

## **A Community of Love; Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Trinity A**

### **Second Presbyterian Church**

**M. Evelyn Graham**

**June 4, 2023**

**Theme: God desired our relationship and created a Community of Love which is interdependent on each of us giving ourselves away to others.**

Our reading today comes from Genesis which means “beginning.” Before creation a formless void existed, utter nothingness. From this nothing, this void, God created not just something, but something wonderful. For us, the creation story begs us to ask the following questions: What can this story teach us about God? What do we learn about God’s creation? And finally, what do we learn that God requires of us?

The sermon for today is broken down into three sections addressing these three questions regarding God, creation, and humanity. As each section is read, listen for what the Spirit is saying to the church today.

#### **GENESIS 1:1-19**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ <sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.’

And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

### **Sermon (Part 1):**

Today is the day we celebrate the Trinity: God as three persons, Father/Mother, Son, and Spirit. As I referred to the Trinity two weeks ago, no one can really understand the Trinity, but we can think of the three persons of the Trinity as if they were moving together. Almost like a dance with one another, simultaneous movement working together for the greater good. Three, yet one. One, yet three.

Genesis tells us, “In the beginning” was God and “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” (v. 2) Have you ever wondered why God created this world in the first place? Weren’t things less complicated for God before our creation? When I think about relationships, each relationship I have brings complications into my life; however, those same relationships bring me immense joy as well. Maybe God was looking for such joy, a relationship in which to share the beauty, complexity, and mystery of all God created.

Perhaps God desired relationship outside of God’s self to share in the joy of creation. The mystery that we call God could not be complete without relationship. God doesn’t need us to be God, but I believe God wanted us. I believe God desired relationship, community, love, adoration so much that God was willing to take a chance on a relationship with us. A relational God who wanted nothing less than a Community of Love.

### **Genesis 1:20-26**

20 And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ <sup>23</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every

kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

### **Sermon (Part 2):**

According to scholars the Hebrew creation story, found in these first few verses of Genesis, is not the first creation story. Many civilizations wrote their own version of creation. In fact, many scholars believe the Hebrew creation story is probably copied in part from The Enuma Elish, a Mesopotamian creation myth, dating to before 1100 BCE. Much like the Mesopotamian version, our story of Genesis is designed to help the Hebrew people to explain their existence and their differences from other surrounding cultures. One big difference between these two creation stories, the Hebrew God Yahweh creates a world out of goodness and love, rather than violence and coercion, as found in the Enuma Elish.

Our God created a world of layers and interdependence. The sky and the dry land depend on the light of day and the darkness of night, just as the plants depend on the water and the sun for growth. The tides of the sea depend on the moon and the night, just as the sun depends on the earth to orbit the sun. The birds depend on the sky for flight, just as the fish depend on the sea for their nourishment. Each part of creation has its own job to do, and each unique part of creation shows the utter complexity of the God who created it.

Meanwhile, our God, who cannot be understood, claims one word for it all: good. God saw that God’s creation was good, each and every part of it. Each day God builds creation, and God always calls it good.

Genesis 1:27-2:4a

<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in God’s image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female God created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ <sup>29</sup> God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant

for food.’ And it was so. <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>2</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished the work that God had done, and God rested on the seventh day from all the work that God had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that God had done in creation.

### **Sermon (Part 3):**

Finally, God creates humans, the crown jewel in God’s gift of creation! On this final day of creation, God not only refers to humans as good, but God also calls this day of creation very good.

Sometimes I wonder if God would like to go back and change that last act of creation after what has transpired in our history, from backstabbing and global warming to nuclear war and genetic engineering. God created humans then turned all of creation over to us to manage, saying, *I have given you everything...everything that I call very good.* We have been given every plant, every tree, every beast, and every bird. We have been given dominion over every living thing. We have been given the greatest responsibility of anything in all of God’s creation.

Humans, however, were not just one more thing created by God. God created humans “in God’s image.” (v. 27) What does it mean to be made in the image of God? On one hand, it means we are co-creators with God. We have the ability to create life and beauty and so much more. Secondly, we have been given knowledge that other creatures do not have: the ability to know our own mortality, the ability to reason and understand, and the ability to know right from wrong.

But there is still something else that makes us unique in all God’s creation.

Last week we spoke about Jesus giving his disciples peace then breathing the Holy Spirit upon them as he sent them out to serve. We each have this Spirit, God’s Spirit within us. We have a small part of God within us, if you will. We are not God, but we are blessed with a piece of God’s Spirit to sustain and give us courage to serve and build our inter-connected community. Richard Rohr says it like this:

God has been trying through all of history to give away God.  
Jesus shows us that the gift is free and totally available, as  
available as our breath. It seems that God has a hard time giving  
away God, however, because most of us aren’t interested. We’re  
interested in other things: money and power and success and

good looks and politics. It takes a long time to get around to the one thing we were created for.<sup>1</sup>

And what is that one thing? Maybe God wants us to give away pieces of ourselves to others. Think about it. If I gave away a piece of myself to you, then I am forever connected to you just I am always connected to God. Just as God has given us a piece of God's self, when we give one another ourselves, we create bonds of love, care, and compassion. Once given, these bonds form relationships which form our very selves. A loaf of bread. A hospital visit. A kind word. Even shared trauma creates such a connection.

What can the creation story teach us about God? Our loving God desired relationship so much, that God took a chance on relationship with us. What can we learn about God's creation? Nothing works alone in creation. Everything is dependent upon everything else. What does God require of humans in particular? As people created in the image of God, we are relational in nature. We have been given the responsibility to extend the standard of care given from God. Taking a chance on relationship with others by giving away pieces of ourselves. God must smile when God sees these connections when we give ourselves away. Certainly, God calls it very good. May it be so!

Thanks be to God our Creator, Christ our sibling, and the Holy Spirit who lives and moves and has its being within each of us every day. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Rohr, "The Holy Spirit: As Close as Our Breath," 5/28/23 from Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations blog, <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/as-close-as-our-breath-2023-05-28/> accessed 6/3/23.