

Genesis 1 for Three Voices

1- This is our way of telling the story from Genesis, chapter one, of God the creator of the world.

2- For us, HOW God created the world is not the point. THAT God created it, is our belief and our proclamation.

1 – There's a part for you in this. Your line is “It was very good”. You will know when to say your part because we will say first “and behold”. Let's try that now. “And behold”

Cong. - IT WAS VERY GOOD.

2 – Let's begin. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And behold....

Cong IT WAS VERY GOOD.

1 – God said “Let there be light” and there WAS light. And behold....

Cong IT WAS VERY GOOD.

2 – God separated the water from the land, and made the sky. And behold.....

Cong: IT WAS VERY GOOD.

1 – Then God made the plants and the trees. So many kinds! Fruit trees, and all kinds of plants and flowers. It was wonderful! And behold....

Cong: IT WAS VERY GOOD.

2 – Then God made the sun and the moon and the stars, and made the day and the night. And behold....

Cong: IT WAS VERY GOOD.

1 – Then God made all the living creatures. Fish to swim in the sea, birds to fly in the air, animals for the land. And behold....

Cong: IT WAS VERY GOOD.

2 – Finally, God made human beings, in God's own image. Humans were made to care for God's creation. And behold....

Cong: IT WAS VERY GOOD.

1- But that's not the end. God is STILL creating.

2 – In brand new babies, like baby Tristan

1 – in brand new friendships

2 – Or old friendships that grow stronger.

1 – or in your garden as it grows

2 – and when people work for justice

1 – when you give to the food bank

2 – or make beautiful music

1- when you take a vacation or a day off to rest your body and mind

2 – when you go to a new place, to meet new people and situations

1 – when like Emily you choose to be baptized

2- when like some of you here you travel to a place you've never been before.

1 – in all these ways and more, God is still creating.

2 – who KNOWS what God will create next?? Maybe God will use US to do it, but one thing is for sure....

1 – and 2 together: IT WILL BE VERY GOOD.

3 – Wait a minute – I have a question. Do you mind? All this talk about God creating the world just makes me wonder. I look around here at the congregation and I see people who are smart, they've gone to school, they think and wonder too....do you really expect them to believe this stuff? Adam and Eve and the rest of it? Actually, your reading didn't mention Adam and Eve at all, did it?

1 – No, it didn't. There are two separate stories of creation in the Bible, and they're quite different. The Adam and Eve one is in chapter 2 of Genesis. WE read the first one, from chapter one.

3 – Oh. I didn't know that. But that doesn't matter, my point is still the same. Don't you think this is a pretty naive way to think? I mean, this is the 21st century.

2 – I don't think it's naive at all. I think it's the truth.

3 – But don't you think that we've learned too much since people wrote this? I guess I can understand that centuries ago, when people didn't understand science and how things work in the world, they would believe this is how it happened. But now – we just know better. Most people today accept Darwin's theory or some version of that – that says we evolved into what we are today.

2 – The way I look at it, science doesn't know everything. I think that when you have a choice of believing in evolution or believing in God, it's just smarter to choose God. Just – just have faith.

3 – Well all I can say is that in some ways I wish I could just have faith like you, but I can't. I can't ignore what I've learned in my courses at school, or in my life, or what my brain tells me must be true. I guess Christianity just isn't for me.

1 – Wait a minute. There's got to be another way. It can't be a choice between science and God. There are too many scientists who are Christians. And look at the people who worship here every Sunday. They are thinking, educated people....How do you think THEY'VE come to terms with this?|

3 – maybe they just don't take the Bible that seriously?

1 – I don't think so. I think there's another approach, and it has to do with how we understand the Bible. What is IS and what it is NOT.

2 – what do you mean?

1 – well, it's like we said at the beginning. There are 2 separate stories about how creation happened in the Bible. Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. As I understand it, they were written at different times, to make different points.

3 What could be the point of a creation story other than to tell us what happened?

1 – That's what's so exciting. The first one, from Genesis one, was written at a time when the country was in ruins and the people were very depressed. They had come to the point where they believed that the world was evil and there was no point to living, no meaning to anything.

The priest who wrote this (and we're pretty sure it was a priest) wrote it to remind the people that the world IS good....that THEY are good, and that there is meaning and order even though it doesn't seem like it sometimes. It's a powerful statement about the value of life and the value of the world.

3 – I've never heard anyone say that before. It makes me look at it in a different way. So....one of my problems with this is it says that the plants were created before the sun and of course everyone knows that plants can't survive without the sun. But if I understand what you're saying.....the author – the priest or whoever it was – wasn't interested in that part at all....it was more like a way of encouraging and reminding the people that life is good and it has meaning. Is that right?

1 – Right!

2 – I don't think I like that approach. I don't see why it didn't happen just the way I was taught. After all, it was God who inspired the people who wrote the Bible, so....I think it happened exactly the way it says. What's wrong with just leaving it alone?

1 – nothing – for you. If that's how you've figured it out and that's what makes sense to you, well, that's good. This isn't about right and wrong ways of believing, I'm just saying there's another way of approaching it. One thing about the United Church of Canada is that there's room for differences like that, and also, for us it's not about correct belief so much as it is about a way of life that honours the creator.

3 – so now I want to hear the background to the other creation story. You said there were two, right? So now I want to hear about the Adam and Eve one.

1 – That's a great one too. It was written at time when the country was at the height of its power. They had money, military power, and a strong king. When things are going well like that, people are tempted to forget God. The point of THIS story is to remind them of what happens when a country or a person gets thinking that THEY are god. To me, it's interesting that in Hebrew, the name “Adam” is the word for humans. Adam means humans. So... in the beginning, God created Adam – people. We miss that in the English translation.

3 – Wow! So it's partly a warning to the people then. Don't get too big for your britches, right? There is DEFINITELY more to this stuff than I thought.

1 – That's what I felt like too, when I first learned this stuff. Whatever else you might say about these readings, they are NOT simple or naive. It's not about science, the authors don't really care HOW God made the world.

3 - But they care passionately THAT God made it. I think I get this now.

2 I still don't think it's fair, or very faithful, to dismiss the scriptures like this. Just explaining it away. If we can't believe the Bible, what can we believe? You're saying Adam and Eve didn't exist – aren't you. Is that what we're going to tell Tristan when he's old enough to come to Sunday School?

1 – Well, to begin with, by definition, no one was there when God created the world, so no one knows what really happened. No one. And more than that, I'm saying that it doesn't matter. The Bible isn't trying to teach science, or history. And our faith doesn't stand or fall on the details of the account of creation.

The word of God for Tristan and Emily and for all of us today is that THIS WORLD IS A GOOD GIFT FROM A GOOD GOD. There is meaning and purpose and we are all precious in the sight of God. That's the message I get when we put water on Tristan and Emily's foreheads and that's the message I get when I read the Bible. So for me, whether God made the world from dust all at once, or by evolution over time, makes absolutely no difference.

3 – Either way, God did it. And either way, we should live caring for ourselves and for creation. That makes sense to me.

2 – well, I'm not changing my mind.

1 - and I'm not either, and neither of us has to. There's room for more than one way to have faith and to praise the creator.

2 So I'll keep my beliefs

1 and I'll keep mine

3 and I'm going to keep thinking about this and keep asking questions. I hope you do too, Emily, and when Tristan is old enough, I hope he does too. Creatively.

ALL THREE TOGETHER – AMEN!