

Order of Worship for May 31, 2026 (Trinity Sunday)

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: “Holy, Holy, Holy”- Hymn #507

Confession and Forgiveness

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: In that name, and with that faith--as dear children approaching a loving parent, as sinners redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, as believers filled with the Holy Spirit--let us confess our sins to almighty God.

C: **Let us seek forgiveness.**

P: Most merciful God,

C: **we have been unworthy and disobedient children. We have ignored our Father's admonitions, disregarded our Savior's instructions, grieved the Holy Spirit. We are not worthy to be called children of God. But we beg You--of Your fatherly compassion, by Your saving merits, at Your inviting call--to have mercy on us and grant us Your forgiveness.**

P: God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit that they may be children of God. Rejoice in the Lord; your sins are forgiven--in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Service of the Word

Athanasian Creed: 1-12 page 319

Prayer of the Day:

P: Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever

C: **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise: “All Glory Be to God on High” – Hymn #947

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 1:1-2:4

R: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

R: Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, . . . “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning Him,

“I saw the Lord always before Me, for He is at My right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore My heart was glad, and My tongue rejoiced; My flesh also will dwell in hope. For You will not abandon My soul to Hades, or let Your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to Me the paths of life; You will make Me full of gladness with Your presence.’

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew 28th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Athanasian Creed:13-26 page 320

Children’s Message

Sermon Hymn: “*The Lord, My God, Be Praised*” – **Hymn #794**

Sermon: “*What Kind of God?*” – **Genesis 1:1-2:4**

Despite the hype surrounding the decline of religion and the rise of the “nones”, those who don’t claim any religious affiliation, the United States remains one of the world’s most religious nations. In fact, one recent survey found that 90% of Americans believe in God—a rare consensus in American life. Even so, just because there is a belief in a god doesn’t mean that there is belief in the same god.

A few weeks ago, a gathering was held in Washington DC called Rededicate 250. Rededicate 250 ran for over eight hours Washington’s National Mall. Billed by organizers as a “National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise and Thanksgiving,” it included worship songs, appearances by religious leaders, and speeches by members of the Trump administration.

The problem with that kind of gathering, though, is the question of who they were worshipping. With the wide variety of Christian and non-Christian clergy and laity participating, there were many different conceptions of god, of which god they were praying to or talking about. We run into that with other aspects of civil religion, of wondering which god it is we’re thinking of when we put “In God we trust” on our money or say “one nation, under God,” in the Pledge of Allegiance.

That’s why it’s important to know what kind of God we worship. What God has revealed about Himself to us. How God relates to us. That’s why it’s important to celebrate this day that focuses on a doctrine, not an event. Instead of focusing on something Jesus did, we focus today on who God is. Today is the day we celebrate Trinity Sunday, when we remember the Triune nature of God. And at first, that can seem like a strange thing to celebrate. A doctrine that

describes a God that we cannot understand, a God who is Three in One and One in Three, who is Three Persons yet One God, seems unapproachable and incomprehensible.

Our first lesson from Genesis 1-2 tells us a few things about God. First of all, it tells us that God created everything. As we say in the creed, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.” As good Lutherans, we ask, “what does this mean?”

We often focus on what it means that God created everything in contrast to those who use merely natural or scientific explanations for how we and everything else got here. But it means more than that. The explanation in the Small Catechism of the First article of the Creed reminds us of that. “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.” God made everything, and keeps everything going.

Yet when we look at God as creator, we see God continuing to be active in the world. God continues to make the rain fall and the crops grow, even if we can explain scientifically how some of that works. God who created and sustains all things. Not impersonal processes. Not just about what happened in the beginning but what happens now.

Why does this matter? Some of the Founding Fathers on the United States were Deists, who would have no problem believing that God created everything. But they believed in more of a watchmaker god, one who made everything, set everything in motion, and then stepped back and didn't get involved.

The first reading also points to the Trinity, the plurality of our One God, the Three-in-One and One-in-Three appears in the Bible going all the way back to creation: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...’” (Gen. 1:26). On the Sixth Day of creation, God did not say, “Let me make humanity in my image.” No, he said, “Let us make humanity in our image...” (plural, not singular!).

This is of course incomprehensible, confusing, beyond our understanding. Thomas Jefferson thought so, and thought it was very problematic: “When we shall have done away with the incomprehensible jargon of the Trinitarian arithmetic, that three are one, and one is three; when we shall have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, and brought to view the very simple structure of Jesus; when, in short, we shall have unlearned everything which has been taught since His day, and got back to the pure and simple doctrines He inculcated, we shall then be truly and worthily His disciples.” Jefferson also famously went through the Gospels and cut out the miracles, leaving a Jesus who was merely a moral teacher, definitely not God in the flesh.

The last thing that the creation story tells us about God is that it shows God is the God of the whole world. In the ancient world, the understanding was often that gods were only in control of certain areas, either geographic areas, or of natural phenomena, such as storms or the sea or fertility. Zeus or Thor are the gods of lightning, Poseidon or Neptune are the gods of the sea. But if God made everything, He is in control of everything, everywhere, all at once, not just piecemeal.

We also know that God keeps His promises. This morning during the Adult Bible class we'll start looking at Sunday School lessons that we don't hear in church, and today we'll look at Balaam and his donkey. Balaam is a prophet who is paid by the Moabites to curse the Israelites as they're preparing to enter the Promised Land. But Balaam can't do that. God won't let him. God promised to bless His people, not curse them, and so Balaam can only give blessings, no matter how much he's been paid to curse them.

God is also a God beyond our understanding. We try to understand God by analogies. Perhaps most famous of all is the three leaf clover, which St. Patrick, the English missionary, used to explain the Trinity to the pagan peoples of ancient Ireland. The analogy goes like this... Just as there are three leaves and yet one clover, so also there are three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—yet only one God. We could also use the three phases of water, or the three parts of an apple, or any other number of things. The trouble with analogies for the Trinity is that all analogies eventually break down. If you press any analogy too far, you become a heretic. Even the Creeds can only get you so far. While the formulations captured in the Creeds are useful for refuting error in belief, the reality is that we are not meant to parse the Trinity; we are meant to praise the living God!

God is beyond our understanding. However, just saying a thing is so does not mean that we can understand it. Just because the Trinity is real does not mean that we will automatically comprehend him. In fact, that is why we have the three Ecumenical Creeds: The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds are the product of the Church's attempt to articulate the Christian faith in the Trinity over several centuries of controversy, confusion, and debate. You are probably used to saying the Apostles' Creed at Baptisms and the Nicene Creed at other times, along with the different explanations from the Small Catechism of the different parts that expand and enhance our understandings. Then once each year we trot out the Athanasian Creed and dust off that dense defense of Trinitarian faith, which has been paraphrased by someone this way: "The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible, and the Spirit is incomprehensible. The whole thing is incomprehensible!"

According to tradition, one day while Augustine was walking along the beach, lost in thought about the Trinity, he saw a child running back and forth with a seashell. The boy was scooping water from the ocean and pouring it into a small hole in the sand. Augustine asked, "What are you doing?" The child replied, "I'm trying to fit the ocean into this hole." At that moment, Augustine realized the futility of his own efforts: he had been trying to fit an infinite God into the limits of his finite mind.

Yet the Trinity reminds us that God comes near to us. God the Father is active in providing all that we need, sustaining creation. In Jesus, God became flesh, moved into the neighborhood, and faced all of the trials and temptations we do, yet remained without sin. Through the blood of Jesus, we have been made holy. Because Jesus is our great high priest, advocating for us with the Father, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence. We have been declared righteous before God. And the Holy Spirit, whose work we celebrated last Sunday, works in us to create faith, and enlighten us, and gather us together.

I may never be able to understand who or what the Trinity is or why he loves me. But I believe it. Moreover, it is that faith in the work of the Triune God, the faith which the Holy Spirit places in my heart, that will ultimately save me.

So, what kind of God do we have? We have a God who made everything and continues to keep everything going. We have a God who is beyond our understanding, but not beyond our faith and trust. We have a God who keeps his promises. We have a God who blesses us and is with us. That's a God worth trusting in.

Athanasian Creed: 27-40 page 320

Prayer of the Church:

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering Voluntary:

Service of the Sacrament

The Preface:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

P: It is truly right to give thanks to You almighty God, heavenly Father because You work in perfect union with Your Son, Christ Jesus, who You sent into this world to save us. And the Holy Spirit who proceeds from You and the Son to wake us from death in sin to new life in Christ. Therefore we join with all the company of heaven in giving praise to You.

Lord's Prayer:

The Words of our Lord:

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

Distribution: *"O Blessed, Holy Trinity"* – **Hymn #876**
 "Glory to God, We Give You Thanks and Praise" – **Hymn #946**

Prayer After Communion:

P: Almighty God, our Father, dwelling in majesty and mystery, renewing and filling creation by Your eternal Spirit, and revealing Your glory through Your Son, Jesus Christ, cleanse us from doubt and fear, and enable us to worship You, with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, living and ruling, now and forever

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “*Glory Be to God the Father*” – **Hymn #506**

Postlude: