

Michael Gehring
“Creator God”
Genesis 1:1-5, 26–28
Main Street UMC
September 9, 2018

With the devastation of the various hurricanes in recent memory of Hurricane Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Nate, and with the menacing threats of storms, we are left to wondering, “What is going on in our world?” Yes, through the ages, there have always been storms and rumors of storms. Yes, there have been tornados, earthquakes, and hurricanes, but it certainly seems to be getting worse. It leaves one to ponder, “What are we doing to our planet?”

In the Scripture readings today, we heard how God created the heavens and the earth. We learned how God spoke everything into existence. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God said, “Let the waters be gathered to one place and let the dry ground appear.” Over and over again, God spoke, things happened. After the work creation “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

I love how C.S. Lewis captures this *In the Magician’s Nephew*. Digory and Polly through the use of the magic rings end up in a dark empty place. Suddenly they hear a voice singing a beautiful song that is soon joined by other voices; “...the blackness overhead all at once was blazing with stars. They didn’t come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out—single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world.” Aslan sings creation forth.

In the second chapter of Genesis, we learn the story of the first man and the first woman. Adam literally means out of the ground. God formed humanity from the clay of the earth or as we say on Ash Wednesday, “dust to dust and ashes to ashes.” These words are there so that we will mark our mortality and make our lives pleasing to God. In the creation narratives, it was all good. There was no sin in the land. I love Genesis 2: 25: “Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.”

The Apostles’ Creed begins, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.” Credo is the Latin word for I believe. As we learned last week, Christians have always been a confessing bunch and that the Apostles’ Creed was a catechesis instrument used for neophytes who were being initiated into the Christian faith. After having studied the faith normally for at least a year, questions were asked of them. As discussed last week, the overwhelming majority of the population was illiterate and, even if you were one of the lucky 3% and

could read, you couldn't go down to Wal Mart and pick up a Bible with the words of Jesus in red.

Do you believe in God? "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Did you catch those 2 words: Father and Almighty, intimacy and all-powerful. Jesus taught us the name for Father God is abba, daddy. And it is this papa who is all powerful and yet also loves all his children whether they are from Algeria, Argentina, or Alaska, whether they are from Norway, New Zealand, or North Carolina; they are all precious in God's sight.

"I believe in God, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth." I have some friends who don't share my faith convictions. One of my friends is an atheist. He enjoys giving me grief. He asks incredulously, "Mike, do you really believe that axe heads can float? Have you ever heard of gravity? You don't really believe he walked on the water do you?" I answer, "That's nothing compared to what I really believe. The amount of energy required for that is like a side-show. What I really believe is that God created everything, everything that there is out of nothing. And whether God did that with speaking it, or singing it, or with a big bang, I'm good with all that. But God did it, and the majesty of creation is beyond our minds to comprehend."

When I was a kid growing up, I used to lay out on the lawn, looking up at the stars, that heavenly canopy woven together through the ages and marvel at it all. It's so beautiful. As a kid, I remember going to the Painted Desert and being in awe of it. I asked my father, "how did it get this way?" My father who was part of the GI Generation (he was born in 1918 and served in the Army Air Corp during the Second World War as a plane mechanic) answered, "There was this huge cargo plane filled with paint cans flying over the desert. It had engine problems and crashed and that's how we got the painted desert." I was just a kid and believed him.

I remember as a child seeing the red wood forest and being lulled by the ancient roar of the Pacific Ocean. I remember being awed and how my imagination roamed thinking about how it came into being. We've all had experiences like this and our minds immediately visualize them: beautiful sunsets, the breaking of a new day, and the splendor of the Appalachian Mountains with the fog lingering in the valleys.

As the hymn goes, "For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies. Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise."

And yet all is not well with our world; fracking by the gas and oil industry has done great damage in Oklahoma. Strip mining in West Virginia has permanently altered the terrain. The polar ice cap is melting and changing sea

patterns. And we fear the water we drink and the air we breathe. No all is not well with our world.

Creation is a gift from God freely given. I invite you in your Sunday school classes, various small groups, and in committee meetings to begin a conversation about how we at Main Street can step up and do more to care for God's creation asking, "what does it mean for us to be good stewards of our world?" God has given us an incredible gift. May we do our part to protect it for future generations!