

Creation Myth
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I have strayed far from the lectionary this week because the more I thought about meeting outside the more I wanted to wonder at the majestic creation we live in. I chose not to read the traditional creation story passages because I know that will come up again soon but rather I wanted to read other verses that spoke to us of creation, it's gift and our responsibilities as we live in the wonder of it.

We have a beautiful creation story in our faith but we have done a lot of damage by our misinterpretations of it and so pulling out less familiar scriptures is sometimes eye opening.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel used to tell the story that when the Holy One, gets up in the morning, God gathers the angels of heaven around and asks this simple question:

“Where does my creation need mending today?”

Heschel say's, “theology consists of worrying about what God worries about when God gets up in the morning.”¹ As people of faith, we believe that the world is at the centre of God's concern. God created it in love and beauty – the plants, trees, animals, water and air – all beautifully crafted. We too were created in love and beauty.

Not only that, but we were given the responsibility of caring for all of creation. We are not separate from it – we are so intricately woven within it that whatever we do to the earth, we do to God and to ourselves. Earth is more than just a bunch of dirt mixed with water and oxygen that we can manipulate and control; it is a creation of God's. Creation is infused with love and life and all manners of creatures in interdependent relationships.

Janice Young shared with us at Cariboo presbytery a few years back a beautiful message of creation in the form of a creation myth written by Terri Anderson. That story came to mind for me this week. Now I am not sure but you may have heard it before because it has roamed the pulpits of B.C. I know but I am going to share it again. Maybe one day in the future you will hear it with a visual presentation I have put together to go along with the story.

Imagine with me long, long ago our faith ancestors sitting around a fire, 🔥 looking at the stars in the night sky sharing the story of how this amazing vast, expansive creation came to be. They shared this story with one another and this became our creation myth, our sacred story. 🔥

¹ Source unknown (I pulled this from a former sermon of my own from years back)

It is not the whole story but it is our story, it is what we have come to know and believe. In the past couple of centuries we have continued to learn and grow and develop pieces of our creation story. Scientists have begun to share a sacred story as well, a story of a Bang, and an evolving life. As Bruce Sanguin says in his book Darwin, Divinity and the Dance of the Cosmos (pg. 79) this does not “replace or render obsolete the Judeo-Christian creation story.” The story of the scientists does nothing to take away from the absolute truth of the Genesis creation story, for that story reminds us that God is at the very heart of all creation, and sees it as very good.

Sharon Parks Daloz reminds us that “Myth cannot be dismissed as mere fiction. Myths are epic, powerful stories that arise from, pervade and shape the cultures we breathe. They are formed from our collective capacity to understand, interpret, and shape our world. The potency of myths is that they provide ways for us to make sense of our experience, to make meaning we can count on and share with others. Myths give us anchoring images and stories, and they seed the assumptions by which we understand who we are, what is true and untrue, right and wrong. Myths interpret the past, locate us in the present, and shape our expectations of the future.”

Markus Borg in his book “The Heart of Christianity” quotes a Swedish proverb “Theology is poetry plus, not science minus.” A Native American storyteller begins his creation story with “Now I don’t know if it happened this way or not, but I know this story is true.” Our scriptures are profoundly true as they speak to us of a God who has created as is creating still.

Many would agree that in order for us to better know our connected with creation we may need to hear the story in a new way.

Terri Anderson, a woman on Whidbey Island in Washington state, created a new creation story which integrates the scientific story of creation with the judeo-Christian myth of creation as well as West Coast Aboriginal creation story.

It goes like this...

Long, long, long ago
in the beginning over 13 billion years ago
all was dark

We might have thought nothing was there
but we would have been wrong

Nothing existed and...
EVERYTHING existed

Everything that was to be

was still only a potential ☞ a possibility
yet to become reality

So *everything* existed ☞ and yet *nothing* existed ☞
And that is what we call: God, Goddess, Allah, Creator, Great Spirit, Tao

One day... God decided it was time to manifest.
All this potential was getting tedious, so God simply let go.
There was a great flaring forth ☞ of such power and color and bright energy that we cannot even imagine how exquisite it was.
In that explosive moment, everything that would ever be...
was unfurled throughout the universe
spread across distances so vast we do not even have a word for how far it is.
God was radiant.

And said "this is good" ☞

For another 3 billion years God was content with this glory.
Then the day came when God wanted more potential to manifest. ☞
So God enabled the emergence of hydrogen, helium, carbon, calcium and many spectacular elements...
Which exploded and pulsed streams of atoms throughout the universe.
Stars ☞ and supernovas were born and LIGHT filled the sky.
God smiled and said, ☞ "this is good"
Another 5 billion years passed and God was satisfied...
Eventually, curiosity about what else was ready for birth overcame this contentment.
So the potential for ☞ solar systems, meteors and comets came into being...
and a sun...
and a planet of such particular beauty that God named her... Gaia. ☞ (Greek for Land or earth)

God watched with delight over the next few billion years as Gaia began to cool and surround herself with atmosphere.
It took her a lot of years to learn how to be a planet. ☞
She learned to rain and so filled oceans ☞
She had to stretch and exercise her muscles
When she hiccupped ... whole continents shifted and the oceans spilled over.
When she burped... ☞ mountains were created.

When she cried ...mountains washed away and deserts formed

Again God smiled and said, "this is good"

Eventually God thought it was time for life to emerge, too.

Starting with the simplest elements, life began to grow, multiply and evolve in the waters of Gaia.

The smallest microbes slowly evolved

into spectacular jellyfish

Delicate lichens evolved into a complex assortment of plants.

Early insects evolved into high flying birds

The essence of so many wonderful creatures existed in that first flaring... God and Gaia patiently awaited their emergence.

With every passing millennium Gaia grew more beautiful.

God smiled and said, "this is good"

Over millions more years, Gaia and her creatures continued to mature, evolve and learn. Gaia could see, hear, smell, taste. But God's evolution was not yet done; yet to manifest was a very special being. One who would celebrate God's creation and appreciate its mystery.

Now God has a sense of humor, and knowing this new being would make him laugh, selected his favorite trickster, Raven to search for this new being.

Raven flew all over Gaia, searching...

He flew over mountains and canyons searching...

Until, finally, there on the beach...

Raven found beings of the human sort and released them from the shell.

And Raven delivered God's message to his new brothers and sisters:

You are stardust

All that you see about you is of me. All is God.

This land is beautiful - take good care of it for it is your home.

All beings are your brothers and sisters.

Love them and care for them as you do yourself.

Each one has a lesson for you.

Brother wolf will teach you to sing.

Brother Raven will teach you to laugh.

Sister swan will teach you beauty.

☞ Brother dolphin ☞ will teach you to play

Sister Salmon ☞ will teach you loyalty to future generations.

Sister Dog ☞ will teach you unconditional love.

I have provided you with this bounty so that you may know ☞ my wisdom. ☞

Take care of the water that it may nourish you.

Keep your air clear so that all beings will stay healthy. ☞

Attend your lessons well.

Gaia is my gift to you.

She is sacred ground, your temple of worship. ☞

Honor her as I do.

Look all about you and see me. And know that you are loved.

And once more, God smiled and said, ☞ "this is good."