



Genesis 1

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There have been crisis moments in my life: 9/11, arguing with my siblings as adults; But there have also been long-term periods of erosion: after care-giving for loved ones in mania & depression, when we created a mission to change the life of others which was then destroyed, when we buried a child, when I have come to the point of wanting to Scream, but saying painfully quietly "We cannot keep doing this." Each of these circumstance, I have been unclear of any alternatives, only that what we have been doing is not working. Something is wrong and has to change. What is the Einstein quote of "Insanity is repeating the same experiment over and over and over, expecting different results."

Our whole world is sick, and even more than Coronavirus, we fear this illness, could be terminal. Repeatedly throughout the last 400 years, our Nation has agonized over whether we could see one another as human, rather than their skin color; and we have chosen to treat others as less than human. For the last 50 years we have been increasingly hurtful to one another, socially and politically polarized. The ides of March, we were told to go home and isolate ourselves, first for virus then because of curfews. We were instructed to start wearing a mask, different from emotional masks we were already wearing. Our anxieties went through the roof by being trapped at home with nowhere to go. Our National Economy crashed as blue chip solid companies went bankrupt. Then, it was televised that yet another unarmed man of color was killed publicly, without trial. As a people, we have been traumatized by witnessing this. Around the world, people turned out to protest, with Police Officers joining-in because what happened was shocking and abhorrent to us all.

As a method of understanding people I have spent a great amount of time studying Family Systems Theory, this is one of the things which first excited me about our Church, because you had come to understand the basics of this as well. One of the 8 Concepts of this Theory is that people repeat behaviors witnessed, If your family were musical you might have a tendency to be; if your family are college educated or military, there is expectation you will be. But also, that if there has been a suicide, others could. As you pastor, I am concerned by how many among us have stated their trauma and questioning how to go on. Please, if ever you feel powerless and hopeless, call us, day or night, and we will be there immediately. I have never been more serious.

When given opportunity, Chaos and Evil happen. The underlying issue before us today, is not political, the issue is the most foundational for people of faith in God. Do we believe in evil? Do we give-in to evil? Do we give over control? It can seem easier to give up; or do we live and struggle and strive, to have hope?

On the first day of Seminary our Old Testament Professor challenged our reality. "As children in Sunday School classes you learned the basic order, structure and content of the Bible. But we are adults, scholars leading others in faith, ministering to others in chaos, so we need to go beyond the façade of what we are given, to question meanings, to try to understand our faith in God." Despite the historic Church placing the book of Genesis, meaning ORIGINS, first; the beginning of Israel was Passover in Exodus. While tradition names that on Mt. Saini God gave Moses the Books of the Law, probably all these words and

theological ideas were written down when the Nation of Israel, Kingdom of David and Solomon, was in chaos, the Temple, all sense or Order and routine was destroyed, the people carried off to Babylon.

I have not gone back through the sermons of my predecessors, but by and large American preachers in the 20th century preached from Genesis, Isaiah and the Gospels, not from the 70 years in Exile in Babylon. So imagine we were those in Exile 70 years. Recognize as we begin that exiled from Jerusalem, instead of being called Israel or Hebrews, culturally/racially this Chosen People of God, became identified as "Jews". Imagine, the routine that our parents and grandparents had lived, that we took for granted as living. That you rise every morning and make coffee, all the routines of the day, and weekly/seasonally/ annually we go to worship, to confess our sins/ our need for God and our thanksgiving to God, for: Order and Justice, Health, Marriage, Life and Family. When suddenly in a night of chaos, everything you have ever known was taken away, the place for worship of God was taken away, you were taken, isolated from home and culture, language, the practice of religion. You hear stories of lynching and looting. And you have no idea if ever again we will find Normal routine, or what the answers are. We have not been Exiled from this Green Valley, this Promised Land, but that sounds a lot like what we have been living.

The People of God in Exile began reciting this liturgy from Genesis 1.

The first sentences of Genesis name classic Jungian archetype images. "In the beginning God when created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said 'Let there be light.' And there was light. And God saw the light was good, and God divided the light from the darkness."

This week has felt as if living in a waste and void, a black hole, where all the oxygen has been sucked out.

The two things that have always intrigued me about this passage, were First, that so many thousands of years before Charles Darwin, the Hebrew people understood the same interdependence of all the elements of Creation. That before there could be mammals, there were reptiles, fish and birds, But to support life there needed to be plants, Before plants there needed to be balance of soil and water, The moon and stars were essential for the tides and seasons, For life there needed to be a firmament, an atmosphere, the ozone layer. But for all of that to happen there needed to be separation and balance between Light and Dark, between Chaos and Order.

Second, where Science has gone backward, ultimately theorizing that there must have been a BIG BANG, a Cataclysmic explosion of Gas; instead the ancient Hebrews affirmed: Before anything else There was God! That is a powerful claim about the authority of God, there is nothing before. God is Alpha and Omega.

And Yet, the Book of Genesis makes an even more Bold affirmation. Genesis is not told, in the manner of other nations and world religions, as Creation out of Myth. Other cultures claimed gods were battling, or gods were seducing one another to form life. The Iroquois that twins were fighting within Mother Earth, being born out of her armpits. Instead, Genesis claims there is this dialectical tension between the Creator and Creation. Genesis wants to affirm that the ultimate meaning for Existence, the purpose of Creation can only be found in the heart of God. God created Creation and God blessed Creation for being good; while at the same time, Creation looked to God and worshipped. The central concern of Genesis is the relationship between The Creator and Creation. However the peculiar understanding of Genesis, is that All other philosophical and political questions, ALL OTHERS are subordinate and conditional upon that fundamental relationship. Human authority, power, the reality of Order, freedoms, justice, all hinge upon the covenant relationship between Creator and Creation. The early 20th century Theologian Karl Barth

described that both Creator and Creation are dependent upon one another, and neither can be fully understood without being in relationship, this Barth described as the Covenant of Creation.

By regularly reciting Genesis Chapter 1 in a time of great anxiety, chaos, evil, the people created a Doxology. We sing Old Hundredth as a Doxology and Gloria Patri as our Gloria every week, not just because they are traditional, or pretty. Doxology and Gloria are a Re-Orienting of Life, that the darkness and Void and Chaos are not in control, evil shall not win. Because God is God, and God named this life GOOD.