In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear fellow forgiven sinners,

The Cherokee people tell a story about the creation of the world. In the beginning, everything in the lower realms was water. A little beetle looked down from the sky realm and wanted to see what was below the water, so he dove deep till he found the bottom. When he came up for air, the soft mud he brought back up with him spread out in every direction and became the world. A buzzard flew down from the sky realm to see if the mud had dried enough for the other animals to walk on, and when he swooped low, his wings scraped the mud and created deep valleys and high mountains. The first animals to settle there were told to stay awake for seven days straight; only owl and panther were able to, and they were rewarded with the ability to see at night.

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.** There’s something striking when you read through God’s account of the way he brought everything into existence. He talks about forming the seas and causing plants to spring out of the earth; you read about the waters teeming with fish and birds flying in the sky. But even at first read, it’s not hard to tell that *none of this is really the point.* God doesn’t start the Bible with Genesis 1 to explain what made the mountains so tall or how the zebra got his spots. It walks us through an amazing day-by-day work of creation that God did by the power of his voice, and then when he gets to Day Six he lets us know: *I did all of this for mankind. I wanted you to have a perfect world.* If you read Genesis and just get a sense of God’s power, we miss something; it’s about how much he loves us and wanted to give us the gift of a perfect world. And then as creation is almost complete, Moses records something amazing for us. It’s the Triune God having a conversation with himself. As his creation was almost complete, Father, Son and Holy Spirit decided within themselves, **Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.** That doesn’t mean that we looked like God looks on the outside – God is *spirit.* He’s invisible. It means the crown of this perfect world God was creating was meant to be perfect people. He gave man a heart that was like God’s heart. A heart that only loved good – not evil. A heart that only sought to help others, not help itself. A heart that would *never* have reason to feel guilty or ashamed. Not pretty good or kinda nice, but holy, just like God. And when he records that for us, he cries out across the ages, *This is where you came from!* No wonder he called it *very good.* Perfect!

We’ve come a long way, haven’t we? You don’t have to look long to see that we don’t live in a perfect world anymore. That first man and first woman sinned, and it didn’t just affect them; everything changed. The rains and rivers that once watered the garden now sometimes wipe thousands of acres of farmland off the map. The winds that used to provide cool in the evening can rip houses off their foundations. But whenever God talks about the effect of sin on this world, it’s not hard to tell that *none of this is really the point.* Because as terrible as all those things are and as much pain as they cause, there is no flood that can destroy a home as quickly as a father who’s being unfaithful, or a mother who cares only about herself. And as dangerous as a tornado is, it doesn’t do anywhere near the damage as someone who’s willing to hurt anyone to get what they want. When you read Genesis, it’s easy to see that this world isn’t what God created it to be. Do you see the same thing when you look at your own heart? God created us to know that we’re loved and to love one another, but sometimes even people who know and confess that truth still live like we’ve forgotten who we are and what we were made to be. Father, forgive us for forgetting where we come from, the love you have for us, and the love you’ve created us to show.

So this is what he did. The Triune God – the Father who created the world, the Son through whom it was made, the Spirit who once hovered over the surface of the deep – didn’t walk away in disgust. He walked in. At the will of the Father, the Holy Spirit came to the Virgin Mary, and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The Bible calls him a Second Adam – a new chance. And Jesus, this Second Adam – he *remembered* where he came from. In an imperfect world, he lived a perfect life. He suffered all the pains of this world while showing a heavenly love – not to teach us what to do or how to do it, but because we couldn’t, and we hadn’t. And when he died on the cross, God did something amazing: he looked at you and me, and he
said something that hadn’t been said since creation: Very good. Perfect. Instead of seeing us as sinful children of the first Adam, he sees us as holy brothers of the second Adam. God counts Jesus’ perfection as yours, even though you still live here for now, God says, Now your real home is with me again.

Remember that. Remember it. Because God doesn’t take us to heaven the moment we come to faith and he doesn’t erase all the problems in this world. Instead, he says that people who know where we come from and what our home really is have a bit more travelling to do yet. So Jesus tells us, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” You know where you’ve come from, but there’s a world of people who don’t, who think that their lives are random at best, who have neither purpose nor hope. You know the perfect love of a God that mankind had lost, and you know what he’s done to bring us back, so go. Go to the places you work and the places you live, and tell them about where they came from, and how God came for them. Tell them about a Father who loves them, a Son who died for them, and a Spirit who will give them new birth.

I know, sometimes we’re better at talking about sharing that message than actually doing it. And when you walk out these doors, there are all kinds of fears that you can have that make those discussions hard. Will they listen? Will they believe? Will I mess it up? What will they think of me? But as you go, remember where you came from: you have the promise of a Savior who will always be with you to wash away your failings and your fears. Remember that you’ve come from hearing about the love of Father, Son and Spirit, and then go in his love.