

Devotions – September 17-23, 2017

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Sunday, September 17, 2017

Genesis 1:1-5 – Light and Dark

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 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. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Isn't it befitting that our Creation Story starts with darkness and light? It is after all, a reoccurring theme throughout our Bible. “The Lord is my light and my salvation-whom shall I fear (Psalm 27:1),” “The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. (John 1:5)” and Jesus says, “I am the light of the world (John 8:12).”

While Genesis is talking about the natural rhythm of creation, the way that God makes evening and morning, Jesus in John 8:12 is talking about the light and darkness that plays out in our world. The darkness is the destructive or toxic things: the relationships we have that are unhealthy, the violence we witness in our world, all these things that seek not to build up and nurture life but to destroy it. Meanwhile, Jesus, the light of the world, is for life. He stands for what is beautiful and sacred. He stands for what builds up and sustains. The reminder throughout our Bible is that we are the people of Light, Christ's adopted brothers and sisters, and that means we are for life. We stand for the things in the world that build up and create. To be the Light in the world can be hard at times but at other times it can be very simple; a smile at someone in the grocery store, a kind word into a tense space. Just like evening and morning the world is full of darkness and light and we as people of God seek to continually live into that space of Light both for ourselves and for our world.



Monday, September 18, 2017

Genesis 1:6-8 – The Water

And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 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. God called the dome sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Isn't it befitting that water comes next? We have the balance of light and dark and now we have water that will sustain all things. Living in the Great Lakes region we sometimes forget how precious water is because we are surrounded by it. Water is what sustains all of creation including humanity. I would imagine that the people who lived in Jesus' region during his time were more aware of the importance of water than we sometimes are. They lived in the desert and spent huge portions of their time hauling water back to their houses from town wells. When Christ is talking to the Samaritan woman at the well he says; "but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life (John 4:14)." And so we live thankful for two types of water; the water that sustains our bodies and the water of baptism that sustains our souls.



Tuesday, September 19, 2017

Genesis 1: 9-13 - Plants

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. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 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. 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. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

God was busy on this day. He created earth and immediately life sprung up. When I drive through my little Wisconsin town in the summer there is vegetation everywhere. Black-eyed Susan, Queen Anne's Lace, and Wood Violets dot the road side. Great White and Red Pines mix with Oak and Maple. It is a constant reminder to me that God will provide for us if we allow him to. The earth is plentiful and God lives with open hands.



Wednesday, September 20, 2017

Genesis 1:14-19 – The Cosmo's

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, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

I am from a small remote place in Northern Minnesota and I remember many nights standing on the lake ice looking up at more stars than I could possibly imagine. This is something so many of us do. The stars are spell-binding. They remind us of the enormity of the world. Sometimes I find great comfort in them realizing how small I am in comparison. Whatever I do, both the good things and the massive mistakes, will eventually be forgotten in this world which has survived eons. The stars also remind me of God. Despite our love of the Creator and respect for God there is definitely this otherness that I am reminded of every time I look at the stars. I cannot understand God. I cannot comprehend a Being which has been around for infinity, I cannot grasp the enormity of God and that is alright. I don't need to grasp God; I just need to trust that God has everything under control. However, with that I am glad that Jesus was here on earth living a life that is more relatable to me. I am glad that Christ most likely looked up at those same stars and found himself completely at awe concerning the Creator.



Thursday, September 21, 2017

Genesis 1:20-23 -Animals

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." 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. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

Alright you probably have already heard this statistic but I am going to repeat it. 95% of the ocean is still unexplored (NOAA). 95% is so much and so on the fifth day God filled the ocean with creatures of every sort, some of which human eyes have still never seen. Then he filled the sky with flocks upon flocks of birds. We have seen many of these ourselves. The Red-winged black birds that migrate through and the Sand Hill Cranes with their piercing calls. In Matthew 6:26 Jesus says "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." Again, that same God who created the cosmos and a world beyond what we can imagine cares for this place. Even those animals we have not yet discovered. What an amazing thing.

Genesis 1:24-25 – More Animals

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. 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.

What would life be without these things? I’m not just talking about the animals who sustain us: cattle, chickens, sheep, but also the animals that live in those wild spaces. Some of the greatest joys in my life have been watching wolves run across a lake in January or a grizzly bear (from far far away) climb a skree-pile in the mountains of Montana. These animals are a reminder of both the vastness and beauty of creation. And then there are the animals that help us in our day to day lives. Dogs and cats that offer comfort to the elderly or teach our young how to be responsible. These are the creatures that are wrapped up into the very fabric of our own lives giving us plenty of frustration at times but most definitely more joy.



Friday, September 22, 2017

Genesis 1:26 – Us

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.”

*So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

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.” 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. 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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

We are last. How strangely befitting. Whether that is because we were the grand prize or create the most work for God I really don’t know. So often I wonder about what this means, to be in the image of God. And I see in humanity those times where we live it out well. Where we seek to be what the creation story starts with, the Light for the world. But there are plenty of times when we are destructive as well: to our communities, to our world, and to ourselves. Have

dominion God says but also remember that all of it is very good. The light and the dark that make up the morning and the night, the cosmos that fill the sky, the land that gives us life, the water that restores both our body and soul, all of it is good. And so we live our lives in gratitude for a God who would make a world so beautiful and then allow us our place in it. We live our lives through the difficulties and the blessings remembering that this is the world we inhabit. It is God's and it is good.

Saturday, September 23, 2017

Genesis 2:1-3 - Rest

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

Happy Sabbath. Isn't it befitting that in all these things God created - animals, plants, land, cosmos, and us - he also created rest. Because in this brand-new world on the seventh day it was probably the first time the world had seen what rest looked like. Rest is more precious to us today than ever because we don't appreciate it enough. Our society is full of people bragging about how busy they are or using terms like "wasting time" so much so that you might find yourself feeling guilty when you sleep in, read a book on your porch, or just sit on a park bench doing nothing for a while. But isn't this the thing? In all these cycles God created; evening and morning and all others, God also created the cycle of rest. We cannot truly appreciate our world or our life if we forget to take part in rest, if we don't stop occasionally and just look around at this precious place - and to the world, to those seven days, particularly the one where God rested. May you find rest as well on this day.

