

September 10, 2017
Gen. 1:1 – 2:4a Psalm 8 Matthew 12:1-13 “A Day for Delight”

In the Celtic tradition, both the Bible and Creation are considered revelations of the Sacred. I am told that landscapes once occupied by the ancient Celts are dotted with high standing crosses--one side engraved with images inspired by the stories of scripture, and the other with images of the created world. Like that of the ancient Psalmist, the faith of the people's hearts cry out, "Creation is filled with the glory of God." This is the faith they proclaim. Though sin and brokenness may distort and obscure, Creation, at its heart, is good! At the heart of humanity is love. We are made in the image of God.

Because of this deep conviction, the early teachers of Celtic spirituality argued mightily with the doctrine of original sin, which had gained preeminence in the western church. The early Celtic Christians argued for a confidence in our original goodness. Look into the eyes of a very young child, they would say, and you will not disagree!

12th century mystic and seer, Hildegard of Bingen, waxed poetic with the same deep impression when she wrote this passage:

I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every living spark...
I flame above the beauty of the fields; I shine in the waters;
in the sun, the moon and the stars, I burn.
and by means of the airy wind,
I stir everything into quickness with a certain invisible life
which sustains all...
I, the fiery power, lie hidden in these things and they blaze from me.

Einstein once suggested that there are only two ways to live our lives – as though everything is a miracle, or as though nothing is. To my mind, everything is a miracle, still--

Day follows day, week follows week, year follows year; and, too often we fail to take time to simply delight in, to stand in awe of--to wonder at the beauty, power and love that resides at the heart of creation—even as we fail to listen to the sounding of our own souls.

Every ancient religion has a creation myth meant to reside in the heart of its people. Imbedded in that myth are bits of wisdom, snippets of insight, and foundational truths to guide our lives.

You heard a contemporary rendering of the first of two Judeo-Christian creation myths this morning from the book of Genesis—the book of beginnings. If we were to ponder it carefully, this old story might provide for us a foundation for hope, inspire in us a deeper place of faith, and elicit from us a greater love and care for creation (including ourselves), and for its maker.

This morning, we will touch upon a couple of 'moments' in this story—both the beginning and the ending, and consider what they might have to say to us.

Our story, according to The Message, begins with these words: "First, God..." The Message's author, Eugene Peterson offers a meditation on these two words:

"God is the Great Subject of life. God is the Foundation. If we don't have a sense of the primacy of God, we may never get it right, get life right, get our lives right. Not God at the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at center and circumference; God first and last."

I wonder, what would it mean for us to live our lives this way? "First God."

Our story tells us, "When the earth was formless and empty, when darkness covered the surface of the deep, then the Spirit of God hovered over the waters". And God said, "Light." And there was light."

Our Call to Worship is a meditation on these words. Listen again to its words:

First there was nothing, a void—emptiness all around.
But there was a great deep, the empty waters, a possibility.
God made the wind ...to stir up the waters, to stir up creation.
The breath of God. a life-giving breath,
a breath that spoke of dark and light,
a spirit of new beginning, new possibilities, new life.

Yesterday, as I was driving to church, I was listening to the CBC. A young artist was being interviewed about a project she has taken up in the neglected and once derelict ally behind her family home. She started by painting images of creation, landscapes and wild animals, on her garage door. Delighted and intrigued, her neighbours began, one by one, to request she do the same with theirs. Energized, she and her children went door to door, asked and were given permission, to paint all the garage doors in the ally! The ally has come to life. Neighbours have begun tidying up the space around their garages, trimming their weeds, taking pride in its appearance. It has become a gathering place. Neighbours, formerly strangers, are becoming friends. They meet and greet in what was once an empty and neglected ally. She plans to complete the project by painting life-sized whales down the ally road. Creation out of nothing, life out of death, community out of apathy. A spirit of new beginning, fresh possibilities, new life has taken hold of the place. The truth of the ancient story is born out.

When you find yourself lost in chaos, darkness, and emptiness of soul--when hope is lost and faith seems a distant memory, when love grows cold and there seems to be no way forward; remember this story. It is a story which tells us of a time when creation itself was a mirror of our own trembling soul...and that it was right then, in the midst of the emptiness and ache, that the spirit of God was hovering over, a word was spoken, light was given, and new life began.

Reach out and grab hold of that ancient memory, and with it the confidence that the Spirit of Creation still “broods over our places of trembling darkness like a bird,” still speaks “light” into our darkness, order into our chaos, clarity into our confusion, and hope into our future.

Listen for a fresh word of creation spoken into the dark, empty and frightening places of your lives, and discover yourselves slowly rising again into new life, and fresh possibilities.

We begin our story with God Creating, and we end it with God resting. On the seventh day, our story tells us that God rested from all God’s work, that God saw all that God had made, and said, “This is good!” Why would ancient the storyteller say such a thing? Surely God does not rest! I suspect that it is written as a reminder that we need time to rest, we need long moments to sit back and appreciate and delight in all that we have accomplished. We too need to say to take a moment from time to time and say of what we have done, “This is good!” There is wisdom in creating a rhythm of work and rest in our lives, there is wisdom both in the work, and in the appreciation, awe, and gratitude.

Author, Wayne Muller, writes,

“The old, wise Sabbath says: Stop now. As the sun touches the horizon, take the hand off the plow, put down the phone, let the pen rest on the paper, turn off the computer, leave the mop in the bucket. We can stop, writes Mueller, because there are forces larger than we are that take care of the universe. The galaxy will somehow manage without us for this hour, this day, so we are invited to relax and enjoy our relative unimportance, our humble place at the table in a very large world.”

Wayne Muller, **Sabbath, Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest.**