

## Genesis 1:1 - 2:4

### First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday

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There are a lot of ways to be smart. You could spell thirty-two words correctly in ninety seconds, like the boy who won the National Spelling Bee this week. You could have an excellent sense of direction or spatial reasoning. You could program a computer so brilliantly that it begins to program itself beyond your understanding. You could write an encyclical about that same technology. You could understand the doctrine of the Trinity.

I bet you are smart in a few particular ways; I believe we all have particular intelligences: good at reading people, good at reading spreadsheets, good at reading constellations. And, of course, we all have deficits too, concepts we will never understand, areas we rely on others to comprehend and manage, reasons, frankly, that we need each other. What if understanding the Trinity doesn't mean anything more than understanding that we need each other, that we actually must be in relationship?

Let's go back to the beginning. Everything starts with God creating something more than God. God wants there to be more than just God. Poet James Weldon Johnson retells the creation story and has God feeling a certain way. "And God stepped out on space, / And he looked around and said: / I'm lonely - / I'll make me a world." Now, you might have thoughts about God being lonely, or having feelings at all, about God wanting or needing anything. But some of the most gifted theologians of our time use this same kind of language about God. Rowan Williams says that "God *wants* to come alive in the other," that God longs to be known through connection. And this longing is the very why of creation, the why of Jesus, the why of creatures who are aware of each other at all. There is something more meaningful about being-with-ness; there is something in the very nature of God that is alive in the between-ness of things.

And Williams is not the only one. In his encyclical on technology and humanity, Pope Leo implores us "to recognize the human heart as the place where God *desires* to dwell." God desires to dwell in the human heart, not in a vacuous space, not in a formless void. Leo goes on to say this, among his forty-thousand-words on the lackings of AI, "So-called artificial intelligences do not undergo experiences, do not possess a body, do not feel joy or pain, do not mature through relationships and do not know from within what love, work, friendship or responsibility mean." Intelligence that does not know love or grief is necessarily limited, which is to say that AI is certain kinds of smart, but it has deficits that are crucially missing.

Here's the rest of Rowan Williams' idea that I partially quoted above: "God wants to come alive in the other, and that's what we mean by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." God is a trinity because there must be more than a singularity; there must be a way for the uncontainable God to expand out and into something more. So in our little minds, the fullness of God can be better understood by

allowing there to be God leaking out of God into the spaces between: between God and creation, between God and humans, even in the space between God and more God. There is something more in the connective tissue, some kind of wisdom that can only be known relationally. We're back to that bit about meaning found in the being-with-ness.

A simple example of how this is true even in the smallest aspects of God's creation. Consider what overflows from a magnolia tree's need to be in rapport with the bees: in that overflow, we get the sweet scent of blossom. A gorgeous "extra" from the space between, in the attracting and attractive space of connection between tree and pollinator. The trees and the bees want to come alive, and they are made to come alive only with each other, and that spills over into the space between, and we all collect something more from their relationship: a gorgeous perfume in the summer air. It's a natural intelligence of community that produces an excess.

This beautiful relationality that we see in tiny examples from creation is the same truth of the triune Godhead, the Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit. There is an excess of aliveness present in that strange trinitarian dance that creates more and makes space for more and spills over as love, a profligate gift, an overabundance that won't fit anywhere but in the between-ness. God is more God in communion. Love is meant to overflow from the space between and to fill the space between.

And if we are made in God's threefold image, then we're made for more than isolation and computation. We are not, as some would claim, "meat-computers." We are made for love and connection. And that can look a thousand ways ... That might mean one or two friends or a host of them, that could mean that we breathe more deeply when we are among the trees, that could mean a lifelong partnership, that could mean eye contact with the check-out girl, that could mean that we vote with others' interests in mind, that could mean that we lie down on the floor with our shaggy dogs, that could mean that we are moved by knowing someone else's story even if we'll never meet. We are more ourselves because of all that is beyond us. All of this stuff outside of us will bring us more alive, will bring us joy and pain, experience and maturity, and we will be transformed and come to know, to understand, to comprehend so much more than we ever could alone.

There's a good bit of talk about whether or not AI is like us, or possibly "better" than us because its knowledge is seemingly unlimited, and there are actually conversations that equate AI with God. And AI is very smart. But artificial intelligences do not love, they are not alive, and they certainly do not want to come alive through relationships with others. True intelligence, dare I say godly intelligence, arrives by learning to dwell in the heart of someone else, to see the necessity of that being-with-ness, to bridge the space between. This wanting to come alive in the unbounded space between, this desire to dwell in the human heart, to be with us, is the very nature of God, especially the nature of God as Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Especially a God who said, perhaps you recall, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."