

Later, Isaiah records the words of the Guardian who says, "*Who has measured the waters in the hollow of [God's] hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?*" (40:12). It seems that not only is God the Guardian, but God created everything that is now guarded.

Moreover, Isaiah says of the Guardian, "*All the nations are as nothing before [God]; they are accounted by [God] as less than nothing and emptiness. To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with [God]?"* (40:17-18). Then he lays it on even thicker: "*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? It is [God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing"* (40:21-23). God the Guardian is both the Creator and the Ruler of the Galaxy.

Jesus the Guardian redeems the Galaxy from sin and death. God is not only the Guardian of the galaxy, but God has a special place in the divine heart for humankind, making us in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). In Proverbs 8:31, we learn that God rejoices in the inhabited world and delights in the humankind. And John 3:16, perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible, remind us that "*God so loved the world, that God gave an only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*"

Isaiah will go on to speak of a Suffering Servant (vv. 52:13-53:12) who offers himself for the sins of others. This Servant would be "*wounded for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities; upon him [is] the punishment that [makes] us whole, and by his bruises we are healed"* (v. 52:5-6). This Servant of God is himself sinless, but out of his great love for the world he endures the terrors of the world to show the world God's will and way. This Servant, who exhibits God's deep love for the world, is killed because the world cannot understand such love.

Who is this Servant? Christians believe it to be Jesus, the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, who came to earth to redeem creation when it strayed from God. What's more, Isaiah says, "*It was the will of the LORD to crush him with*

pain" (v. 52:10). God chose to send God's Self in the person of Jesus Christ to suffer and die for the sins of the world. One man died that all people might live free from sin.

But we know this is not the end of the story. If Jesus died for us, but failed to rise again, then we would be free from sin for a time, but not excused forever. Human beings make mistakes. They do bad things. They sin. The clean slate offered us by Jesus' death on the cross is not complete without the promise of new life that comes with the resurrection. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ who lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

Our sins are forgiven by the death of Jesus, but our guilt is redeemed by the resurrection to new life. This is why Isaiah sees an angel fly to him with a hot coal and touch his lips to purify him, saying "Now...your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out" (v. 7). Isaiah's life is urged of its sin and redeemed for God's use; his lips are cleansed and made ready to speak God's word to God's people. Through Christ's death and resurrection our sins are forgiven, and our lives repurposed.

The Holy Spirit Guardian repurposes our life for God's mission to the world. It is the Holy Spirit of God, the Third Person of the Trinity, who comes to us and repurposes our life. There was a store in town, Repurposed Inspirations, that took old things and gave them new life and purpose. Tires became planters. Spent horseshoes turned into a wall cross. Old furniture received new paint and meaning. Old buttons and beads and bottlecaps used to brighten worn out items. Sadly, the store is now closed, but what a wonderful idea to make old things new again! God's dream is to take tired and sinful people and make them energetic and purposeful again. Through Isaiah, God tells God's people: "*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"* (vv. 43:18-19).

God's "new thing" is nothing less than the redemption of the world. God's plan and purpose is to reclaim the earth and return it to the way God designed it to be in the beginning. And that new thing that God is doing is made possible by the Holy Spirit of God whom Jesus promised to send to us.

God comes to us in the Holy Spirit and makes us part of God's family, sealing us to the covenant promise of new and eternal life, in baptism (Romans 6:3). We receive "new birth" into this repurposed life by the Spirit (John 3:5-8). The Spirit is our Advocate (John 14:26), our Intercessor (Romans 8:26-27), our Comforter (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Cor. 13:14), and our Guide (John 16:13). The Spirit gives us wisdom and knowledge about God (1 Cor. 2:10-11), and the Spirit gives us gifts – spiritual gifts, gifts of the Spirit - to aid us in our work for God's Kingdom (1 Cor. 12:4). The Spirit is the power of God at work in and through us to the world.

In our text, Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord asking: "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?*" The prophet responds, "*Here am I: send me!*" (v. 8). When Isaiah answers God's call, God commissions him to speak to God's people. God, the Guardian of the Galaxy, did not need Isaiah's help. God, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, has more than enough power and wisdom to accomplish what must be done. And yet, God invited Isaiah, as God invites us, to be part of what God is doing in and for the world.

The God who is community, sends us out into the community. This Guardian of the entire Galaxy invites us to become guardians of our little corner of the galaxy. Trinity Sunday is a great time to reflect on who our God is and how we fit into God's plan and purpose for this world. The crown on the front of the bulletin represents God the Creator and Ruler of the Galaxy who is holy and just. The fish, an ancient symbol of faith and abundance, is Jesus Christ, the redeemer of souls, who lavishly offers us God's grace. The dove descending is the Holy Spirit, the Re-purposer of life, who comes to us not because we are worthy or special, but simply because we are loved. The Triune God who is One-in-Three and Three-in-One, is relational by nature and that divine community is ever-expanding (like the universe!) to include us and all of creation. Where might God be calling you to serve today?

Prayer: God our Father, our Creator, who made the heavens and earth, we are Your children, and we are in awe of all you have made. Christ the Son, our Redeemer and Savior, You lived and died for us all. You live again, and have prepared the way for us. Holy Spirit, the Sustainer, You move in us and among us. We follow Your wisdom and feel Your presence. God, Triune, Three-in-one, help us to know You more fully. Guide us in this life. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we ask this. Amen.

Guardian of the Galaxy

Trinity Sunday, May 27, 2018

Isaiah 6:1-8

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Guardians of the Galaxy is a movie franchise that first hit the screen in 2014. The second film appeared almost precisely a year ago (May 5, 2017), and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* is scheduled for release in 2020. In these films, based on Marvel comic characters, a team of quasi, semi-impressive superheroes bands together to be guardians of the galaxy. The team is led by Peter Quill (nickname Star Lord). Abducted by aliens as a child, Quill is raised by a group of alien thieves and smugglers known as the Ravagers. Joining Quill on the quest to save the galaxy are Gorn (a trained assassin), Drax the Destroyer (a warrior seeking revenge for the loss of his family), Rocket (a genetically modified raccoon bounty hunter and mercenary), and in the first movie, Groot (a tree-like creature) and in the second movie, Mantis (who has empathetic powers).

I recently watched the first *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie with my kids, and it made me think about the *real* Guardian of the galaxy. This Guardian is the ruler of everything, the ruler of innumerable universes filled with galaxies we cannot see, and is more powerful, awesome and wise than we can imagine.

Moreover, this Guardian is triune, existing in three forms, each being peculiar and unique and yet each possessing the powers of the other. In a word, this Guardian transcends everything we know or think we know about guardians. A trinity of powers; a unity of personality. In Isaiah's prophecy, we can clearly identify this Triune Guardian of the Galaxy: God, who is the Creator and Ruler of the Galaxy; Jesus Christ who redeems the galaxy from sin and death; and the Holy Spirit who comes to us and joins us to God's promise for the Galaxy.

God the Guardian is the Creator and Ruler of the Galaxy. The prophet claims the God of Israel to be the Guardian of the Galaxy, and he writes, "*I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of [God's] robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above [God]; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew*" (vv. 1-2). God is clearly the ruler of this Heavenly Kingdom and all the creatures show their respect and admiration for this holy Guardian of the Galaxy.