

FATHER, ALMIGHTY, MAKER

Matthew 6:25-34

Third Wednesday in Lent (Series B)

February 28, 2024

Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND

The gospel lesson comes from *The Gospel According to Matthew*, chapter 6, verses 25 through 34. Please stand as you are able for the Gospel. From Matthew 6, beginning at verse 25, we read in Jesus' name.

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Father, these are your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

You may be seated.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.”

Last week we considered the first part of that sentence: “I believe in God.” We talked about two things: what it means to believe and who God is. That is, he is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So we considered the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. To believe in him means that we know him to be true, confess him to be true, and trust in him for eternal salvation.

I suppose you could say that we're still in the doctrine of the Trinity today, because we turn our attention to the first person of the Trinity: God the Father. Most of Christian doctrine really fits inside the doctrine of the Trinity, because it includes everything about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity includes who they are and what they do. So, for sure, everything in the Apostles' Creed fits under the doctrine of the Trinity.

Tonight we turn our attention to the first article of the creed: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” So we will consider three words: *Father*, *almighty*, and *maker*. What does it mean that God is Father? What does it mean that the Father is almighty? And what does it mean that the Father is maker? How are these things true, and what does it matter to us?

First, God is Father. What does that mean? Whose Father is he? Before anyone else, he is the Father of the Son, Jesus Christ. Before the world was created, and before we came to know the Son by the name “Jesus,” God the Father is the Father of God the Son. In eternity, that is, before and outside of time, God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So God the Father is the Father of God the Son.

And Jesus, the Son, teaches us that his Father is also our Father (6:26). We are not his children in the same way that Jesus is his Son, because we are not God. We used to be able to say that God is our Father by virtue of creation. That is, he created us; therefore, we are his children. This *should* be true. Since he created us, we *should* belong to him. But we broke that when our first parents overthrew God’s fatherly authority and became subject to sin and death. Since then we have been runaway children, chasing after sin, death, and the ways of the devil, instead of living under the kind protection of our Father. So the Father becomes our Father again by redeeming us through Jesus Christ.

So the Bible does not speak of all humanity being the children of God. We *should* all be God’s children, because he created us all. But all humanity became runaway children instead. So we cannot rightly say, “We are all his children,” referring to the whole world, because that implies that all people are in a right relationship with God, regardless of repentance and faith. But we can and should say that all who believe in Christ are children of the Father. And we can and should say that the Father desires for all people be his children again. We become children of the Father again only through Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of John teaches this in an interesting way. In the other gospels, Jesus sometimes refers to the Father as “**Our Father.**” He includes us already, because he knows what he is going to do. But John holds back until after Jesus’ resurrection. Before his death and resurrection, Jesus often speaks of God as *his* Father or “the Father.” And we might not think much of it, except, immediately after his resurrection, Jesus sends word to his disciples saying, “**I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God**” (20:17). The point is this: after Jesus’ death and resurrection, his Father becomes the Father of all who trust in Jesus. Jesus’ sacrifice reconciles us to God the Father and brings us back as his children.

And the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians, “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (3:26-27). He says this specifically to baptized believers. It’s not the whole world who are children of God, but those who are in Christ. And we can and should say that God desires for all people to become his children again through Jesus. So we urge the whole world to be reconciled to the Father through Jesus Christ. That is how we becomes his children again.

Now, the picture of God as our Father can be helped or hurt by our earthly fathers. This should not be so, but it is the reality of this fallen world. Every child should have a kind, generous, and strong father. This is their natural right. No child truly receives the earthly father they should. Every father falls short and sins against their children. For this we should repent, both to our children, and to God. But despite our sins, some children do receive a father who models a relatively accurate picture of the love of God. But there are also many children who do not. And this is a grave injustice. Some fathers are harsh or abusive. Some are neglectful or withholding. Some are simply absent. And it is a natural occurrence that children form their thoughts about God after the model of their fathers. This tendency isn’t as strong with mothers. It’s kind of mysterious. And this isn’t a patriarchy versus feminism thing. It’s just the way it is. Our earthly fathers shape our conception of God. So a bad earthly father might make us think that God is harsh, withholding, or simply absent from our lives. Fathers are supposed to teach us

about our Father in heaven. They do this, whether they intend to or not. Some are good teachers; some are bad.

Why do I tell you this? Well, you should know that your Father in heaven may or may not actually be like your earthly father. If you have a good earthly father, your heavenly Father is similar, but better. If you have a bad earthly father, your heavenly Father is totally different. He is kind. He is strong. He is present. And he is gracious. A good father forgives his children. He loves them, not because they have done anything to deserve it, but simply because he is their father. When a good father sees something wrong with his children, he knows it is his job to fix it, even if he didn't cause the problem. When his children run away, he knows that he must go and rescue them, even if it's not his fault they ran away. When there is a break in the relationship, it is a father's job to fix it. When an earthly father does these things, he is reflecting the fatherly goodness of our heavenly Father. And when an earthly father fails to do these things, he is misrepresenting the character of God. But God is still the same. Your Father in heaven is still kind, generous, forgiving, and strong.

And so it is a comfort to us that God is "almighty." That's the second word for tonight. God possesses all power. There is nothing beyond his strength.

We crave a strong father. I don't know how it is for girls. It might be similar. But for boys, at least, one of the things we argue about as children is whose dad is stronger. Growing up in small town North Dakota, I distinctly remember standing in the lunch line arguing about whose dad had the best truck, because a big truck is a symbol of strength, or so it seemed to us. My dad had a little S-10 blazer with a 2.8 liter V6. It had less than half as much power as our minivan does now. But I was insistent that my dad's truck was the best. Years later, that blazer became mine, and I learned that it was very, very weak. So my dad did not have the best truck, but he was a better dad than most. And that, I don't have to pretend about.

Here's the point: we desire a strong father, because that's what God is. This desire is hardwired into us from creation. And if a father is good to us, then his strength is a great comfort, because a good father will use his strength to provide for his children, protect them from evil, and rescue them from danger. Whether you have a good or bad earthly father, this is true for your heavenly Father. He is your loving, all-powerful, and gracious Father.

His raw power is clearly seen in nature. When we consider the grandeur of this world, and not just this world, but also the entire expanse of the heavens, we cannot help but marvel at the power of God, for he created all of this by his powerful Word.

So the third word for tonight is "Maker." Or we could also say, "Creator." "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). We read about this from Genesis 1 and 2. That is the account of how God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, the earth was formless and empty. There was no material or substance, and there was no form or structure to govern that substance anyway. So when God created, he created the material of the universe, and he created the structure or laws that define how the material should function.

Creation was the work of the Father. The Son and the Holy Spirit were also present and involved, but the Father is the primary actor in creation. Each member of the Trinity has their own special work, but they do not do it alone. For example, the work of the Son is to redeem us from sin and death, so he died and rose again. But the Father and the Holy Spirit were also present and working with the Son. So also in creation, it is the work of the Father, but the Son and the Holy Spirit were also present and active. In Genesis 1, we read about the Spirit "hovering

over the face of the waters” (1:2). And in the John 1 we learn that Jesus, the Son of God, is the Word through whom the Father created all things (1:3). So the Father did the creating, and he did it through the Son. What, exactly, that looked or sounded like, I can’t really say.

Here’s the thing with Genesis 1 and 2. Everything recorded there is true. But it’s probably not everything we want to know about creation. And it certainly doesn’t give us every detail of what happened. Should every detail of creation be recorded, I don’t suppose the books of the world could contain it.

So we should accept Genesis as accurate in a historical sense. It doesn’t tell us everything we want to know, but what it says is true historically and scientifically. We know this, not because we can verify all of it, but because Jesus died and rose again. He claimed to be the Son of God. He treated Genesis as historical (e.g., Matt. 19:4-5; Mark 10:7). He prophesied that he would die and rise again. Then he did. On the basis of that evidence, we should regard everything he says as true, including his affirmations of Genesis. The world, of course, has a competing theory. Naturalists insist that everything came into being by a big bang, followed by a process of evolution. This theory is so pervasive that even Christians feel like we have to believe it.

So I’ll ask the question you might be thinking: “Can a Christian believe that the world came about through a big bang and a process of evolution?” And what, exactly, do we mean when we ask that question? Do we mean, “Can a Christian believe that and still be saved?” Answer: yes. A person doesn’t immediately forfeit their salvation if they believe the world’s explanation instead. Christians might believe all sorts of errors without losing their salvation, but it’s not safe. So I’ll ask it another way, “Is it okay for a Christian to believe evolutionary theory?” Answer: certainly not.

The theory of evolution and the account of Genesis 1 and 2 are very much contradictory. I’ll give you a couple examples. First, Genesis says God created the world in six days. There might be something God hasn’t revealed about those six days, but to stretch those six days into billions of years is a bit too much. Second, the theory of evolution requires death. It requires billions of years of organisms mutating and dying. But Genesis teaches that death began because of sin. Man was formed before sin. Both things cannot be true. And the basic problem is that the theory of evolution exists in order to explain how the universe could come to exist without God. So Christians should reject the theory of evolution for theological reasons.

But we should also reject it as bad science, because it is. All we really need to know in order to reject the theory of evolution is how the theory is supposed to work. I won’t go too deep into this, because we’ve covered this in classes, and we’ll probably cover it again sometime. But the theory of evolution relies on two things: random genetic mutations and natural selection. First, it requires genetic mutation. When an organism procreates, genetic information is copied from the parents to the child. A mutation occurs when there is an error in the transmission of that data. Then, if the mutation is positive, that offspring will survive and pass on that mutation. Now, organisms do adapt to different environments. We can observe that. So the natural selection part could work. But for the whole theory to work, billions and billions of mutations have to go just right. I mean, all those unintended accidents need to work out perfectly. As we learn more about genetics and cellular biology, the likelihood of this happening, even over the course of 4.5 billion years, has shrunk to be practically impossible.

And evolutionary biologists know this. The people who study and promote evolution now do not dispute this. They know that the odds of evolution producing life as we know it is practically zero. This is not controversial anymore. But they still believe it. Why? Because they think it has to be true. If we assume that God cannot be the cause of all things, then we can only consider

naturalist explanations. So they write creation off as being impossible. And the theory of evolution, which is only *practically* impossible, seems preferable to the impossible option. But creation is not impossible, they've just assumed from the start that it is.

All we really need to know in order to dismiss evolution is how the theory is supposed to work. But dismissing evolution does not mean the Bible is right. That would be a logical fallacy. Destroying the other theory does not mean ours is true. We need positive evidence. Many believing scientists see evidence for creation in the physical world. And I think they're right to see it. It's there. But the skeptics are probably not going to interpret that data the same way. The real positive evidence for creation is the resurrection of Jesus. That's the positive evidence for all of Christianity. If he died and rose again, like he said he would, and like hundreds of eyewitnesses report, then he really is the Son of God, and he really does know what he's talking about, and the Genesis account becomes the most reasonable option.

So with eyes of faith, we can look at the world, we can look at the trees, the bugs, the birds, the stars, and everything and marvel that our Father in heaven made all these things. We know a little bit about how he did it, but not everything. So we can explore, discover, and wonder about his marvelous work. And as we see the marvels of his creation, we can say, "My Father made that, and he made it for me." He made it because he loves you.

The same God who made all of this, and who provides daily bread to all creatures, is your heavenly Father. That's really the point of all this. He is your heavenly Father who provides for all the needs of your life, both now, and into eternity. So you can rest in his grace. He is your loving, all-powerful, and gracious Father. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Amen.