“God’s Creation”

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St. Paul’s UCC Church

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## Genesis 2:4b-7, 18, 21-25

## 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 a man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

## 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 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.

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 I’m so excited! This is the day that we, as church, begin our journey through the Narrative Lectionary once again. Narrative: story-telling. That’s what my preaching is going to focus on throughout this year, from now through the spring. Telling the story of God and of us, God’s people.

Every week, I’m going to focus on a different story, a different narrative, in our Bible. And, we are going to tell the story in order, from the beginning to the end, from Genesis to Revelation. During the fall, we will focus on the Old Testament. The Christmas season will be filled with the familiar stories of Jesus’ birth. And starting in January and going into the spring, we will read from the Gospel of Mark. We will conclude our nine-month period by reading some of Paul’s letters as we look at how the church expands, and is sent, into the world.
 All the while, through this whole big story arc, will we continue to ask: “Who is God? What is God’s story?” And, “Who am I, and who are we, in the great story of God?”

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Today we begin at the beginning, with the Creation Story in Genesis chapter 2, in the beginning. To take our first big question, “Who is God?”… well, this story would suggest that God is the Creator. God made this whole wide world, and everything in it. God made us, man and woman – God made us in the very image of God.

So, if God is the Creator, and we are created by God, then we must be God’s creation. Being God’s creation can mean lots of things; this morning, I want to focus on three.

Who are we? We are God’s creation. God’s creatures. This means, first of all, that we are made from the mud. I love Adam’s name. It’s significant. The word “Adam” comes from the Hebrew word “Adamah,” which means “earth” or “ground” or even “mud.” When we translate Adam’s name, we could translate it as something like “earth-creature,” or “the one from the mud.” Who are we? We are the ones from the mud. We are made of earth and dust, dirt and clay. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” You’ve heard that before. We are made from the earth, and to the earth we will return. So to be God’s creation means that we are mortal; it means that we are going to die.

It’s important to remember this because our culture is always trying to tell us, in one way or another, that dying is optional. If we can just exercise enough, if we consume the right food and go to the right doctors or health experts, maybe we can be excused from this whole business of dying. Nope, says Genesis.

But there’s actually good news here. If we are aware of, and honest about the fact that we are going to die, we are going to live a little differently. If we know that nothing lasts forever, we are going to know that we have to show up for our lives. We are going to realize that it’s good to be here, to be present; because this present moment… it’s gone. Just like that. There is a freedom in being honest about our mortality; there is a freedom, a spaciousness, in knowing that yes, we are made from the mud, and to the mud we will return.

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Who are we? We are God’s creation, God’s creatures, made from the mud. But there’s a second thing about being a creature of God. We are also made for life with each other. In our story for today, God sees that Adam is alone; and God says, “This isn’t good. This isn’t going to work. You need a partner. You need someone to help you get by.” So God makes a woman. And when she shows up, Adam says something like, “Yes! *That’s* what I’m talking about!”

People of God, we don’t do well by ourselves. Our culture likes to tell us that strong people don’t need anyone. *I am a rock; I am an island.* But the truth is, when I am a rock or an island, I fall short of God’s purpose for my life. I’m probably one of the worst among you in admitting that I need help, that I need you. But I do. And when I’m not honest about that, I start to think that I can do things on my own. And that’s dangerous. Left to my own devices, without checks and balances from my loved ones, my church, my family, my community… anything could happen. I need you. I need you to help me remember who I am.

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Who are we? We are made from the mud; we are made for each other; and finally, being a creature of God means that we are made for God: made to share a full, rich, joyful life with our Maker.

Okay, y’all, I’m going to show my Presbyterian colors here and quote a little from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, written way back in the mid-17th century. The whole thing starts this way: “What is the chief end of human beings? It is to glorify God, and to enjoy God forever!” Those crazy Scots, and a few Englishmen, got it right. They got it right! Why do we even exist at all? Why have been created in the first place? To glorify God, and to enjoy God forever. We are made for joyful relationship, not just with each other, but with God.

Sometimes, I’ll be the first to admit, this can feel like a burden – having this relationship with God. Sometimes it’s just another thing I can let myself feel guilty about: I’m not praying enough; I’m not going to church as much as I should; I’m not a good Christian. But you know, when I start to think this way, I imagine God lets out a huge sigh. I imagine that when I start to feel like relationship with God is a burden, God says something like, “I made you, Sweetie, and it was very good. I enjoy you! And, I want you to enjoy me. Let’s have fun together!” The essence of relationship with God is joy. We are made for joy in our Creator.

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 To sum up: Who is God? God is our Creator. Who are we? We are God’s creations. This means three things: that we are made of mud and we are going back there, which means we are free to relish the life that we have here and now. Being God’s creatures also means we are made for relationship with each other. We are not rocks or islands. We need each other. And, finally, as creatures of God, we are made for *joy*, made for joyful relationship with the One who formed us out of the mud in the beginning.

 Thanks be to God!