

The lectionary for the next nine weeks pulls its Old Testament readings from the book of Genesis. Seeing that the word Genesis means origins or beginnings, and we here at St. Paul's are beginning a new season, it would be fitting to spend the next nine weeks taking a closer look at this book. The book of Genesis is the first of five books in the Old Testament, known as the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is not only the beginning of the Bible, but is the foundation of the entire Bible, as well as the cornerstone of the Christian story. Traditionally the book of Genesis has been attributed to the authorship of Moses. Over the past hundred years there has been much debate about this claim, as some have argued that there were several authors that contributed to the book. Whether it was one author, or several, it doesn't change the message that God is trying to speak to His people. It is important that as we look at Scripture to remember that its content was written for an intended audience at a given time in a given place; but the message and principles being communicated, go beyond the confines of time and space. It is hard work trying to read and interpret Scripture, but it is something we must constantly be doing. The Holy Word of God is our "how to manual;" it shows us the plan that God has for each of us; how to behave in given situations and in our lives; but most importantly, it is a love story...a love story about the God who creates; the God who existed before existence itself; the God who, out of His grace and mercy, created humanity in His image; who then turned their backs on the One who created them, until God sent His only son into the world, to redeem fallen humanity, and to allow them to find the glory that it had always been intended to achieve. And this love story ends with the people of God, you and I, working together to usher in the Kingdom of God, when all of creation is restored and perfected into what God had always wanted it to be. In creation the master artist has drawn in pen the outlines of the sketch, and the rest of time has been the filling in of colors. And the end product is the most pretty, breathtaking and awe inspiring piece of art ever produced. Isn't that an amazing idea? That we are God's craftsmanship, God's artwork, God's love recipients. Our reading from Genesis this morning tells us, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth." In the beginning, this means that before there existed time, there was God. Time is a way in which we measure motions, actions and change. We can say that at one moment x is x , but at the very next moment in time it is no longer like x , but rather a different type of x . The minute we are born, the aging process has already begun. Each passing second, means a change in our lives. An ancient Greek philosopher once said, "You can't step into the same stream of water twice." The truth is, we can't step into the same stream of water once. We can't because in time everything changes. Not one atom, not one neutron, stays the same. There is consistent motion in the world, and in each of us. For the author of Genesis to state, "In the beginning," means that there was a time when time did not exist, and before time existed, and the only thing that existed was God. We can't even really state that God was, because the "to be verb" was, is a marker of relation of time, thus it indicates a time that has already past. God was, is and always will be, just...GOD! God is eternal. Because creation, is just that, a creation, means at some point there was nothing, and now there is something. This indicates a change which only can occur within the realm of time. Don't try to think about this too hard, your head will in fact EXPLODE! St. Augustine in his confessions puts it this way: "See, heaven and earth exist, they cry aloud that they are made, for they suffer change and variation. But in anything which is not made and yet is, there is nothing which previously was not present. The manner of

our existence shows that we are made. For before we came to be, we did not exist to be able to make ourselves” We did not create ourselves. Whether someone believes in a literal creation, or rather a form of intelligent design and evolution, what one must recognize is that humans had nothing to do with creating themselves. Only One being, who is outside the confines of time and is unable to be created, namely God, is able to be an unmoved mover. There is nothing that caused God to exist, because God is pure existence. I know this can be difficult to wrap our heads around, but it is of the utmost important, from the very beginning of the Christian story, that we recognize who God is, and who we are in relation to God. How we read the first verse in the bible, will have consequences in everything else we do. If God is anything other than what the bible teaches, than God is not God, but rather something else. The label alone, God, means there is nothing greater which can be conceived than it. Now, we could think about this for the rest of the day, and be no closer to understanding the essence of God. But what this understanding does do, is helps us to understand the rest of the bible. It even helps us to understand the next portion of our reading this morning, and it aides us in understanding a bit better the Trinity. I can’t tell you how many times I have heard preachers complain about having to speak on Trinity Sunday. I find that really troubling. I agree that the Trinity is a divine mystery, and this has led us to make really bad analogies on how to understand it. I think my favorite one is that the trinity is like an egg; you can have it scrambled, over easy, or hard boiled; three different ways, but yet, the same egg. With our understanding of the eternal nature of God, we can better understand the trinity, so we don’t have eat bacon with our doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the trinity is never explicitly stated in scripture, but the principle can be found throughout. In our reading this morning, we heard God state, “Let US create them in OUR image.” Now unless God has a mouse in His pocket, He must be referring to someone else. Tradition holds that from the very beginning of the bible, the trinity is present in creation. This is very important, as we will see in a moment. The way the Trinity has traditionally been understood, is the formula of One God, in Three persons. The three persons are the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit, but yet One God. For times sake I am not going to go through the details of this formula, but I am debating to offer a class on the trinity sometime in the future, if that is of interest. The Trinity functions relationally, and it does so as love as its driving force. The father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are in relationship with one another, so much so, that they are ONE. The best way I can put it, is that when something terrible happens to a child, even though the parent didn’t physically experience it, they still fill the pain. There are two different persons experiencing the same pain, but yet the experience has happened to only one person. Unfortunately, even this analogy can break down, but I hope you get the point. So, when God states, let us create humans in our image, this means that you and I, our created to be relational beings, centered on love, just as the Trinity is relational in love. This is why the bible states, that an injury to one member of the body, is an injury to the whole body. When someone in our parish, is undergoing pain or persecution, or is at the receiving end of maliciousness from another parishioner, it is an injury to the rest of us. Anytime I say something bad about a parishioner, I might as well have said it to each and everyone of you! Being created in the image of the Trinity, means that we have an imprint of the very nature of God on each of us. Its like taking a cooking stamp, and pressing it into the dough so that the stamps imprint is able to be deciphered. God has put His imprint on each of us. Just as with the cookie, we are not the

stamp, but we have the mark of the stamp on our nature. Because this is true, whenever we hurt each-other, God is hurt, and God feels it too. When we do something good for one another, God takes pride and joy. And this imprint, is not just on us Christians, but rather on all of humanity. When we read in the New Testament that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, its because we acknowledge the image of God in them. So I ask you this today; is there someone whom you have not treated as if they have been created in the image of God? Has someone treated you, like you don't have God's divine stamp on your being? Or maybe, there is someone who God has put on your heart to help, or spend some time with them because they are going through a rough time. I want to encourage each of us to seek those people out and serve them. If you have been offended or have offended someone through gossip, or insensitivity as I have done on many occasions, make peace with them. When we do this, we acknowledge the image of God in one another, and in turn,we will begin to appear to the rest of the world as distinct relatives of our heavenly father. Amen.