

**Trinity Sunday**  
**Love, Beauty, Rest**  
**Genesis 1:1-4a, 26-2:3, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13**  
**Rev. Joy Laughridge**  
**May 31, 2026**

My sermon title today is Love, Beauty, Rest. It's a trinity of words for us to think about on this Trinity Sunday. The words aren't meant to correspond with and represent the persons of the Trinity, but love, beauty, and rest certainly are realities that have their origin in and flow out of the Triune God and into our lives and the world. We can know, experience, and appreciate each one because God is who God is – existing in loving relationship as Father, Son, and Spirit – and it's love that compelled God to create the whole realm of nature and humankind so that we could be included in Divine love.

The Old Testament lectionary reading for this Trinity Sunday comes from Genesis 1 and 2, and I love returning to the creation accounts in Genesis because they help bring perspective to our lives. The creation accounts are meant to reveal things to us about the nature of God and ourselves, and they direct our attention back to essential truths that show us that love, beauty, and rest can be recovered when they go missing from our lives – and how easily they seem to go missing, don't they? Think for a moment about the ways that each- love, beauty, and rest- have a way of being diminished or disappearing from our lives.

Let's start with love. In our more connected than ever globe, people suffer from what the US Surgeon General described in 2023 as an "epidemic of loneliness." The presence of loneliness often makes love feel absent, but it's also strained and conflicted

relationships, or relationships that have been completely broken that can cause us to feel like love has gone missing from our lives.

And beauty. Yes, we live in a world that is filled with beautiful things- gorgeous sunsets, vibrant flowers, smiling and unique people- but too often we are preoccupied with other things and we fail to take it all in and enjoy it. We're too engrossed in our phones to look up, or too busy to "stop and smell the roses," or too lost in our worried thoughts to see the beauty around us. Even if we are looking, there is also a lot of ugliness in our world, and sometimes it can be louder and more noticeable, covering up the beauty like ugly graffiti plastered across a beautiful mural.

And rest. For some, rest might be the thing that seems to be in shortest supply. Since Virginia Catherine just graduated from high school, I've been reminiscing a lot about her younger years, and I think, "I wish I had done this or that," but what I remember is that I felt so tired all the time. At the time I felt too tired to do some of the things that now I wish I had done. The demands of work, and family, and other responsibilities are enough as is, but we attend to those demands from within our American culture that values hard work, productivity, and profits. We don't even have the luxury of living in a culture that builds siesta time into the day! Even when we have time that is supposedly for rest, many of us end up filling the rest time, not with work we get paid for, but the other work we have to do like laundry, grocery shopping, and mowing the lawn.

As you think about it right now, does it feel like love, beauty, or rest are in short-supply in your life? Do you long for more of any or all of these things?

If it does feel like you are missing love, beauty, or rest and you find yourself longing for them, it is important to hear and to know that

the desire for these things is *good*. The longing for these things is not a sign of weakness, or selfishness, or laziness. There are lies that we're told, or lies we tell ourselves, and sometimes we might believe them. They might sound like this. You don't deserve to be loved. You're not worthy of love. Giving attention to beauty is a waste of time. There is no time for rest. You can't afford to rest. You may hear things like that ringing in your head when you find yourself longing and discontent, but, again, part of the good news that is proclaimed to us today is that our discontent is not a sign of weakness or misguided desires. Instead, they are God-given desires. We long for love, we are drawn to beauty, and we crave rest because God made us for them and them for us. This is what we see in the creation story.

God creates humankind in God's image. The desire and the ability to love and be loved is built into us, as is the desire and ability to create and enjoy beautiful things. God made a world filled with colors, and sounds, and smells to be enjoyed, and we have the capacity to make things that fill the world with colors, and sounds, and smells. We can even create things that point to realities and truths beyond themselves. We long for rest, because again, God built the rhythm of rest into creation. On the seventh day God rested from God's creative work, and God has given us the gift of sabbath rest.

When we feel dissatisfied and discontent because we are missing love, beauty, and rest, it is not a sign that there is something wrong with us, but it is a sign of something. It is a sign that somehow, somewhere along the way, things have gotten out of order, and we have strayed away from God's good intentions and purposes for our lives, but the good news that is revealed in the creation story is that God created order out of disorder. There is an order and a design for life that allows us to flourish and experience what Jesus calls abundant life. It includes loving connection with God and caring for

and enjoying creation, and when we stray away from God's good way, which we all do, we can be restored to it.

God's beautiful and well-ordered world fell into a disordered and messy state as a consequence of human unwillingness to follow God's good pattern for our lives. Jesus came to rescue us from the mess and disorder that came into God's good world and into our lives, and he invites us to turn away from broken patterns and lies of this world – the lies that say we are unworthy of love or the lies that tell us our only purpose is production – and he extends this invitation to us. Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest...take my yoke upon you, for my burden is easy and my yoke is light. That is his invitation, and if we will accept that invitation, he is ready to give us what we need.

As wonderful as that sounds, I know it isn't always easy to accept that invitation because we are busy, or distracted, or overwhelmed by the disorder that has overtaken our lives, but sometimes when we struggle to turn to Jesus for the refreshment and renewal that we need, God has a way of graciously giving us opportunities and space that make it a little easier to get ourselves turned back around toward our loving Creator. One of the ways that God has done that for me is with the gift of my upcoming sabbatical leave which I know comes to me as a gift from God through all of you.

I am so thankful to all of you for believing in the importance of an extended time of rest like this. For me this is not just a long vacation. I truly see it as a sabbath rest, and there is something I read a few months ago that really puts words to what I think this time is for. I read it in a book the Session just finished reading together called *What if Jesus Was Serious About the Church?*

The author told the story of Colonel William Pogue who spent 84 days in space in 1974 with a team of astronauts on the Skylab space

station. Halfway through their time in space, Col. Pogue and the other astronauts requested an adjustment to their schedule so they could have more rest time. Col. Pogue said they had been overscheduled, but ground control was reluctant to give them rest time because the work was too important and time was limited. Col. Pogue insisted that they wanted more time for looking out the window at the spectacular view and thinking, and eventually they were allowed to have more rest time. Col. Pogue was so insistent because he said that having more time to look out the window at the sun and earth below also made him reflect more about himself, his crew, and their ‘human situation, instead of trying to operate like a machine.’” The author of the book said that like Col. Pogue and his crew, we need to set aside time from our work “to gaze out the capsule window and contemplate our lives and calling from a cosmic perspective.”<sup>1</sup>

I am so eager for the opportunity that this time will provide for me to spend unhurried time resting and recreating, pursuing and enjoying God’s love and the love of my family. I am grateful for all the ways I will be able to spend time “looking out the window” so that I can consider my life and our life together from God’s point of view, and as Skye Jethani said in his book, it will “prepare me to reenter the atmosphere of the ordinary with a renewed sense of meaning and communion with God.” My commitment to all of you as I take this time away is not that I will be *productive*, but that I will attempt to be present and attentive to the Spirit’s presence and work in and around me.

My sabbatical leave is one example of how God is graciously giving *me* an opportunity and space for accepting Jesus’s invitation to come to him and rest, but this week there is an opportunity and space that opens for all of you, too. This week *summer* begins. For students and teachers, the rhythm of life changes more dramatically

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<sup>1</sup> Skye Jethani, *What If Jesus Was Serious About the Church?* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2022), 136–37.

during the summer, but even for people who work all the time, or retired people who don't work anymore, there is usually some change to regular routines that summer brings. It's typically a season in which we find time for slowing down, rest, and reconnecting with friends and family through visits and vacations. You may not have days on end for rest and leisure this summer, but somewhere in these coming days, I trust that there will be chances for you to slow down and pay attention to the God who loves you and wants to be with you. There will be chances to pay attention to a beautiful sunset, or to feel the refreshing cool water in one of the Florida springs, maybe, or a chance to sit down and talk with God about your needs and longings. There may be time to eat lunch with a friend or have a 4<sup>th</sup> of July BBQ with extended family, and in those times the opportunity to love and be loved. I encourage you to embrace all of these things as your own chances to "look out the window" and ask and allow God to refresh and renew you, too.

Too often life can feel burdensome and overwhelming. Too often we feel harried and exhausted. Too often we feel disconnected from others, ourselves, and God. This is often our reality, but we are reminded today that this isn't what our Creator who loves us and gave us our lives wants our life to be like for us. Life, and the beauty of this world, the opportunity to share in God's fellowship of love are all extraordinary gifts and it's possible for us to enjoy all of them. Look for the moments, and the days, and the seasons that God graciously gives that hold the space and the opportunity for responding to Jesus's invitation to come to him and find rest. The Lord is our Shepherd. He makes us lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He refreshes our souls. Amen.