

Trinity A 2017  
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St. Matthew's Kellers Church  
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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Creator, Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit, our Comforter.  
Amen

Order after chaos is always welcome. For the family of an alcoholic, days of sobriety are a relief after the chaos of too much drinking. For any of us who have been through a trauma, just an orderly, boring day is a blessing. When our daughter Marica was 18 months old, I had to start packing so we could get out of seminary housing. We still didn't have calls, so we had to put our stuff in storage. We could take only what we could fit in Don's Saab. After seminary graduation, we housesat, stayed in a friend's RV, and then moved in with Don's mom, until we received our first calls. By that time, Marica was 22 months old. We had no idea how much all that moving around had affected her. But when we started unpacking all our stuff, especially HER stuff, she was one happy toddler! She recognized all the stuff, even after it had been boxed up for 4 months – and seeing her stuff made her realize that the place where she was now, was home. A place of order out of the chaos. And it was good.

Goodness is what today's readings are all about. God brings about goodness through God's ordering of creation. What was there in the beginning was chaos: a formless void and darkness. Then God ordered creation into being – and it was good. (Kind of reminds me of what is happening with our building – order out of chaos.) In Genesis 1, it was light in place of darkness. Designating days and months and seasons and years. The assignment of plants and animals of every kind. It was good. In this story of creation, we hear God's first pronounced blessing, to the creatures of the sky and sea: "Be fruitful and multiply." That was part of God's good ordering of creation, too. After God created the other animals and the humans, in God's own image, God blessed them, too, with this good blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply" – plus this extra instruction for the humans: be good stewards of the earth and all the creatures in it. It is part of the expectation of the Creator that we humans take care of the rest of the creation – basic to our relationship. Then there is the goodness of a day of rest, to honor and enjoy creation and the Creator. For us, as responsible stewards of God's good creation, it would be good to be more diligent about keeping the goodness of God's creation. Which we have done a lot to break. Human action of chopping down trees was a primary cause of the spreading of the Sahara desert. The collapse of so many bee colonies from our excessive use of pesticides and insecticides is starting to have an impact on our food supply. Human-caused carbon emissions have changed our atmosphere, our oceans, our weather, and our climate – that God created to be our home and to be good.

The second reading, from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, offers hope for another kind of goodness: the goodness of working through the pain of broken relationships. By the time Paul writes this second letter to the people in Corinth, they must have been even more messed up than they were when he wrote his first letter. In the verses before today's text, Paul warns them that if he comes to see them again, he will not be lenient. He also notes that if there are charges brought against anyone, there must be 2 or 3 witnesses. We don't have any idea what the problems were in Corinth – but the fact that Paul writes about bringing charges and needing witnesses – you know that can't be good. I hear the roar of helicopters several times a day, as they circle the home of my neighbor, Bill Cosby. Most of us with broken relationships, even when charges are brought against us, don't have to deal with it so publicly – so we may

have more room for grace as we try to bring healing to relationships we have broken ~ to put things in order, to restore goodness.

Jesus' brief words in today's gospel remind us of all the good words he has spoken. Jesus gathered the disciples on a mountain – perhaps it was the mountain where he preached his first, and most famous, sermon. On this day, in his last words, Jesus assures them of his authority; then he commands them to make more disciples, even foreign disciples – to do so according to his teachings. Teachings like, blessed are the peacemakers. If you are angry with a brother or a sister, you will be liable to the penalty for murder. That you are to love your enemy. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Judge not, that you may not be judged. These are a few of Jesus' teachings, commandments, as Matthew records them. These teachings of Jesus are hard to follow – but good to follow, also. This time, on the mountain, Jesus reaches out to his closest followers, who both worship him and doubt him. Jesus does not judge them for their doubts; he gives them tasks, missions to do. But that is not how Jesus leaves them. For Jesus, God's Word of grace and mercy, leaves his followers with an even more comforting last word. Jesus good promise: "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God who created everything, who brought order out of chaos, who provided us with laws (which we broke) and a savior (whom we also broke), is determined, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, to keep on saving us, to keep on healing our brokenness. God is determined to be with us always. God is determined to be our home – no matter where we are – and it is good. Amen