

“Once Upon A Time...”

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Genesis 1:1-2:4a

John 1:1-14

“So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
Genesis 1:27

Let us pray... O God,
We are created in your image to be creators ourselves;
May we as individuals, blossom;
and as a faith community, may we bring forth a good harvest.

Amen

Happy Fathers' Day!

We have the story of Creation from Genesis and the First Chapter of John
to celebrate “fathers”.

One of the great mythic themes of sacred storytelling is the Hero's journey
depicted as a search for the hero's Father
to gain a blessing and return to bring its benefit
for the sake of all the people.

That is the story of Christ – and it is our story, as we seek God,
our true and compassionate ‘Father’.

We shouldn't think of God as having a gender –
but if we speak of God as ‘Father’, that's meant in terms of relationship
rather than some particular form.

God is outside the bounds of what we call reality or nature.

God has generated or engendered Creation
with time and space and possibility.

And we are created in God's image – male & female,
to be creators ourselves.

Today, I am going to venture out into our wider community
to introduce Biblical storytelling as a portrait of Jesus in words
and perhaps for many, it will be a new way to hear his message
and how God is still speaking to us – and still creating through us.

Friends, as we dare to share our gifts with others,
we become more truly who we are, expressing our faith
by whatever talent or gift that God has engendered in us –
has generated through us.

Willard, p.2

Think of our choir's singing, the knitting of prayer shawls and quilts,
the baking of cakes and cookies, the preparation of financial reports,
the negotiating with construction workers, playing a sport,
the art of teaching and encouraging young people,
the active concern for those who are sick,
the writing and telling of original stories, the painting of pictures,
the preparation of the bulletin and video graphics –
all these things are examples of art that require
talent tempered by discipline with the shared theme
of what we do while 'being the church'.

The stories I am going to tell today at The Church on the Square
will be about how the Word that was engendered in Jesus –
what was written into who Jesus was,
was brought out by testing and resolve
as Jesus became who he was going to be.

Each of us has the opportunity to reflect the image of God
not only when we do something creative,
but when we help others to achieve their potential.

This is not about doing your own thing,
but it is about daring to share something of who you are –
and there is some risk in that.
But in so doing, you help create an environment
where other people feel safe to do this, too –
to make their contribution for the common good
to build something.

The other day, I happened to be talking about careers with
a young man who was a store clerk.
He was getting married soon and he'd been out of school for a couple years
and was concerned about gainful employment.
I asked him what he loved to do and he told me taxidermy –
and that he did this as a gift for family members who were hunters.
I urged him to realize that –
no matter what honest work a person does to make ends meet
it's good, but whatever it is you love to do –
if it's in you, find a way to do it.
So, what is that gift that God has given you to do?

Amen

*Our lesson today from the Jewish Scriptures is Genesis 1:1-2:4a.
It is the story about how God our Father created
the heavens and the Earth.*

1In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,
2the 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.

3Then God said,
'Let there be light'; and there was light.

4And God saw that the light was good;
and God separated the light from the darkness.

5God called the light Day,
and the darkness he called Night.

And there was evening and there was morning,
the first day.

6 And God said,
'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters,
and let it separate the waters from the waters.'

7So 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.

8God called the dome Sky.
And there was evening and there was morning,
the second day.

9 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.

10God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together
he called Seas.
And God saw that it was good.

11Then 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.

12The 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.

13And there was evening and there was morning,
the third day.

14 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,
15and let them be lights in the dome of the sky
to give light upon the earth.'

And it was so.

16God made the two great lights—
the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—
and the stars.

17God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,
18to rule over the day and over the night,
and to separate the light from the darkness.

And God saw that it was good.

19And there was evening and there was morning,
the fourth day.

20 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.'

21So 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.

22God blessed them, saying,

'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas,
and let birds multiply on the earth.'

23And there was evening and there was morning,
the fifth day.

24 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.

25God 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.

26 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.'

27 So God created humankind in his image,

in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
28 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.’
29 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.
30 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.
31 God saw everything that he had made,
 and indeed, it was very good.
And there was evening and there was morning,
 the sixth day.
2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished,
 and all their multitude.
2 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.
3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,
 because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.
4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth
 when they were created.

John 1:1-14

In the beginning, the Word was expressed;

And the Word stood before God

and the Word was God's Name come to life.

The Word was present with God as things began to be'

And through the Word was made all that there is.

And no created thing was made separate from this.

Life was in the Word and life has been the Light of humanity.

And the light shone forth in the gloom

and the gloom could not hold it back.

A human being was sent by God; His name is John.

And he was sent as a martyr to bear witness to the Light

so that everyone would believe through him.

The Light was real, illuminating all of humanity

as it was proceeding into the world.

The Light was in the world

and the world came to be through the Light,

but the world did not understand this.

The Light had come alone and was not accepted by us as a group,

but as many as there have been who have trusted in God's Name,

they have been given the power to become children of God.

This has been so, not by human desire, nor physical need, nor logical reason,

but by God's desire.

And the Word was expressed as a living body and lived with us;

And the Light's blessing has been recognized,

blessed as being the only offspring

of the Beloved Guardian – the Father,

perfected in talent and truth.

Today, you will hear some of the old, old stories of our faith
unpacked from their familiar labels to be told in a new way.
I will tell you stories from each of the Gospels-
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that I have translated and paraphrased
about the beginnings of Jesus' ministry
and how what was written into him – his talent and destiny,
were brought out through trial and rejoicing.

There have been great challenges to the Church throughout its history
and we are certainly in the midst of such an era now.
And each generation has had to adapt and interpret Jesus Christ for their time
and not only to understand his words and deeds, but to ask “Who is he?”
As it says in The Apostles' Creed,
“Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate”,
but what happened in between?

I offer you a verbal portrait of who Jesus is
and a challenge for you to answer that question for yourself.
For the truth of these stories still speak to us – God is still speaking to us.
And it is up to us to use our heads and hearts to figure out
what Jesus means for us, now...

You all are the salt of the earth,
but if seasoning becomes tasteless,
with what shall it be made savory again?
Why, it is good for nothing –
but even then it can be thrown out on slippery walkways!
You all are the light of the world;
A city built on a hill cannot be hid.
And no one lights a lamp and places it under a basket,
but places it on a lampstand, shining forth to everyone in the house.
In this way, your light must shine forth in the sight of humanity,
that they may see your good works and praise
for your Beloved Guardian – your Father who is in the heavens.