

Creation's Blessing

Genesis 1

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June 23, 2013

Over the past one hundred years, there has been a lot of discussion about the truth of the first chapter of Genesis. Some argue that it is absolutely true. Others argue that it is a myth that needs to be dismissed. Still others say it's a nice piece of poetry and a compelling way of explaining life, but the writer was an ancient soul and not informed with the knowledge of modern science. While all of these perspectives create good conversation, it seems to me that they miss the point. Genesis 1 is a powerful witness to the remarkable mystery of the blessing of God with us. It is this perspective that I would like us to open our hearts to today.

I love this text. It is, for me, a prayerful, glorious, spectacular witness of God's love and God's gift of life. From the very first words, it is compelling. "In the beginning God is" "With those opening words, the reader is drawn into a drama depicting the beginning of creation. We are swept into the power of a formless void. We encounter the wind of God sweeping over the deep. There is light and darkness; day and night; water and sky; dry land that is called earth; and waters that are gathered into seas. There are seeds that yield plants and trees bearing fruit. There are seasons of the year and a dome in the sky that gives light to the earth. Wow! If every story had this much drama, our children would choose to read, rather than play video games!

A key element to the drama of creation is the way God blesses each day. There is a lovely rhythm to it: "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day." The rhythm of the unfolding of creation centers on the movement from evening to morning. And God saw that it was good! God loves this. God blesses it. God breathes life into it.

As a part of God's creation, we are invited to immerse ourselves in this blessing and delight in it. We are invited to fall into the rhythm of blessing and let it mold our lives. We are invited to become a part of this scripture and breathe with it.

It is interesting to note that the rhythm of the blessing of the creation story is opposite from our concept of the day. While we see the beginning of the day with the morning, scripture frames it with the evening. "There was evening and there was morning, the first day." Evening is a mysterious time of day. It is gentle and quiet. There is often a stillness about it that is hushed. Even after a windy day by the water, there seems to be a calm at sunset. It is no wonder that our ancestors gathered to pray at this time of day for evening song or hymn sing. It is a time to watch for the Holy - a time of blessing.

Every now and then, I get to go to a beach that faces the sunset. It has become a tradition for Bob and me to walk down to the beach about one-half an hour before sunset. By then, the beach is almost empty. The crowds from the day have packed up and gone

home. There are a few people out for evening jogs or strolls on the beach, but, in general, we are alone. It is a quiet time. There is no reason to talk. We soak in the cool evening breeze. We watch the birds dive for dinner and we stare at the sun as it sets on the horizon. Sometimes, the sky is completely clear and the sun gets larger and deeper orange, almost red, as it falls behind the rotating earth. Other days, there are too many hazy clouds in the sky to see a good sunset, or there is rain off on the horizon blocking our view. And then there are evenings when the clouds create a reflecting ground for the sun. This is a spectacular event ó nature's light show. As the sun moves through the clouds and the angle changes, its rays break through, illuminating the sky and the waters with all kinds of designs and vistas. Every fraction of a second changes the angle of the light. Just when I think I've seen the most glorious moment, another arrives. It is breathtaking. Beautiful. Glorious. Mystical.

This same kind of blessing happens each morning. Dawn is a mysterious time. There is a tenderness to the beginning of the day that is ancient and holy. It is as though it speaks to us saying: "Be still and listen. Watch and see the gift of fresh living bless you with life."

A few years ago, Bob and I were vacationing on Squam Lake in New Hampshire. I started going there with my family when I was a young child, and we return almost every summer for at least a few days. One morning in mid August, I woke up before dawn to the calling of a loon. It was so close that I decided to get up and walk down to the dock to see if I could photograph it. The gray dawn was very still. There was a thick mist covering the lake, so it was hard to see. I could only hear the gentle lapping of the waves against the rocks, the call of the loon as it floated near me, the rustle of the leaves in the trees as they whispered the movement of the wind. I sat on the dock and waited. Gradually, the light of day began to bless the lake. Gradually, I could make out the movement of the mist moving over the waters. And then, I could see the loon gracefully moving along the top of the still waters, gliding through the mist and calling out the blessing of the new day.

As people of faith, we are invited to open our hearts to the blessing of the rhythm of God's creation. We are called to fall in love with it. We are called to be in awe of it and to treasure it.

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the crew of Apollo 8 sent a video message to earth. They were circling the moon, preparing to land. The pictures showed that as they circled in the void of darkness, they approached a lunar sunrise. Witnessing this sunrise and experiencing the wonder of space was so moving to the crew that they decided to send a Christmas message to "all the good people on earth." Then, through a crackling recording, we hear, one at a time, the voices of the three astronauts read a section of the opening of Genesis 1: "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth í ö

When they finished with this moving reading of scripture, Neil Armstrong finished the message by saying: "God bless all of you ó all of you on this good earth."

This is what our scripture is saying this morning. Through creation, God blesses all of us. God blesses our lives and the lives of all living things. God blesses us with the rhythm of the evening and the morning. God blesses us in our work and in our play. God blesses us in our listening and in our conversation, in our loving and in our caring.

May God bless all of us and may our hearts be open to receive the gift of Holy Creation.
Amen.

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