

# Daily Devotions

## June 5-10, 2023

### Monday June 5

#### **Genesis 11:1-2:4a**

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,<sup>2</sup> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." <sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

<sup>29</sup>God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." <sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

<sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>2</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

<sup>4</sup>These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

### ***For Reflection***

This unusually long reading allows us to get caught up in the grandeur and grace of God’s creation. When we read this story all at once, we hear the rhythms and patterns of God forming the universe out of nothing, and making it beautiful. Notice how many times Genesis says, “And God saw that it was good.” The book of Genesis is not a science textbook. When we read about God creating the heavens and the earth through the lens of faith, we experience God’s great love for us and for the world he made. God even made humankind in his image! After God provided everything we need for life, he gave humans the important job of stewarding and caring for every living thing on the earth. Finally, God rested on the seventh day. That’s our sabbath day, which Christians observe on Sunday as a day of worship and rest.

This story, at the very beginning of the Bible, also marks the beginning of our relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From the start, we can see that our God is generous, creative, loving, and kind. He cares deeply for us and for the world he created by speaking all things into existence. Worshiping God on the Sabbath allows us to praise and glorify him in response to all that he has first done for us!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What aspect of God’s creation brings you the most joy? How do you give thanks to God for those things you love most about the physical world?
2. How do you like to observe the Sabbath? In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther writes that the commandment to “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy” means, “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God’s word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it.” What part of observing the Sabbath through worship strengthens you the most for your daily life and why?
3. What part of God’s creation puzzles you or makes you laugh? What creatures would you like to see in person, either at a zoo, in the depths of the ocean, or in other countries?

### **Read Psalm 79-81**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for victims and communities grieving from gun violence. Pray for the safety of all people, especially in schools, for reasonable laws, and for resources to combat the mental health crisis in America.

## Tuesday June 6

### Read Psalm 82-85

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for all students. Ask God to grant them learning, growth, friendships, and fun. Pray that they would increase not only in knowledge, but in wisdom and character.

## Wednesday June 7

### Psalm 8

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.

<sup>2</sup>Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark  
because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup>When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and  
the stars that you have established;

<sup>4</sup>what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that  
you care for them?

<sup>5</sup>Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them  
with glory and honor.

<sup>6</sup>You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you  
have put all things under their feet,

<sup>7</sup>all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup>the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the  
paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup>O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

### **For Reflection**

It may seem strange that a psalm that dwells on human nature is appointed for the festival of the Holy Trinity. But there are two points of contact. One is the Old Testament Creation story, which this psalm echoes. The Triune God was at work in Creation, and Psalm 8 glories in the creative works of God, humanity chief among them.

The other point of contact is the idea that human beings are created in the image of God (the *imago dei*). According to Genesis, God made human beings (male and female) in his image, and Psalm 8 says that God "crowned them with glory and honor."

The mysteries of God and humanity are, Psalm 8 suggests, deeply linked. To see humanity is to see the creative work of God, and to be

moved to praise the “majestic” name of the Lord. We cannot rightly understand what it is to be “human” without contemplating the facts that we are creations of the Triune God and made in God’s image. But as we understand humanity more deeply, we will be moved to praise God more fully.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What things move you to praise God the most? The more I learn about just how fine-tuned not just our planet, but our solar system, and indeed the laws of the whole universe are to make human life possible, the more I am inspired to praise God. Spend some time pondering whatever it is that helps you to see the greatness of the Lord.
2. And yet, we human beings are so tiny! In the scale of the universe, we would seem to be completely insignificant. But God is “mindful” of you! What does it mean to you that the God of the universe knows, values, and loves you?

### **Read Psalm 86-88**

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray for the ministry of Reformation Lutheran Church, that we would be devoted to serving God, bearing witness to the Gospel so that others may come to believe, and serving our community so that we may bless others.

## **Thursday June 8**

### **2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

<sup>11</sup>Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. <sup>13</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

### ***For Reflection***

I’ll be honest: there really is a lot of theological and philosophical wrangling behind the doctrine of the Trinity. Questions of what “being” really is, how the infinite and the finite connect, and how (or how much) the human mind can grasp God are all involved. But, I will also be honest about this: these are not the heart of the matter. The doctrine of the Trinity was not created to keep theologians in business. This reading from 2 Corinthians shows that in the very beginning of Christian community, believers were committed to the idea that there

is one God of love, that his Son Jesus is “the Lord” (which is another title for “God”), and that the Holy Spirit they were experiencing somehow brought the divine presence of Jesus to them. “The Trinity” is a doctrinal way of working out how all those experiences can be true. It isn’t mainly about philosophy; it’s about the lived reality of God’s presence among Christian believers.

And notice how, in Paul’s words above, the triune idea shows up in the language of gift. It is an unconditional blessing: “The grace... be with all of you.” God’s Triune nature is how God saves us: the Father defeats sin and death through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son, and the power of that victory is offered to the world by the Holy Spirit. It is unfortunate that the doctrine of the Trinity has often been caricatured as something that keeps God abstract, theoretical, and distant. In truth, it is all about the God who is Lord over all, who reigns in mercy and love, and is nearer to us than our own heartbeat.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. When you think about God, do you think more about the Father, Jesus the Son, or the Holy Spirit? When you pray, think about what difference it makes if you address your prayers to “God,” to our “Heavenly Father,” to “Jesus,” or to “the Holy Spirit.” What changes depending on how you think about your prayers being directed?
2. Paul’s closing blessing here in 2 Corinthians follows words about healthy Christian community in verses 11-12. The way we conduct ourselves as a community should reflect the nature of the God in whose name we gather. Since God is a perfect unity of three Persons, Christians are called to strive for unity. How can you find deeper connection with fellow Christians through the presence and love of God?

### **Read Psalm 89**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for the spiritual growth of yourself and all our members, that we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, increase in our knowledge of God’s will, and overflow in love for each other and the world around us.

## Friday June 9

### **Matthew 28:16-20**

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### ***For Reflection***

Matthew's gospel ends with this passage and with a clear calling from Jesus for us and our lives going forward. It's striking that when Jesus gives us our instructions for how we'll continue to serve him after he ascends into heaven and returns to the Father, he does it by reminding us of our baptism in the triune name of God. Just as we were baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," we are to go out and make disciples of all people, by baptizing them in the same name and bringing them into our community of faith. That's how the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection will spread throughout the world.

As we invite others to join us as disciples, and as we love and serve our neighbors, we reflect the relationships of love within the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each distinct aspects of the one God. They work together to share the love of God with the world. As those who Jesus sends out to make disciples, baptize, and teach, we get to be co-workers with the Trinity, as we share the grace of God with a world that is hungry for peace, joy, and good news!

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. If you were one of the eleven disciples with Jesus on the mountain in this reading, would you be fully worshiping him without any reservations, or would you be quiet, holding back with some questions or doubts? Either answer is ok, and it might change from day to day. Remember that Jesus can handle your doubts and questions, just as he welcomes your exuberant praise!

2. Jesus instructs his disciples to go to “all nations.” Have you had any experience with Christian churches in other parts of the world? What was it like to worship there or to meet Christians from other cultures? How did that expand or deepen your faith?
3. Re-read Jesus’ reassuring final word to his disciples in this gospel, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” How does that promise from your risen Lord give you confidence and hope for your life today?

### **Read Psalm 90-92**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for peace in the world, especially in Ukraine. Ask God to sustain those who suffer under persecution for the name of Christ. Pray that all people would have freedom and good government.

## **Saturday June 10**

### **Read Psalm 93-94**

**Today’s Prayer Focus:** Pray for police, fire fighters, all emergency workers, health care workers, and those who serve in the military. Pray for farmers and those who transport food. Ask God to grant well-being to all in our community, and to stir up generosity to meet the needs of those who lack food, shelter, or other needs.

### **The Mission of Reformation Lutheran Church is to:**

**Invite** our neighbors as Jesus invites us.

**Engage** in a community of graceful discipleship.

**Equip** our members to grow in faith and ministry.

**Embody** the love of Jesus in our world.