

St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)
Trinity 21 – October 20, 2024
John 4:46-54 – The New Creation
Rev Peter Wagner

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

But oh, how we wish we could have been there, in that fresh and perfect world. To eat from every good fruit, to speak with God face to face. How we long for Eden again, to walk with God, to be free of sin and death and sickness and tears, to live in the presence of Jesus forever.

Why did they turn away and disobey? How will we ever enjoy our Maker again?

O Lord Jesus, come soon! Come and restore your fallen creation, as it was in the beginning. For you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the living Word, by whom the heavens were made.

And we know that you, our Triune God, all three persons, you were there in the beginning.

We know that when your Father, God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, when he spoke and said, "Let there be light," then he spoke through you, his only-begotten Son. And we know that the Spirit of God was there also, at the beginning, hovering over the face of the waters, the Spirit who brings life and light to all creation.

And we know that you, Lord Jesus, you are the true life and light. For in the beginning was the Word. It was you. You are the Word who was with God, the Word who is God, who was there in the beginning. In you was life, and that life was the light of men.

But even then, before the first day, before there was ever morning or evening, before there was sky or sea or planets, before you made any tree or sea creature or animal, or created man in your own image – we know that before all things you already knew what would come to pass in this creation. You knew what your creatures would do, how they would disobey. You knew they would take of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and sin, and die. And so they would pass their wickedness down to their children's children, so that sin and death would reign from Adam until now, down through all the ages.

You knew all these things, O God, and yet you still spoke. You were not afraid to create. You still sent forth your Word, saying, "Let there be light." Why did you do it?

You did it because you are love, O God. You were filled with love, and you still love your fallen creation, even now. And your love was so great that it had to overflow. It was not enough for you to love internally, not enough for you, heavenly Father, to love your only-begotten Son, through the Spirit. And it was not enough for you, O Son, to love your Father in the Spirit. No, your love was so great that it spilled over. You had to create, so you would have more to love.

And in your great love, you were even willing to create that which would not love you rightly in return. You knew you would be spurned. You knew we would turn our backs on you and hate you. But you were ready to bear it all, to suffer everything, to keep showing steadfast love forever. You were ready even to allow sin to enter the world, so that you could lavish your love on us all the more by redeeming us. For great is your steadfast love. The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are your judgments and how inscrutable your ways!

For in your great love, O Lord, even when we sinned, you did not turn your face away from us. You promised Eve, that from her offspring one would arise to crush the serpent's head. And though our sin brought death, you yourself intervened to undo our curse.

So knowing all this, knowing we would turn against you, you still created. Not only that, when you regarded everything you had made, you even called it very good. Not just good; very good. Oh what great love, to regard what would soon be so wretched and evil and miserable, to look at us and bless us and give us dominion over all that you had made, to even call us very good.

Not only that, but you were so pleased with everything you had made, so filled with love, so unconcerned for the evil days to come, that on the seventh day, you rested. You simply enjoyed what you had made, without any thought of the coming sin and suffering.

So teach us to rest in your goodness, O Lord. Even now, surrounded by the cares and troubles of this evil

world, make us find our rest in you, in the sanctuary of your church.

And oh what great love, to treat us so! For even then, you knew what you would have to do. You, Jesus, the living Word, the same Word who walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day and spoke so gently to them, you knew that one day you would humiliate yourself and come down and be born among us, God with us. You would walk again with men, to suffer with us. You would be mocked and spit upon and crucified and suffer every agony and temptation, all for us. And you would do it gladly, joyfully. Without any hesitation, all in your great love, to restore us once again, to turn us back from sin and death and bring us once again into that very good relationship with you.

No, not just very good. Even better. Your first creation was very good, but the new creation to come, when you restore and recreate all things, the new heavens and the new earth will be a paradise that is even better. Yes, by your blood you are bringing us now into a new relationship that is even closer. Not just creator and creature, but husband and bride. You have called us your bride, the church, you have purchased us with the bride price of your own blood.

So defend us, Lord Jesus, by your mighty word. Bring us into that eternal paradise. You who spoke, and it was so: Speak now, and make it so.

Speak your word. For we know that if you only speak the word, then instantly, this old and dying creation will finally come to an end. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll, and all the dead shall rise, and Judgment Day will come, and those who put their hope in you and your saving blood, all whom you have called by faith, you will bring us at last in new and perfect bodies to dwell in the light of your glory forever.

Oh, speak now, and make it so!

Speak, just as you spoke on the cross. "It is finished," you said, and thus you finished all your work of creation. In that moment, you finished the task. You redeemed what you had lost, you won it back, paying for all the sins from Adam until the end of time.

So defend your church, defend your bride! Strike this fallen world, O living Word of God. Strike our enemies with your sword of the Spirit. Destroy all the cosmic powers over this present darkness, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Destroy the schemes of the devil, the tempter who has led us astray from Adam until now. Stand upon the earth in this evil day, with your helmet and shield and breastplate, in the strength of your might. Stand firm for us, for we are weak, and apart from you we cannot stand. Come, mighty Savior, having fastened on the belt of truth, come keep us firm in your gospel of peace. Extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. Put him to flight forever. Cast him into the lake of fire, so that he can never tempt us again with his lies.

And speak, just as you spoke at Cana in Galilee, where you made the water into wine. Speak, and bring about the joyous day of your wedding. Take your bride the church, so we may feast and drink with you forever. Make it a far better wedding even than the wedding day of Adam and Eve, your great marriage feast in the new heavens and new earth.

And speak, as you also spoke a second time at Cana, when you said to the official, "Go; your son will live." At that very instant, your word did not return to you empty, but accomplished the purpose for which you sent it. Though the boy was at the brink of death, at that moment he recovered his life and lived. Speak to us like that, and give us faith to believe your mighty words. Speak, to forgive our sins. Command the dead to rise, that all who are dying in their sins might stand once more.

And give us faith, faith like that official who came to you, who believed your word and went his way, trusting your good promise. Give us faith to trust all your promises, to believe your word, to not lose heart. Lift up our heads, for our redemption is drawing near. Make us trust that your day is very soon, when you will speak, and all these things will be accomplished, and we will rise with all the dead in new and perfect bodies, to inherit with all the saints the new heavens and the new earth, to dwell in your perfect love forever. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.