

**Trinity Sunday A, 2026**

**Genesis 1:1-2:4a**

**Corinthians 13:11-13**

**Matthew 26:16-20**

*“Most people are asking what is going on in our cities, but I am more concerned about what is going on with the people”* said Eugene Peterson reflecting on the riots in his beloved city of Baltimore during the 1960’s. It is what started Pastor Peterson working on a then new translation of St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians. He wanted to connect people with the powerful word of God revealed through scripture. That led him to his Bible translation that is known to us as *“The Message.”* It was Pastor Peterson’s attempt to connect with people where they were and to draw them into conversation, fellowship, community as sisters and brothers beloved by God.

Eugene Person’s translation of the second reading that we just heard read moments ago; *“And that’s about it, friends. Be cheerful. Keep things in good repair. Keep your spirits up. Think in harmony. Be agreeable. Do all that, and the God of love and peace will be with you for sure. Greet one another with a holy embrace. All the brothers and sisters here say hello. The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.”*

It was reported to the Apostle Paul that there were conflictual things going on in Corinth within the Christian community. He wanted to know what was going on with the people especially as it related to the powerful Word of God revealed through Christ Jesus. That led him to his letters in response to the conflict, unrest and wavering faith of the people living in the city.

This morning we hear Paul making a plea for mutual affection, calling upon his sisters and brothers, created in the image of God. He wants everyone to mend their ways inviting them to a life restored, reflecting to the world that they are truly recognized as an Assembly of God’s people. Make no mistake when Paul asks them to agree with one another, it does not mean that they are to sweep things under the rug or that they are to maintain a diplomatic truce, but rather to accept and provide counsel and encouragement. It means that everyone involved needs to listen, speak, respect, reflect and together create a path forward as it pertains to Christian community. This will in time allow for people to live in peace.

This is a radical shift from the prevalent competitive bickering that brought them into such conflict and unrest. Paul advocates that they great each other with a Holy Kiss, that when they come together they do so in sincerity. This is not like the kiss of Judas that betrays and leads to death for both Judas and for Jesus. This idea should set them looking beyond themselves. It should help them grasp the larger picture of God’s reality in Christ Jesus. It should help them see that all God’s children are beloved by God.

The First Gospel, Matthew, reports that there were conflictual things going on in Jerusalem. The need for the Disciples to take the message of hope and salvation from Jerusalem to Samaria, and Judea, and to the ends of the earth, clues us in to see a bigger picture. Not everyone responded favorably to Jesus of Nazareth, his teaching, preaching, healing. So in the reading this morning often referred to as *“the Great Commission”* Jesus sends the disciples out to connect with people, drawing them into conversation, fellowship, community; *Baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them all that was commanded.*

Most people are asking what is going on in our world, our nation, our cities, and our community. There is unrest, conflicts are openly on display, and tensions continue to give rise to violence. Anxiety, fear, apprehension, confusion; the call for justice, the desire for recognition, the abuses of power, they have all made their way to the forefront of our life together. But like the Disciples, and the Apostle Paul, and like Pastor Peterson, the important thing for us to focus on as people of God, is the lives of the people; all people, everyone, created in the image of God. Everyone, given our theological perspective, is part of God's good creation. The Old Testament reading from Genesis proclaims the creation narrative reminding us that at the end of each day's work of creation, God says "it is good."

Currently God's message is needed to give shape to leaders of congregation councils, synod staffs, community leaders, elected leaders both local and national, as well as global leaders. It is bound to take an enormous amount of time, energy, passion, and conviction in order to figure out how to solve the dilemmas that confront us. This ranges from keeping congregations open and thriving on one end of the spectrum and bringing an end to war, aggression, hatred and violence on the other. We need people who can conduct the necessary conversations, leading to understanding and eventually agreement so congregations thrive on the one hand and that peace may be restored on the other. In the wisdom of the Apostle Paul, it does not mean that we are to sweep things under the rug or that we are to maintain a diplomatic truce, but rather to accept and provide counsel and encouragement. It means that everyone involved needs to listen, speak, respect, reflect and together create a path forward as it pertains to a life giving community. This will in time allow for people to live in peace. This work is not easy nor is it instantaneous.

Jesus gave the great commission sending his followers out into the world to be messengers of hope and healing. Jesus sends us out. Paul encouraged his followers to work together to bring about peace, not something that was simply for show, like Judas kissing our Lord Jesus on the cheek the night in which we was betrayed, but with sincerity so that such a kiss would be a sign of life giving in the community of faith. We are sent out to be such a sign. In the 1960's Pastor Peterson was more concerned about the people than the cities in which they lived. His desire was to create community built on the outpoured love of God made known in Christ Jesus, his suffering, his death, his resurrection. Pastor Peterson's translation of the Holy Scriptures bears the title "*The Message*" for a reason. People need the message of hope made known through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They need to know that God's creation is good. That God's love in Christ Jesus is for all humanity. And that the Holy and life giving Spirit is poured out so that all may have life and have it abundantly.

We have been entrusted with God's message of hope and salvation. We are sent out with that message into the world. It is the message Jesus gave commissioning his disciples. It is the message Paul wrote encouraging a struggling community. It is the message that Pastor Peterson relates in his contemporary translation for people who don't know God's love, acceptance, forgiveness, or belonging. We are sent out with just such a message. On this Trinity Sunday we acknowledge the mystery of God's presence with us, the surety of God's love for us, and the peace that God alone bestows among us. Let such mystery, love and peace envelope the leaders of all communities and the people who live in them. That's the message. Amen.