

"Made in the image of God"

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday October 3, 2021

Genesis 2

This morning, I invite you here the story of our origins as it is told in Genesis 2. I want you to hear and see and imagine the world that God has created for us, and how God intended things to be.

Chapter 2 of Genesis begins with the ending of Chapter 1 and then begins another account that sees our creation from a different angle.

Listen for God's word to us the church:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 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. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Another Account of the Creation

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called

every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.”

Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

What strikes you first as you hear those words, and the picture of creation is painted for you? Does it seem a long way off from the world we live in? Some of it does to me, but some of it I still see.

We live in northern Ontario (at least many of us). All of you have visited here- and we see trees and shrubs that are beautiful to the eye. We see trees and shrubs that produce good fruit. This time of year we are blessed to have markets filled with the produce of the ground. We see the abundance that earth produces.

Colour and beauty surround us, the bounty of the world that God created, blesses us.

But the picture of order and harmony, of the joy of the relationship between the humans and God, the humans and the earth, and the humans and each other can be a long way from the world we live in.

Some of us might live in some harmony with God, and we are learning to live with each other, but when we look at our larger world, and how we live in this world together- it's a mess.

There are few other things that catch my imagination as I situate myself in this story. In Genesis 1 we hear the words that God created order out of the chaos, light out of the darkness and humans are created in the image of God, and we were made to rule with God over God's wonderful ordered creation.

In Genesis 2 we hear of this intimate creating. God forms the human, and then God breathes life into the person. God plants the person in the garden- and the person God creates partners with God in the care of the garden, tilling the soil, and tending the garden. The human then names the animals.

Naming is part of determining the identity of the creature. Naming is part of the ruling over the creation and part of the partnering with God.

Psalm 8 reminds us that we were made "a little less than God."

C.S Lewis reminds that we have never met any mere mortals.

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption."

We were made for partnership and care and ruling. In Genesis 1 & 2 we don't learn what that means exactly – it doesn't tell us how to rule, how to partner with God and live together.

And in taking matters into our own hands, in choosing our own wisdom and our own ways, things become bad very quickly, and death is introduced into creation and our hearts are corrupted completely.

What eventually in scripture we learn is that God's ways are not our ways.

Our wisdom, our striving, our plans are corrupt, and evil is always crouching at the door of our hearts.

But God gives us his law, and in Jesus, God writes that law on our hearts, and Jesus gives us the clearest example of how we are live together rightly related to God, rightly related to each other.

- We learn that ruling looks like serving.
- We learn that God orders our time in a way we would not - providing a day of rest.
- God orders our care of the poor, the widow, the orphan, the vulnerable, those in need.
- We learn to make provision for each other, we learn justice and compassion.

The picture at the end of Genesis 2 is of man and woman being together, bone of the same bone and flesh of the same flesh. They are together and

they are not ashamed. Can you imagine be unashamed - no hiding, no secrets, no manipulating, no guilt before each other and before God. Being together, fully accepting ourselves and fully accepting the other. We were made to be unashamed, unafraid, knowing that you are made in the image of God, but so am I.

You have value and worth because you are a son or daughter of the King, but I also have worth and dignity because I am also a son or daughter of the King.

We are not in competition, but are in partnership together with God.

This is how God created us- this is how we are being recreated in Jesus.

This is what we celebrate today as we join with Christians from every place in the world. You, we, all of us, made in the image of God.

We are invited poor and rich, male and female, young and old, from every language, tongue, tribe and nation, because we are part of the body of Jesus the Messiah.

We are marked as Jesus' own, we are all invited to come to His table because He has paid the price for us.

Here the playing field is leveled, here we are forgiven- all of us- here we are partners in the gospel, a new community in Christ, together serving God's mission in the world.

So as we prepare to come to our Lord's table, I invite you to reflect on what God intended for us together.

We are invited to come unafraid and unashamed.

Jesus is our peace with God, and teaches us peace with one another.

Let us pray:

Lord, we see what you intended for us and for our world and we confess how far we have fallen.

So we come to you, seeking hope, seeking your ways, so that our world might be healed, so we might be healed. Amen.