

“Holy Mystery”; Genesis 1 & Matthew 28:16-20; May 18, 2008; Albany UMC

In the past three weeks, we heard many terrible news:

Last Monday’s earthquake in China: tens of thousands of homes were destroyed and thousands of people are dead and we don’t know how many more are still under the rubble.

The tornadoes in the Midwest states: we get this all the time and are not even surprised any more.

How about the Cyclone victims in Burma: it happened two weeks ago and we know hundreds of thousands of people lost their homes and lives. But we do not feel the magnitude of this disaster because we do not see with our own eyes.

Last week, someone sent me some gruesome pictures of those victims; I just couldn’t believe it; literally countless dead bodies are scattered here and there on the beach. I just couldn’t believe and I didn’t know what to say! It is just terrible!

My question to you is how do we explain all these things? Why did all these things happen almost all at the same time? What do we do?

Some TV evangelists may say, “Well, these are the signs of the end-time” while other people point to global warming as a reason.

But for me I just don’t know what to say; I am just having difficulties figuring out what all this means; I am at a loss.

But it is not just these natural disasters that make us feel miserable. There are more man-made disasters like wars, violence, oppression around us that we get to hear in our daily lives.

Whatever causes they may be, one thing is clear to me: life is filled with enough bad and sad news.

So our question is “Where is hope?” Where is good news? Where should we turn to hear a life-giving, uplifting story?

Is there such thing as hope in the world? Honestly, this is the kind of feeling I bring to you today.

According to the church calendar, today is called Trinity Sunday. And the text we are given is Genesis one.

By the way, many preachers do not preach on this text, especially on the whole chapter. We just heard the long, long story of creation from this chapter. Some of you may have wondered why we read these long passages.

In fact, I had the same question “Why this whole chapter?” We know what this story is about; it is the creation story; God made heaven and earth; God made man and woman; God made trees and animals. It is an old, old, story. So what about it?

Does it have any good news for us here and now? What does this text have to do with all the things going on now? Anything to do with earthquakes, tornadoes, and cyclones? How do we make connections here?

While I was reading, however, there is one verse that caught my attention. Verse 2 says “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep”(NASV). Ok, God created the heavens and the earth; that is verse one. But the earth God just created was formless; it did not have a form; this means it did not have structure; that means it was in chaos.

The reason it was in chaos was it was dark. There was no light; without light you don't know what it looks like.

I remember about 40 years ago, back in Korea when I was growing up; we did not have electricity in my rural village. We had lamps that used oil; but you wouldn't believe how simple life was. No TV; no stove; no refrigerator; whenever night time came, we just went to sleep; very simple.

But sometimes we went out to play at night. And if it happened to be one of those nights when there was no moon light, you would be in huge trouble. Literally, it was dark. You could not see. It was as if you were blind. I remember that I was trying to find my way home in the darkness; I bumped into trees and rocks.

Nowadays, light is all over, day and night. No matter where you go in the world, it will be difficult to find a place without electricity.

But we have more problems; we have more darkness in the world. It doesn't matter whether it is in California or Korea or China.

I know many people are going through tough times because of natural disasters. My heart really goes out to them. Somehow we should raise some money for them as a church.

But what I am concerned about is this: there are many more people here and there who are walking in the darkest valleys in their lives. They may live in a nice house; they may not have to worry about a thing in their lives.

But they do not have the light, the real light, the light that shines in their souls. This light does not come from the Pacific Gas and Electricity Company. It comes from God, the creator of heaven and earth.

We call this light the grace of God; we call this light the Holy Spirit; we call this light Jesus; and this morning, we call this light Trinity—God the father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit—they

seem to have three different names but they are one and the same. There is just one God.

The scripture says this God is sovereign. He has power. He has the light. We need this light to get over all the darkness in our hearts.

We think things will make us happy. But it is this light, the light from God that makes us who we should be.

Life is always complicated; life is hard; there are always challenges.

No matter how good of a person you are, there is always darkness in your heart that tries to control your life. No matter where we go and no matter what kind of life situation we are in, being rich or poor, it is always easy for us to follow the path of darkness. I don't know why; I am talking from my personal experience!

Boy! It is hard to stay on the sunny side of your life! I know God wants us to be happy and positive and worry-free all the time. But you know how hard it is to be like that all the time! There is always another human being within yourself that you don't like!

We need this light, the light from God. The text today says when the earth was in chaos and darkness was over the surface of it, there was the Word which says, "Let there be light." And there was light and the light was good.

The light was not only good but it also made God happy.

We all want to be happy. We all love God and we want God to be happy with us too. But we know who we are.

Tornadoes, earthquakes, cyclones are tough ones for us to deal with. But we have bigger enemies within us; that is this power of darkness. We know light and darkness are not friends; they cannot be together. When there is light, the darkness has to go away.

According to scholars, the Genesis story was written when the people of Israel were going through their toughest time in history. It was during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC when they were in the Babylonian exile

The problem for those oppressed people was that many Babylonian gods seemed to control the future.

Their enemies had defeated them; the power of darkness had controlled them; and the Jewish people were feeling decidedly hopeless.

In answer to this dilemma, the book of Genesis was written, not to make a scientific claim about how the world was made, but to make a confession of faith about why it was made.

The point is this: God still moved over the dark waters of life, brooding over it and seeking to bring forth life for them.

God is alive; He was alive when there was no light in the beginning of creation; He is alive now when we think there is no light in our lives.

So, church, seek the light; call upon Him and come boldly before Him and ask for help.

He will not only answer to your call. He will make your lives alive and bright.

Thanks be to God. Amen.