

Sermon Title: All that is in-between
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, May 31, 2026

Prelude

Welcome —> to St. Giles Presbyterian Church

We are a caring community of faith in the heart of the Glebe.

We seek to share Christ's vision for the world and responds
 in a Christ-like manner to the present-day challenges
 of our society and world

—> Paul Wu, minister, worship leader

—> Bible study of 1 Samuel has concluded last Friday
 a model of leadership that trust wholeheartedly in God

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
 And lean not on your own understanding;
 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
 And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Call to Worship

One: Holy are you, Source and Creator of all things;

All: We praise you for your gift of life.

One: Holy are you, Son and Redeemer of all things;

All: We thank you for your gift of new life.

One: Holy are you, Spirit and Sustainer of all things;

**All: We worship you in holiness,
 Ever Three and Ever One.**

Hymn 435 All things bright and beautiful

Children's Story —> Matthew 28:16-20

The Great Commission: "make disciples of all the nations"

disciples —> a student, someone who learns

apostles —> is one who is sent out

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Prayer of Adoration

Holy God, you are Three in One and One in Three.
Praise to you, Source of life, maker of Heaven and Earth,
who created us in your image and called us good.
Praise to you, Jesus Christ, born in our flesh
to teach us how to love and offer us grace and mercy.
Praise to you, Holy Spirit, for the energy you bring us
to greet each day as a gift.
Holy God, Three in One and One in Three,
we praise you for your mystery and mercy.
Reveal to us how to live as your people
and witness to your wonder and grace.

Unison Prayer of Confession

**God of mystery and mercy,
you know the details of our lives.
You see the sin and the sorrow we bear;
you see the problems and the possibilities we face.
You see how we fit into the world around us
and how we rub each other the wrong way.
We confess we do not always see what you see.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory, forever. Amen**

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Assurance of Pardon

The Apostle Paul teaches us that if anyone is in Christ,
there is a new creation.

Everything old has passed away;
everything has become new!

Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start
through God's gift of forgiveness and peace! **Amen.**

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Scripture

First Reading Genesis 1:1-23

—> first of the two creation accounts,
how God created and brought order to chaos

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then 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 a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the sky 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. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. 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 dome of the sky 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 dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the

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two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon 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 bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 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.

Psalm 8 (with refrain ?)

Second Reading Genesis 1:24-2:3

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree

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with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air 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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, 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 their multitude. On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord
People: **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn 305 God, who stretched

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Sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

There has been this nagging feeling of mine,
of something not quite right in the creation account of Genesis,
of something missing—a whole lot of missing
in the biblical text.

Let me take you through one and see if you agree with me.

We read, on the first day of creation,
“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.”
(Genesis 1:3-5)

Do you see what I mean by ‘something missing’?
Whatever happened to midday,
or for that matters, whatever happened to dusk, or dawn
or all that is in-between?
Did God forget to create those?

I rather like dawn,
when the first ray of light breaks forth through the night,
even before the Sun rises from the eastern horizon,
the light of dawn emanates.

It has this surreal, almost magical quality,
like a painter gazing at a blank canvas,
the light of dawn paints the morning sky,
steadily, methodically, and always far too quickly.

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Before you know it, the Day arrives,
and the light of day overtakes the night.

I could swear dawn exists,
I've seen it with my own eyes, a number of times
when I was able to get up early enough.

Dusk is far more common of a sight, given my daily schedule.
Less spectacular and far longer of an experience
that is part of the daily lives for most of us.

Did God not create them? Of course God did,
so why were they not mentioned in the creation account?

And it gets worse, on the second day,
God separated the water above from water below.
I take that as figurative,
pointing to clouds in the sky and water in the ocean.

What then happened to all the water in-between?
The vaporous mist that creeps into our midst
when weather conditions somehow align.
I don't know all the science of it,
but do know they are made up of H₂O,
floating somewhere in-between.
Did God not create them?

One can apply such a line of questioning with equal vigour
to all the missing elements in the Creation account,
of rivers, lakes, marshes, planets, stars,
and amphibious creatures?

Elements absent from the biblical text
are undeniably present in the world
and integral to God's creation.

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Why then did the author of Genesis fail to mention any of them?

Now some of you are undoubtedly wagging your finger,
 shaking your head, thinking: Pastor, you are getting it all wrong!
 You can't read the biblical text so literally.

Just because these in-between elements aren't specifically mentioned,
 they are nevertheless implied.

More importantly, their place in the created world
 is no less important than those
 that are specifically mentioned.

Day, Night, dawn, noon, afternoon, dusk, and evening
 are all part of God's good created order—
 they are equally important to God, and to us.

If that is indeed the case, why then when we get to v.27 of Genesis 1,
 "So God created humans in his image,
 in the image of God he created them;
 male and female he created them."

We, or more accurately, some would insist that
 only male sex and female sex were created by God,
 and absolutely nothing in-between.

The case for all that is in-between is not that hard to make.

Merism is the formal name for a common figure of speech,
 where a whole concept or totality is expressed
 by combining two or more contrasting parts,
 or polar extremes.

For example, when we say 'searching high and low for something',
 we do not mean to search only the high and only the low,
 but we mean to say we search everywhere.

The two polar extremes are meant to convey
 the totality, the entire spectrum.

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Same thing happens when we say ‘ladies and gentlemen’,
 we do not mean to address only
 the proper ladies and upstanding gentlemen,
 but to address everyone. Everyone!

That’s merism (spells m-e-r-i-s-m, you can look it up yourself).

The use of merism is also quite prevalent in the Scripture,
 as a literary device.

Other than those I’ve already mentioned,
 there are also ‘the heavens and the earth’,
 ‘the Alpha and the Omega’, ‘far and near’,
 ‘great and small’, ‘rich and poor’,
 ‘good and evil’.

In none of these sayings do biblical writers
 meant to convey only the polar extremes.

In none of these sayings do interpreters and commentators
 insists they only point to the two opposite ends
 and nothing in-between.

Why then have we been told to read ‘male and female’
 as the two exclusive sex that God had created,
 and whatever in-between were somehow
 abnormal, deformed, and not pleasing to God?

Now this sermon is not meant to drag all of you
 into the ongoing debate on human sexuality,
 which the Presbyterian Church in Canada has been
 engaged in for the better part of my adult life.

The decision of our denomination a few years back
 to adopt a dual parallel track of doctrinal understanding
 hasn’t quieted the debate.

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It essentially permits all ministers, congregations and presbyteries
to pick and choose their own theology, either
a traditional conservative approach on human sexuality,
or a progressive, inclusive approach.

I think the idea is to ‘pick your own doctrine and let’s just all get along’.
It’s the getting along part that is still being worked out.

I for one would call myself a centrist, currently,
as my theology has evolved overtime.
I am not hardcore, married to either side—
a position that pleases no one.

If you are at all curious of my personal take,
I would be happy to talk to you more after the service.

All that is to say I came to this idea of merism only very recently,
through the article in the June 2025 issue
of the Christian Century magazine,
titled “In the Bible, gender is not binary”,
authored by Julie Faith Parker,

She is a biblical scholar in residence at Marble Collegiate Church
and a visiting scholar at Union Theological Seminary.

The idea of merism is not new, but new to me
(and I don’t know how I could’ve missed it in the years past),
and the effect of reading the article is like
a light bulb going off in my head, of a shadow dissipating,
the long line of traditional interpretative weight lifted,
that when God created humankind,
male and female God created,

It does not mean only exclusively male and exclusively female,
but the inclusive all that is in-between.
Now that’s is worth rejoicing and celebrating.

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Perhaps, just perhaps,
and I don't want to make light of the effect of sin,
of fallen humanity that is still core to the Reformed doctrine;
nor do I want to make light of the difference
between biological reality and social construct.

But hear me out,
perhaps there is a place in the creation story for 'in-betweeners'
(yes I am making up words as I go, but you get my drift).

The in-betweeners as in lesbian, gay, bisexual,
transgender, queer, intersex,
asexual, Two-Spirits, and plus, as representing
all other marginalized sexual orientations,
gender identities, and variations
that are not explicitly stated.

Perhaps, in God's created and re-created order,
there is a place for all of you, for all of us.
Perhaps, it is in such rich variety and diversity
that is truly *Imago Dei*, the image of God.

That, in itself, is worth celebrating.

Most of all, let us not forget to celebrate
the centrality and supremacy of Christ Jesus,
as the Apostle Paul proclaims so elegantly
in Colossians 1:15-16,

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible.”

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And jumping a bit to verse 19-20,

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself
all things, whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross.”

On this Trinity Sunday, when Christians around the world
celebrate the Triune God,
of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I note, this term ‘trinity’ is not explicated stated in the Scripture,
but a secondary theological construct,
a doctrinal understanding that emerged in the early Church,
that the early Church had to seriously wrestle and grapple.

Through a protracted, contentious and sometimes even violent process,
the Church finally arrived at a brilliantly open and inclusive doctrine
of One God, Three Persons, but of the same substance.
I think the Greek term for that is *homoousios*.

I know some of my colleagues loath to preach on the trinity,
for it gets into the nitty gritty world of metaphysical Greek.
The key point that I want to make is this:

Perhaps, just perhaps, if we are open
to the Spirit of God speaking to us,
softening our hearts and our theological positions,
we may yet find unity through all that is in-between,
not just for the sake of unity onto itself,
but a true unity in Christ Jesus,
who is worthy of our thanksgiving
and eternal praise.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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Prayers of the People

(based on ancient liturgies of the church
that mark celebrations of the Trinity)

Holy God, whose glory is beyond compare;
whose mercy is boundless, and love for us is endless;
look upon us now in your compassion.

We pray for peace that calms our hearts,
that quiets our minds and soothes our souls,
and for peace in the whole world and throughout creation:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for the stability of the church
and the unity of this congregation,
for the ministries of your church around the world
in challenging and difficult times:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for this country, our leaders,
and all those in public service,
particularly those serving this neighbourhood of The Glebe.
We pray for Shawn Menard, councillor of the city of Ottawa.
We pray for Catherine McKenney, MPP of the province of Ontario.
We pray for Yasir Naqvi, MP of the government of Canada.
And we pray for our Prime Minister Mark Carney,
and for all who offer themselves in service for the common good:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for your creation in its beauty and bounty,
for the wellbeing of every creature and their habitats,
for a willingness to change our ways
to protect places and people at risk,
and for generations yet unborn that they too may thrive:
Hear our prayer.

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We pray for the safety of those who must travel
by land, sea, and air,
and for all those who are separated from those they love:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, the suffering, and the isolated,
for victims of violence in their homes and in their nations,
for refugees and people held as captives:
Hear our prayer.

To you, Holy God, Creator, Christ and Spirit,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
belongs all glory, honour, and worship,
now and forever, and to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

Hymn 335 Give us, O God, the grace to see
 (tune of Maryton, #642)

Passing of the Peace

Announcements

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Offering (invitation)

Trinity Sunday proclaims the outpouring of love within God's own being,
for God's very nature is love.

May our gifts offer an outpouring of our love for God
and our willingness to put that love into action.

Doxology (Hymn 830)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

Prayer of Dedication

God of overflowing love, receive our gifts
as signs of our love and commitment to live for you.
Bless our gifts and our lives,
that they may accomplish more than we can ask or imagine,
as we follow Jesus, equipped by the Spirit,
to serve you God, your people, and your kingdom. **Amen**

Hymn 338 Let all things now living

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all. **Amen.**

Postlude