

Trinity Sunday

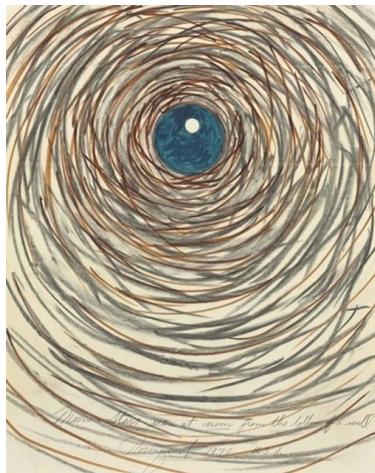
Gen. 1:1—2:4a

Acts 2:14a, 22—36

Matt. 28:16—20

Our Deliverer: Seeking Answers in these Days

“2020 is the worst year ever.” Have you heard that said? We’ve had plague, recession, racial violence and injustice, catastrophe and devastation – take your pick. Everywhere you look, there seems to be profound pain and loneliness. It’s overwhelming. It’s as though we’ve fallen into a dark pit with no way out. So, what’s happening? Is there a lot of extra sin going on that’s never been seen before? Is 2020 the worst year ever?



People of God, we are simply coming face to face with the brokenness of the world more clearly than we’re used to doing. We see the darkness that surrounds us in the pit, and we’re looking for ways to climb out. Is it science and reason? Is it impassioned speeches and messages from important politicians or celebrities? What if we could just pray better? Are we trying hard enough to speak or to listen? We want to save ourselves, but the pit is deep, and the darkness is getting darker as violence

erupts and we do not know what is to come. We fear for ourselves, and those we love.

Confronted with darkness, I think of Psalm 30, where David writes:

“O Lord my God; I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.”

There are problems that man cannot answer, no matter how many are brought to justice, or how many march in protest. We need a deliverer. Not just to get us out of the pit, but someone who can *restore us to life*.



Martin Luther lived through plagues and a massive revolt that saw anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 people killed. I don't think that what's happening today would surprise him. When he looked at the brokenness in and around us, he put sin in three different categories: **the sin that comes to us from (1) the world, (2) from the Devil, (3) and from within ourselves.**

Since you can't help but hear all about what's happening in the world, let's start there. Luther had this to say:

[The world] offends us in word and deed, and impels us to anger and impatience. In short, there is nothing but hatred and envy, enmity, violence and wrong, unfaithfulness, vengeance, cursing, raillery slander, pride and haughtiness, with superfluous finery, honor, fame, and power, where no one is willing to be the least, but every one desires to sit at the head and to be seen before all.

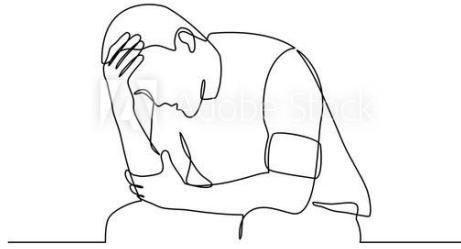
The way you hear him say it, it sounds like 1529 was the worst year ever – or maybe some things don't change. We are offended by the words and deeds of this broken world, by the evil we see around us, and we react wrongly, because we see evil and try to answer it with more evil. We are tempted towards hatred, anger, violence, and pride within our communities. We want the power to decide what's right and what's wrong. We come to comfortable conclusions and we judge.

That's the sin of the world; how does the devil tempt us? Luther writes:

Then comes the devil... agitating matters... to induce us to despise and disregard both the Word and works of God to tear us away from faith, hope, and love and bring us into disbelief, false security, and obduracy, or, on the other hand, to despair, denial of God, blasphemy, and innumerable other shocking things.

The devil wants to pull you away from God. He wants you to despise God by depending on false gods like money, politics, or being on the right team. He also wants you to lose sight of God and despair when trouble comes. Despising God isn't just saying

you hate Him; despising God's word is as simple as not seeking it out. Here's a question to ask yourself in the days to come: "Am I going to worship this week?" It's an important question, and it's a question you can faithfully answer with a "no," if you aren't ready to be here yet, but it needs to be an active question – you need to make that decision each week, because the devil wants you to be passive.



And then there's the sin in you, which is also the sin in me. It's where we usually go when we think of sin: lust, lying, craving, and not doing what we should be doing. Luther, and the Apostle Paul before him, recognized that in our bodies we struggle with temptation every day. In all the hurt and confusion, what new temptation has come to you, or, what disappointing thing have you kept doing?

Whether it's the world, the devil, or our own selves – I don't care what else they tell you – the problem is sin, and what can man do against sin? What happens when we can't climb out of that pit?

God has to deliver us.



God the Father has created all things, and all of creation, all the world answers to him. He hears his people cry out! He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He sends the deliverer. He is our fortress and present help in trouble. He is the source of all justice and good. This same God has declared that you are his.

God the Son has conquered the devil and brought forgiveness of sins. He has delivered you from the pit. The devil has no power to say you're not good enough for God, and he cannot offer you anything better than what God has given you in your baptism.

God the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father and the Son, has breathed saving faith and life into you when you were still dead in your sins, so that you could love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and strength. So you can love your neighbor as yourself. So you can love your enemies and have hope in this life.

And these are not three Gods but one God; not three AlUITties but one Almighty; not three Lords but one Lord. The Lord our God is one, and all of God is bigger than all of sin. And even now I have seen Him and His church at work:

I have baptized children into God's family over kitchen sinks and in bowls while their families watched online.

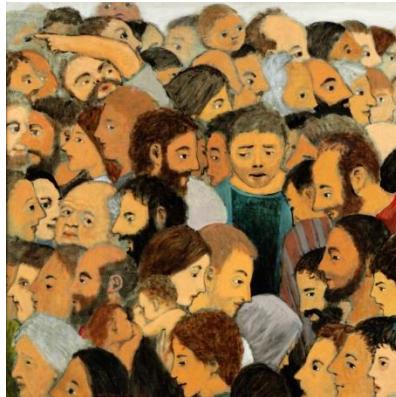
I have married God's people when we could have no more than ten in the room.

I have buried God's people when we've had to stand outside in the wind and the cold and the rain because that was the safest option.



God is also where I haven't been: He is in and among those who protest; He is in the hospitals and the grocery stores and the homes, He is in the midst of the fire and tear gas and broken glass; He is in the prisons and the squad cars and the riots, and He is with the over 40 million who are unemployed in the US, and perhaps as many as 1.6 billion more around the world, wondering about their daily bread, saying "**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**"

God is at work in a messy, angry world. Remember that the next time someone tries to tell you that it's all over, or that it's up to us and only us to fix this. Paul tells us that Christians in the world may be perplexed by the evil happening around us – and at times *to us* – but we do not despair, because our Lord, Jesus Christ, took every one of those sins and announced, "**It is finished.**"



So, where do you fit in? If God has conquered sin, where should we turn when sin still hurts?

I think what confounds us is how we should act, or how we can help. I can't tell you exactly what that looks like, but as you consider this, know that you are God's child, loved by Him and sent by Him, and that there are many seasons in a Christian's life. Nobody is going to go through this the same way. Hear from the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter three:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

**a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;**

**a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.**

When it comes to these seasons of life, I find it's a lot scarier to reach out and check in with the few people in my neighborhood than it is to post my opinion online to hundreds, but it tends to be far more fruitful.

There *is* a time to speak out, even as there is a time to keep silence. Everyone here will find that time, even if it's years from today. I pray that when you do, you point to your Lord; that you speak the truth in love, and give a reason for the hope that is in you.

God bless and keep you in these days.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.