

Jesu Juva

“As It Was in the Beginning, Is Now, and Will Be Forever”
Text: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Acts 2:14a, 22-36; Matthew 28:16-20

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

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God the Father, God the Son or God *the Word*, and God the Spirit, created. The Holy Trinity - three divine persons but only one God, created. All active in bringing forth from nothing, *ex nihilo*, all that is.

But in the beginning, ***the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.*** Without form and void, or *tohu wabohu*, is how the Hebrew goes. *Tohu wabohu* - without form and void, wild and wooly, null and void, chaos, without order. And dark.

But then into this darkness and chaos, God brings light and life. Not by letting this *tohu wabohu* and darkness gradually evolve over millions of years into a well-ordered universe, but by speaking. Or preaching, perhaps we could say. God preaches order and order happens, according to His good and gracious will, according to His careful and purposeful plan. No accidents here, but gift. The gift of creation from God to you.

And it was good. After God is done with it, no more *tohu wabohu* and darkness. ***God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*** Perfect. All in total harmony with each other and with God. Exactly as planned. The planets and stars and universes, the land and the water, the plants and birds and fish, the creatures of every kind, and finally man. Good.

But as you look around in our world today, in your life today, do you see *good*? Or do you see *tohu wabohu* and darkness?

Oh it's not one or the other is it? There is still good in our world today, because of the mercy of God. But also much that is not good, because of our sin. I don't need to go through the usual litany of all the problems in our world today - the tragedies and terror, the hatred and division - you know it well. And the news casts are happy to remind us and report it to us every night.

But since it's Father's Day weekend, let's just pick on that as an example. The *tohu wabohu* in our families, where fathers fail to care and children fail to honor, serve and obey, love and cherish. The *tohu wabohu* of men fathering children but then not being fathers to them. The *tohu wabohu* of abuse and abandonment. The *tohu wabohu* of rebellion and grudges and thanklessness for the gift of family God has given us.

For *in the beginning*, God created that too - *family*. He didn't just create a million human beings all at the same time to populate the earth, though He could have. Easily. Just as easily as He created everything else. Instead, He created families. In the beginning a man and a woman, to have children, to *be fruitful and multiply*, to love and care and teach in the image of God.

But how far, far away that sometimes seems these days. How far, far away God sometimes seems these days. And how much *tohu wabohu* and darkness.

For that's what sin is: *tohu wabohu* and darkness. Not that God created sin in the beginning. To borrow a phrase from St. Paul: *By no means!* But the sin that has infected us and our world, and satan, the author of it, seeks to disorder God's good order and *tohu wabohu* creation again. Plunge us into darkness again. That we not ascend with God in faith, but descend into division, despair, and death, and finally into the *tohu wabohu* and darkness that is the unordered chaos of hell.

And perhaps there was no greater darkness and disorder than when creation killed its Creator. When man, created to love, instead in hatred silenced the Word of God made flesh in death. *Tohu wabohu*.

But just as *in the beginning* God brought light and life out of the *tohu wabohu* and darkness, so here too. For *this Jesus*, Peter preached as we heard in Acts, the Creator who was crucified and killed, was *delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God*. Or in other words, no accidents here either! Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, descended into the depths of our darkness and *tohu wabohu* to bring light into the darkness and order out of the chaos again. A re-creation. A *new* creation. To dethrone the *tohu wabohu* and darkness that has falsely claimed the rule of this world and the rule of our lives, and make these *enemies* of God *His footstool*.

And that was accomplished, Peter says, *because Jesus rose from the dead*. *Of that we are all witnesses*, he says. Eye witnesses. Legal testimony of this great reversal. That in Jesus, sin and death and grave are toppled, the trending *tohu wabohu* is stopped, and light shines in the darkness. Which is to say, in Jesus, everything is good again.

So, Peter says, *let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified*. Know *for certain* - no doubt or question - that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the true God who has accomplished such a great salvation. He is the **LORD**, the bearer of the divine name, and the **Christ**, the Saviour of the world.

And now . . . now this *tohu wabohu*-ordering, darkness-enlightening, death-defeating, sin-forgiving, grave-popping Saviour says: *this is for you*. *Go and make disciples of all*

nations. Or: go and give *my good* to all the world. You - go into the *tohu wabohu* and order it, go into the darkness and enlighten it. By baptizing, by preaching, by teaching, by forgiving. All that I have done, you give. And ***I am with you always***. You won't be alone. ***I am with you always, to the end of the age***.

You know those words of Matthew by their common name, *the Great Commission*. And most of the time they're preached as what you now, as a Christian, have to do. And I'll get to that . . . *kind of*. But realize and remember this first: that first *this is for you; that before you do the Great Commission, the Great Commission did you*. Jesus has come to you in your tohu wabohu and stopped it. For you are baptized. You are a child of God. You are forgiven. You are raised to a new and re-created life in Christ. You have been given the Spirit. **You!** You who have not only an earthly father but a heavenly Father. You who are sons of God in the Son of God. You who have not the spirit of this world but the Spirit of God. You who have this triune God with you always. That the *tohu wabohu* and darkness of this world and life not drag you down to hell, but instead you be raised to the throne of God in Jesus.

That's for you. All God's doing, just as in the beginning when God made all things out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. So He has given you this new life out of nothing in you. All His gift. All for you.

And *now* you do it too, this Great Commission. (I told you I'd get to that!) And it's really very simple. Too often I think we think of this as such a really BIG thing, with programs and organization and manuals, and so it becomes just a "church thing." And it is - baptizing and preaching and teaching and *evangelism* and all that! But it's not just that. It's little too. Personal. And while again I could go through the usual litany of all the places, all the vocations, all the stations in life where you bring Christ and His forgiveness in little ways and by so doing order the *tohu wabohu* and enlighten the darkness, let's just pick on Father's Day as an example again.

I'll start with the kids . . . and when I say kids I don't just mean under the age of eighteen. *I'm* still a son, even though I haven't seen eighteen in the rear view mirror for quite some time! Kids, forgive you parents when they mess up, 'cause they do, a lot! And obey them, even if you think what they said is stupid! Maybe it was. But don't add to the *tohu wabohu*, don't make the darkness deeper. Bring Jesus and His light and forgiveness into your family and to your parents.

And Dads, parents, forgive you kids when they mess up, 'cause they do, a lot! And teach them, even if it's, like, for the thousandth time! Sometimes it takes us that many times, too. Bring them to be baptized, like little Grace this morning, and celebrate their baptismal birthday every year, and help them to remember it every day. When they were made a child of their heavenly Father. And give them the Word. Pray with them. Pray for

them. Shine the light of Christ into your family, that He (as the old prayer says) *order our days and our deeds in His peace*. Order our *tohu wabohu* and give us peace.

And then eat together. I don't mean at home - though that's good and important. Eat together *here*, the Body and Blood of your Saviour. I don't get to do it very often, but to stand side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, with your kids, with your parents, with all your brothers and sisters in Christ here in this place, and receive the forgiveness, life, and salvation of Jesus here, together . . . there's nothing better than that. Together in Christ. Together against the darkness. Together in the midst of this world's *tohu wabohu*. And leaving restored, renewed, and refreshed in Christ, and taking Christ back out into the chaos and darkness, into your families and wherever you go, that He continue to break it in His order and peace. What a blessing you are then to them, and they to you. What a gift, from God to you.

And so that little phrase we sing so often in the liturgy is true. We sang it again this morning in the Introit: *as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever*. **In the beginning** God created and brought order and light into the *tohu wabohu* and darkness. **Is now** for God is still bringing order and light into the *tohu wabohu* and darkness of sin and death through His Word and Sacraments, His mercy and forgiveness; through His Church, through you. **And will be forever** when our Lord comes again in glory to take us to that place where *tohu wabohu* and darkness will never be again, where all is good and right and light again, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, where God, *your* God - the Father most holy, merciful and tender, the Son our Saviour, with the Father reigning, and the Holy Spirit of comfort, advocate, defender (LSB #504 v.1), *lives and reigns, one God, now and forever*.

Let us give glory to him because he has shown this mercy to us.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.