



SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE
in the City of New York
The Reverend Canon Carl F. Turner, Rector
www.SaintThomasChurch.org

Sunday, February 20, 2022
The Seventh Sunday After the Epiphany (Sexagesima)

Choral Evensong
4pm

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A Sermon by
The Rev. Prisca Lee-Pae, *Associate for Pan-Asian Ministry*
on
Genesis 1:1-2:3
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'Knowing Who I Am'

These days, dealing with my teenage son,
I realize how important it is to establish a right self-identity
and how difficult it is to do that.
"Birds struggle to hatch and come out."
In his novel *Damian*,
Hermann Hesse compared the pain of puberty to a bird emerging from an egg.
What kind of struggles and challenges have you faced
to discover and establish your self-identity?
I remember when my daughter was about 5 years old.
One day she asked me, "Why does God only have a son and no daughter?"
I was quite perplexed, but I pretended to be calm and said,
"Well, that's a good question. Let's think about why."
She thought for a moment and said, "Oh, I know why!"
And joyfully she said, "I am the daughter of God!"
It was a conversation six years ago, so she may have forgotten it,
but I cherish that moment as it was an astonishing answer from a little girl.
Could there be a better and truer confession of one's identity than that?

The Bible is, of course, a sacred book written by inspiration from God,
but it's a collection of texts of human thoughts written by humans in human language.
This book contains human interpretation of various problems in the world
and of the origin of all things in the world.
And the Bible is the confession of faith
that all of these things will be accomplished within the plan and will of God.
The Bible speaks of humans as beings created in the image of God.
Humans define their identity as beings resembling God.
Human beings see themselves as beings resembling the Creator
who created time and space, created the sky and the earth, and created all living things.
It is truly astounding that human beings, as creatures,
assert to have an identity that resembles that of their creator.
This claim would be impossible without the realization
that a human being has discovered divinity within oneself,

though this ideology is sometimes misunderstood and misused.

We know the history of Western civilization's misuse of the phrase,

“God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness:

and let them have dominion over all creatures,"

to justify the reckless development and destruction of the Earth's ecosystem.

But how did God create the lives entrusted to human to rule?

As we have heard from the 1st reading today,

heaven and earth and all life in this world were created by the word of God,

and looking at each creation, God saw that it was good.

God entrusted human beings to rule the creatures,

so humans who resemble God are given the power and authority to rule,

but more importantly, to take care of them with the Creator's love for the creatures,

which God said was very good in God's eyes.

And this, seeing all creations with God's love for life,

is how we live as beings who are created in God's image.

Considering that in the ancient Near East,

the king was often called the image of the deity and was vested with God's authority,

and Mesopotamian cosmologies ordinarily portrayed human beings as slaves,

it is clear that how to understand God is inextricably related with how we,

human beings see and define ourselves.

Even though the Hebrews had lived under slavery in Egypt

and wandered in the desert for long time,

they were able to have a self-identity resembling God

because they knew God, the source of all existence, as the God of love.

Knowing what kind of God who created me is fundamental to knowing who I am and how to live.

It is an important issue not just for adolescents who are contemplating and exploring their identity, but for all of us.

No matter how old we are, every day we need to realize and confirm

who we are and how we should live.

That is why we pray, read the Bible, and participate in this liturgy in the community of faith.

If we neglect the task of realizing and confirming that we are beings created by God's love

and beings created in God's image, it is easy to strive for the false self that the world is trying to instill in us.

This world constantly whispers us the illusion that what to eat, what to drink, and what to wear is so important to my identity.

This world whispers as if wearing Prada and carrying a Louis Vuitton bag makes me a better human being.

Those whispers invade our lives everywhere and any time,

and they can dominate our subconscious

and ultimately our way of thinking and living.

So, we need to actively seek out to sit still, even for just five minutes each day,

close our eyes and ears to the world and open them to God to see who we really are.

What we eat, drink, and wear has nothing to do with who we are.

We are beings who can focus on more precious things in life than worry about what to eat, drink, and wear.

We are beings who can seek the kingdom of God and God's righteousness.

We are beings made in the image of God.

We are beings able to discover divinity within us.

We are daughters and sons of God, whom God admire in God's sight.