

## **“Repaired, Renewed, and Redeemed”**

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As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Minister: Holy wisdom, holy word.

People: Thanks be to God.

## **Repaired, Renewed, and Redeemed**

We live in a world where so much is broken. A couple of weeks ago, Saturday Night Live’s cold open was entitled “What still works?” and it featured Kate McKinnon as host of a talk show interviewing various individuals, asking the questions “does the government still work?”; “does the stock market still work?”; “does social media still work?”; and more. Amidst all the jokes and the reminder that Tom Brady does still work, the answers to those questions seemed to consistently be, “No, that doesn’t still work.” Or at least, it doesn’t work in the way that it should, or that we expect it to, or that we want it to. There is so much that needs repair. AND among all those things that need repair, so do we. AND we need so much more than to be repaired, we need also to be renewed and redeemed. We NEED a revival. Please pray with me:

O Lord, our everlasting God, you Created the ends of the Earth and yet are not faint or weary. Please be with us this morning, giving us power, renewing our strength through this word, healing us through the message Jesus proclaimed throughout Galilee and the message with us here today. Amen.

Our Isaiah text this morning opened with questions about God’s sovereignty. “Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?” This tongue-in-cheek way to talk about the greatness of God pokes fun at our humanity. Because of course we have heard the message of God’s glory time and time again. Of course, we SHOULD know the great I Am. But do we really understand from the foundations of the Earth? I suppose I can only speak for myself here, but I don’t think so.

That being said, we do know that Jesus is there with God at the Creation, from the foundations of the Earth. That means that the sovereignty and glory of God written about in our Isaiah text describes Jesus as much as it describes God the Father. In the beginning God the Father and God the Son created the heavens and the earth. God made light and saw that the light was good.

Jonathan Williams writes that “God made the stars, which bring light because they’re dying. They are flaming balls of gas that come from dying planets and bodies. God says it’s tov. It’s good.” From the very beginning of existence, temporariness, the brokenness of human life, is good.

He writes that “God creates seed-bearing plants that grow and produce more seed-bearing plants. They must give up seeds in order for there to be new life. Plants innately sacrifice parts of themselves for new growth and life. For a seed to create new life, it has to be buried. For new plants to grow, there has to be death. God says this is tov. This is good.” And this is the image in Isaiah of our earthly rules. They are scarcely planted. But the holy, God’s chosen people, are planted, so they can take root.

And certainly, our lesson today from Mark highlights these same themes. Jesus plays the role of everlasting God who isn’t faint or weary was there at the creation. But Jesus is also human. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. Jesus was probably exhausted, physically and spiritually. He was protecting his human self from being burnt out.

And certainly, we all understand that. If we think about ourselves as candles, here in Fairfield Ct we probably are all burning at both ends. I think of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s poem, “My candle burns at both ends, it will not last the night, but ah my friends and oh my foes, it gives a lovely light.”

Kelsey Patel’s book “Burning Bright” reminds us that our minds will always have us believing that we just need to do a few more things, or maybe even just one more thing, to finally be happy, at peace, healthy, successful, worthy, and joyful. BUT Patel tells us that we don’t need to step outside ourselves to reach happiness. We need to follow the path that leads us inside ourselves. Just as you are right now, you can start burning bright.

But to burn bright, we need to be repaired. So first, a story of repair. Walt Anderson, in his story “Much Ado About Some Loose Screws” purchases a “beast” of a mower from clearance at his local sears in 2003. He writes that he “I enjoyed about 3 months of mowing bliss, with powerful operation and easy starts. Then I started noticing that it was harder and harder to start when hot. That seemed strange since my experience with mowers says that COLD starting is the usual problem. I tried all the easy things like a new air filter and spark plug, to no avail. I did notice that the old plug was noticeably cleaner than others I have removed and didn’t think too much of it. This later turned out to be an important clue that I overlooked. Turns out these low-emission mowers are a bit fussy about air/fuel mix. See *Morals*, below.” Two of his morals are about checking bolts and screws, and about gas engines. But the third moral is that plastic manifolds are no substitute for real aluminum. Likewise, time with God to connect with our internal spark is no substitute for anything external.

Indeed, we know that there is a spark inside of ourselves, and we must journey inward to find the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. Only through prayer and meditation can we discover this spark of divinity that is directly invited into the trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit's divine community. But Jesus' own humanity, and his actions in our scripture today show us that our broken human selves are so valuable too. The miracle we read about in Mark today is also found in Matthew and Luke's account of the gospel. John Calvin hypothesizes that this is not because it was a more remarkable miracle, but that it is Christ giving to his disciples a private and familiar illustration of his grace. This example of grace is relational it is Simon's mother-in-law who is healed, in Simon and Andrew's own house. This is significant because it shows the way that we, as broken humans, are personally invited into the glory of Christ's grace.

When we think about our trinity then, we know that Jesus' miracle there is a glimpse into the original community of the trinity that existed before creation. It is only because of God's essential essence as a trinity that we can be saved, that we can be repaired and renewed. Because we are only repaired and renewed together, because communities inherently invite in new members, and because we are invited into that community to experience God's love and redemption.

Our second story is one of renewal then, as renewal of community leads to experience of God's love and redemption. While not without its issues, the 2017 film, *All Saints* is a great example of community renewal and redemption. Based on a true story, John Corbett plays an Episcopal pastor of a small church in Tennessee. The church is dying and only has a few elderly members, and the diocese has ordered him to close the church. However, the church experiences renewal as refugees from Myanmar begin attending, having worshipped with Anglican missionaries before being forced out of their country. Through creativity and out of the box thinking, the refugees use the land the congregation has to start a farm, help themselves, and ultimately teach redemption to their pastor.

At yesterday's meeting of the Presbytery of Southern New England, Rev. Shannon Vance Ocampo prayed a reminder to us, "You are our God, and you are our God of love, so we lean on you when times are good and when times are hard. We never suffer alone for we are together and are united. "

And this is a reminder for all of us, beyond just a prayer to our God. Our God is a trinity, a community of love, and we are constantly invited into that community, as ourselves. Our divinity, that divine burning spark within us, the whole spirit in ourselves is invited into that community. But just as much, our humanity is invited into that community. In the same way that Jesus' humanness is as important as his divinity, our broken selves, our burnt-out selves, our jealous selves are invited into that community of love to be repaired, but also to be renewed and to be redeemed. When we look at the table, the table at which we are about to partake of communion, we are reminded of that community of love. When we take of the bread and drink of the cup, the elements indwell in ourselves, doing that work of revival. Jesus is with us, Jesus loves us, Jesus redeems us. This table is our revival.

I will leave you with a few quotes about revival to meditate over during communion.

From Robert Coleman, "Revival is that sovereign work of God in which He visits His own people, restoring and releasing them into the fullness of His blessing. "

From CH Spurgeon, "A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or day-dawn without light. "

And from JO Sanders' Enjoying Intimacy with God, "in almost every case the beginning of new blessing is a new revelation of the character of God--more beautiful, more wonderful, more precious."

Thus, understanding the trinity in this way is our revival, because it is a new revelation about God in a more beautiful, more wonderful, and more precious way.

Amen.