

Sunday, June 4, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“Go Therefore”
Genesis 1:1-2:4 and Matthew 28:16-20

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, “What are some ways people describe you?” (i.e., appearance, personality, character, etc.) How are these descriptions accurate or inaccurate? How is the description of you incomplete?

Genesis 1:1-2:4. Context. This week’s reading from Genesis is the first of two accounts of the creation. It was probably added “at the front” of Genesis, so to speak, providing a broader context for the second creation account which tells the story of Adam and Eve and their disobedience. Although this first account gives a description of the physical universe, its purpose is not to give a scientific account, but rather a moral account: when God looks at creation, he sees that it is good, not that it is composed of hydrogen, oxygen, etc., in various quantities. The Babylonians had a similar creation story, but the entire account is set in conflict and chaos. Here, creation is the orderly result of the work of the sole and supreme God. As the rabbis pondered this story, they came to the conclusion that creation must have taken place in the fall, since it mentions that there were “trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it” (think apples and pomegranates). From ancient times, Christians saw in this account the work of all three persons of the Trinity: God the Father who creates through speaking the Word (Son of God, God the Son), as a Wind (same word as Spirit) from God (God the Holy Spirit) swept over the waters. Additionally, when God goes to create human being, God says, “Let us make...”

Matthew 28:16-20. Context. In Matthew’s account of the resurrection, the risen Jesus appeared to the women and told them to tell his other disciples to meet him in Galilee. When they encounter him in Galilee, their reaction is one of reverence mixed with doubt. What follows is commonly known as the Great Commission: Jesus sends his followers to make disciples from among all the nations of the earth, baptizing and teaching them. Matthew doesn’t tell us much about what kind of baptism Jesus is talking about; he only gives us the three-fold formula of “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” As for his teachings and sayings, they have been gathered together by Matthew into five collections, beginning with that “sermon” that Jesus preached on (another?) “mount” in Galilee.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:4 and Matthew 28:16-20

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read Genesis 1:1-2:4 and Matthew 28:16-20 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Read Genesis 1:1-2:4 again. It might sound familiar to you, yet you might be surprised not to hear parts of the creation story that you thought were included in Genesis 1. In this account of the creation story, what do you learn about God?
- *“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted”*(Matthew 28:17, NRSV). Close to the end of Matthew’s gospel, we find that there are doubting worshipers, yet they are still given the Great Commission by Jesus...(Matthew 28:19-20). What does this tell you about God? What does this tell you about followers of Christ?
- The Planning Worship section for Trinity Sunday says, *“We worship a God who came down like fire and burned a mission into our hearts.”* What comes to mind when considering a mission burned into **your** heart? How might it look to be ready to give your all to accomplish this mission for God’s glory?
- The Preaching Notes say, *“It is always our inclination to explain God on Trinity Sunday. Resist that inclination. All the metaphors ultimately fall short and serve only to reduce God into accessible bites that we can snack on like popcorn.”* What metaphors have you heard to describe God? Why do you think people struggle to explain our Triune God?
- Have someone in the group read Matthew 28:16-20 aloud. How do you hear Jesus’ directive in your life today? How do you hear it differently for clergy or laity? How do you hear it for your community of faith collectively?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Triune God, we offer our prayers of thanksgiving that you are beyond our understanding. We confess our inadequacy in grasping the fullness of your glory and our tendency to doubt the fullness of your power. Continue to call us as doubting worshipers to be your disciples, taking the commandments of your Son to heart. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.