

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

**"Creation"
Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-3:24 (J creation story)**

Pastor Bill's intro:

One way I define the Bible is as "the progressive revelation of the nature and activity of God as understood by the people of Jacob (also known as the Israelites) and the people of Jesus (also known as the Christians)." Using the 12 words helps people to see a progression in Jewish tradition, history, custom, and theology that culminates in the life and teachings of Jesus.

The Bible is "the progressive revelation of the nature of God." Hebrews 1:1-2 states, "*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.*"

Often when we read the troubling passages in the Old Testament that portray God as vengeful, warlike, and even capricious in angry judgment we are confused. Some even like to say (erroneously in my view) that "the God of the Old Testament is the God of judgment and the God of the New Testament is the God of Love." Scripture teaches that the nature of God is unchanging. The prophet Malachi writes, "*For I the Lord do not change...*" (3:6) Jesus told his disciples in John 14:9 "*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*" And Hebrews 13:8 clearly states, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*"

If God does not change, and Jesus, present and active at creation does not change, then what has changed? Our human understanding of the nature of God has changed over time. And in the fullness of time, God revealed his divine nature in the only way we could really "get it." In Jesus.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- Think about how your understanding of your parents or some other authority figure or important person in your life has changed over time. If you were going to write about that person when you were younger how would it compare with what you would write now?
- Think about some of the people and events that have shaped our collective understanding of who we are as Americans. If you are studying in a group, see if the events are remembered differently depending on

the region of the nation in which persons grew up. Are there some stories that you are not sure are legendary or factual? Would you include them in our self-understanding and national identity if they were not historical “facts?” Why or why not?

- Read Genesis 1:1-2:4 and then Genesis 2:5-25. You will immediately see that these are two versions of the creation story. Make a list of the order in which things were created and compare.
- Think about how different views of the same thing or event add to our understanding. How do we learn or grow from others’ perceptions of an event we have all shared? What are the challenges that come from being open to an interpretation or perspective that is different from your own?

Key ideas we'll see throughout the Bible:

1. God breathes God's own breath or spirit into us.
2. God seeks us when we sin/estrangle ourselves from God and others.
3. God saves (saves = to heal & make whole) us from ourselves and our choices.
4. God leaves the garden to go with us.
5. God guides us. God does not leave us alone.
6. God re-creates us.