

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections  
based on this week's lectionary readings

June 15, 2014  
Trinity Sunday, Year A

The readings this week:

- Genesis 1:1-2:4a ◦ Psalm 8
- 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 ◦ Matthew 28:16-20



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

I love words. I love the way they can convey meaning, and connect people. I love the impact they have when coupled with a tone and a facial expression. As a writer, I love the quest for just the right word, and the joy when it is found. Words, for me, are never “just” words. When my wife says, “I love you” these are not “just” words. They convey an intimacy that touches the deepest part of me. And when someone speaks words of threat or inhumanity to someone I value, the strongest reactions get stirred up in me. Words are deeply powerful, dynamic, living things.

But, words are also dangerous. Words are symbols, containers, metaphors that always point beyond themselves to a reality that they can only describe and suggest. As such, to take words as an end in themselves is always a mistake – and it's an all too common one. And nowhere is this more true than when it comes to the words we use for God. Wars have been fought, lives have been lost and nations have crumbled under the weight of the language we use for Divine reality. But, this can only happen when we forget that the words are not the point, and when we lose the necessary humility that should always accompany any talk of God...

To begin with, Jesus claims that all authority (exousia) has been given to him. It is common to view this in terms of “power over”, dominance and conquest, but to do so is to make the post-resurrection Jesus a contradiction to the Jesus of the rest of the Gospels. Somehow this authority must be understood in the light of the whole ministry of Christ – the ministry of service, self-giving, grace and unconditional love. Rather than Jesus claiming conquest over all of creation, it would seem that he embraces it all, includes it all. His is the authority of the God who loved the world enough to become Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23). His is the authority of the Lover, of the spouse, over the partner – the gladly-given authority to impact and influence the life, the values and the very being of the one that he loves.

It is not dominance so much as it is mutuality – the authority of true knowing.

Then out of this authority Jesus calls his disciples to make other disciples. This is not a mission statement for a Christian conquest of the earth, for the establishment of some kind of Christian nation-state. Rather, it is the call to expand the inclusive love of Christ, to offer the invitation to life to all people in Christ's name. To paraphrase this command in today's English might sound something like this: “invite all people to learn how to live from me”. ...

Finally, and driving the point home, Jesus gives the promise that he will always be with those who receive him. The loving, compassionate, gracious, challenging presence he has been throughout his ministry will not end now that he leaves his “earthly” existence. Rather, it is expanded, widened, able to encompass the entire universe and bring all things, ultimately, into the embrace of his divine love.

The words we use for God – Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Trinity – are not intended as ends in themselves. They are signs, sacraments, symbols and metaphors that seek to lead us beyond themselves into the inexpressible mystery of God, and of our amazing God-given capacity to know, to experience, intimate relationship with God. Heaven forbid we should ever use these words to exclude, or to arrogantly claim that we have God “nailed down”. Unless we let go of what we think we know, and allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the beautiful mystery these words point to, God will never be anything more than words to us.

An excerpt from  
*God in a Word*, by  
John van de Laar.  
Read the entire  
text on [Sacredese](#)



# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: [Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#)

Isn't it amazing? The Creator of the universe is also the God who wants to be with you today. Sit quietly and let him come to you now. In what ways do you think God views his creation as being good? According to 1:26, the man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God. What similarities are there between God's own work in creation and the commands and responsibilities he gives to the man and woman? The creation account reveals that God brings order, beauty and harmony out of an originally chaotic situation. In what areas do you need to trust God to produce these qualities in your life? As you look around at God's creation, how does it give you a greater appreciation for the Creator? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

## Psalm Reading: [Psalm 8](#)

Browse through the psalm and note every word that refers to what God has created. How do these things reveal God's glory? Why do you think the psalmist contrasts what children and infants say with what foes and avengers say? What evidence do we have that God is mindful of us, that he cares for us? How does Psalm 8 compare with the way you view yourself? What adjustments do you need to make to view yourself as God views you? Some people think of themselves as "a little higher than the heavenly beings"; others think, "a little lower than the beasts of the field." In what area has Psalm 8 corrected your self-image? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

*"Every guy who's gone out to lunar distance is amazed by the beauty of the Earth. [When I was there, I thought] 'I must be at a place that God envisioned before He created this universe. I must be seeing the Earth as He saw it before He created it.' It's just too beautiful to have happened by accident."*

~ Eugene Cernan, Apollo 17 Astronaut

## Praying Toward Sunday

Give us, O God, the vision which can see thy love in the world, in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust the goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts, and show us what each one of us can do to set forth the coming of the day of universal peace. Amen.

~ Frank Borman, Astronaut, Commander of Apollo 18

## From God's Front Porch

On Christmas Eve 1968, the Apollo 8 astronauts Frank Borman, Bill Anders and Jim Lovell celebrated humanity's first orbit around the moon by reading ten verses of 3,000-year-old poetry. Even the most irreligious person would have recognized the evocative words. In fact, the astronauts read ten verses from the lectionary for this week that begin with the first sentence of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

And just a year ago, I heard Eugene Cernan speak, the last man to walk on the moon as a part of the Apollo 17 crew. I don't remember all the specifics of his amazing stories, but I do remember the thoughts he shared as he stood on the moon and looked down on earth; *"Looking back to see the Earth in all of its fullness and beauty was like looking out from God's front porch.... That view brought a new perspective about the world we all share. If we could put everybody on that spot for five minutes, the Earth would be a different place."*

Over and over in the creation story we read, "God saw that it was good." I hope that in our stewardship, He still looks down from his front porch and thinks, "it is good."

## 3rd Reading: [2 Corinthians 13:11-13](#)

Verse 13 is a familiar benediction and the earliest expression of a Trinitarian formula in the New Testament. What attributes are assigned to each person? What significance might there be in the order: Jesus first, then God (meaning the Father) and finally the Holy Spirit? What is the thrust of Paul's admonitions in verses 11-12? How does that relate to the Trinitarian benediction at the close? "Discord and conflict have no place in the church." What do you think of that statement? What distinction might separate "conflict" from "discord"? [Light on the Lessons](#)

## 4th Reading: [Matthew 28:16-20](#)

The disciples go to Galilee where they meet with Jesus. Describe the commission he gives to them and us. How does Jesus equip them and future disciples to carry out his commission? What keeps people today from believing that Jesus is the resurrected Lord? As you conclude this study of Matthew, how can you be more involved in making disciples and fulfilling the Great Commission? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)