

08 Sept. 13  
Genesis 1:1--2:4a

### “Good”

There are a lot of different ways to interpret Scripture. And when I say “interpret Scripture,” let me be clear that the chief, maybe the only, thing that matters in the end is what we hear God saying to us, how we hear God addressing our real lives, what we hear God calling us to do or to be. Everything else is a mental exercise. Now, don’t get me wrong, I *am* an academic guy. I’m really quite proud of my graduate degree in New Testament. I love my academic books. Each time I move them I try to cull a few out. And that is a painful process for me. So I do value knowing *about* the Bible. Knowing about the Bible is good and useful. But it’s still a mind exercise, and until I hear God addressing *me* in the Scriptures, I haven’t really heard the Scriptures, and I really haven’t done anything to move my relationship with God forward, and I haven’t done anything that will make a real difference in my life.

Still, nothing wrong with faith seeking understanding. That’s a good thing. So, one of the ways to interpret Scripture is to notice the form of the passage we’re looking at. And what I noticed this week that I don’t think I’ve ever noticed before is that Genesis chapter one is a litany. It’s a responsive reading meant for worship. That’s why we read it the way we did. In a litany the refrains are perhaps the most important parts. And the refrains in this litany are: “And it was evening and it was morning, the first, second, third, etc. day,” and “God saw that it was good.” So we end with, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

It was good. It *is* good. The world may be fallen, but it is still good. *Your* life is good. One of our participants at Wednesday’s Theology on Tap for men asked if the Christian faith was all about getting ready for the next life or if it was also about this life and how to live it. My immediate response was that it is about both. I didn’t even have to think about how to answer that one. Read the sermon on the mount. It’s about how to live well by living a worry-free life. Or read Genesis one. God’s Creation, this life given to us by God is good. Or just listen TO Garrison Keillor, good Lutheran that he has become.

The goodness in mind here in Genesis one is not perfection. It’s not trouble free. Goodness here is about a balanced relationship: light/darkness, air/land/sea, male/female. Balance, harmony, relationship. It’s like the Jewish word for peace, shalom, which is more about being in a balanced, life-enhancing relationship than it is about not being at war.

Part of the goodness of our creation is that we are created in the image of God. Which means . . . well, that’s debated. Some think it has to do with the ability to speak. God creates in Genesis one by speaking. We, too speak, and are in relationship with our creating God. So some think image of God is about being in relationship with God, and some think it’s about being able to create. By the way, nowhere in the Bible is it said that we lost the image of God in the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Literally, the word image means a visual duplicate. That really doesn't make sense since God doesn't have hands, feet, a head, etc., although we sometimes speak that way. Maybe what Genesis one has in mind is the command to make no graven images. We are forbidden to make any idols, any statues, of God in any shape or form. So, the only image of God that the Bible allows is . . . other people. Hmm, kind of makes you look at other people differently, doesn't it. That annoying person ahead of you in line, cutting you off on US50, sitting next to you right now is created in the image of God. And so are you.

I think being created in the image of God also has something to do with being fruitful and multiplying and being given the stewardship of this part of the Creation of God. If we are made in God's image, we are made to have dominion, lordship, stewardship the same way that God exercises them. How is God's dominion played out in Genesis one? Not by destroying or ravishing but by creating, enhancing, and blessing.

In this litany which is Genesis chapter one I get the sense that God, being God, cannot but create. That's how it was in the beginning. In the beginning (yes, the Orioles could use a few big innings), in the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things that are created are created through him. This Word of God has become flesh and blood so that we might see the glory of God.. Not in the image of the man Jesus (no one knows what he looks like either), but in life, in people being restored to health and to relationships, in feeding, in raising to life again, is rising to life again himself. For god so love the world.

So I think our sermon challenge this week is to spend time each day living out this image of God in which we are created.