

“Creation”
Genesis 1:31 – 2:7;
Romans 8:13-23; John 3:10-21

Pastor Norman Fowler
First Presbyterian Church of Moscow
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I have a question for you. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Sometimes thinking about beginnings is kind of hard because we're not certain exactly what happened. I would guess in much of our daily lives we really don't spend a lot of time thinking about beginnings. Each day that I go along, it's not the first thing I think about in the morning. How did it all begin? I just want to try to begin my day. And yet, I think there's something really important about thinking about beginnings, particularly the beginning of everything.

How did it all begin? I'm one who believes that it all began because there was a creator. Right there, that begins to shape how I see everything, what it means, what creation is about. I can get caught up in daily life and not think about all of that, but then I can also begin to think about my own stuff and get so focused that I don't think of anything outside of myself. That's one of the things that thinking about the beginning suggests. If there was one who began it all, there is definitely something outside of myself. And if there is that one outside of myself who began it all, there might be some meaning and purpose behind it as well.

It begins to shape a way of seeing things, so just beginning to think about God creating all that is, wondering at the incredible nature of God, impacts how we see things. It's an incredible thing to think about the beginning and to think that God created. He not only created all that is, but then we have that wonderful image of God breathing life into Adam. Not only all that is, but life. Wonderful images that I think impact the way we think about the world.

The Psalmist says “The earth is the Lord's and all therein.” It makes me pause and think. Maybe I should pay attention to some of that, how I care about it, those kinds of things. But I don't want to stop there because the Psalmist says something else that at first almost sounds contradictory. In Psalm 115, verse 16, which is one of the verses we read today, it says “The heavens are God's, but the earth he gave to us humans.” What does that mean? Not only can we think about the incredible nature of having a creator who might have created things in particular ways and all of that, but then there's this idea that God gave it to us.

Throughout history, there is one thing that has happened with acknowledging a Creator. People have begun to look at what creation looks like in relationship to God. So one of the ways, one of the roots of science, is actually the idea that God made things and God has some consistency as to who God is and therefore

there is probably some consistency to this creation, so we might begin to find those consistencies. Today, I think we call them laws of nature.

The idea that there is something to find came out of a belief that God does things that have some order to them. There might be a law of thermodynamics because it makes sense that God does something like that and created things in a particular way. Now they didn't quite start there, but by beginning to look for how gravity works, why the planets go around in the ways they do. There was a sense that God made things that had some order to them.

Now I think there is one little danger with that because we begin to think about how orderly it is and we think it should all be orderly. We could take it to the extreme and sometimes I think we almost think that if we could just have everything work right all the time, so there was no change, it would be great.

There was something I read as a teenager, a long time ago, that reminded me of this. It's a book by Madeline L'Engle called *A Wrinkle in Time*. I think it's a classic book. Without telling you a whole lot about it, these youth are on a new planet and they are looking for their father. Their first experience of going into a town on this particular planet is, I think, interesting.

Below them a town was laid out in harsh angular patterns. The houses in the outskirts were exactly alike. All square boxes painted blue. Each had a small rectangular plot of lawn in front. Each with a line of dull-looking flowers edging the path to the door. Meg had a feeling that if she counted the flowers, there would be exactly the same number for each house. In front of all the houses, the children were playing. Some were skipping rope, some were bouncing balls. Meg felt vaguely that something was wrong with their play...

Charles said suddenly, "They're skipping and bouncing in rhythm. Everyone is doing it at the same moment." It was so. The skip rope hit the pavement; so did the ball. As the rope curved over the head of the jumping child, the child with the ball caught the ball. Down came the ropes; down came the balls over and over again, up and down, all in rhythm, all identical like the houses, like the paths, like the flowers.

You get the picture. The idea that we want everything to be the same, to actually work out that way, begins to get boring. Do you really want your next day to be exactly the same as the one before, and the one before that, and the one before that? At least in the movie *Groundhog Day* he got to change things up as he went along. He didn't have to do the same thing every day.

Sometimes I think when we think about the way the world works, the consistency of it, we really long for it and we think we want it all to be exactly the same. But I don't think God made things that way. It talks about God hovering over the deep, and "the deep" was an expression for chaos, in Hebrew thought. Do we have any chaos among us? A little bit? Or we might say "randomness."

Do you ever play Bingo? I have a Bingo card. I'll just draw a number out – N45. My card doesn't have that number. All I am suggesting here is that there are things in life that are random. We work with randomness all the time (like drawing a Bingo number), and yet when you add to it some structure (like a Bingo card) you get a pattern. It feels to me that God has created things so that there are patterns, but there is also randomness. That's what gives life interest in some ways. Between the structure and randomness something happens. God has created something that is really interesting.

Why would God do that? So that God could give us a way that things happen without God always being in control. In fact, I think we can hear that when, in Matthew 5, Jesus talks about the rain falling on the just and the unjust (or the righteous and the unrighteous). Because that happens, God is not always deciding that the rain is going to fall just on this person to reward him or this person to punish him. Jesus suggests that doesn't seem to be happening.

There's another point where there's an accident. The tower of Siloam falls on some people and folks wonder why this happened to those people. What did they do wrong? Jesus says they didn't do anything wrong. (Luke 13:4-5) He refuses to say that everything that happens is either reward or punishment. When God gives the world to us, it's a world that works in particular ways. It has some randomness that's bounded.

If you think about it, that's kind of what all creation is. What is God? One description is "Alpha and Omega." What's in between? Creation and the energy of it. Some physicists might even say that everything is energy bounded by the rules of the world. After all, $E=mc^2$, so mass and energy are related. We don't really need to go all the way there, but the point is that God has made things in a way that there is energy in the world and there is consistency, and with the boundedness and the randomness, things work and allow us to react to them.

So let me talk about this in another way. There was a guy way back in ancient Greece names Heraclitus. He was looking at a river and he said, "You know what? You never put your foot in the same river twice." On one side, we can recognize that. The river has flow to it. Now we know there are all those molecules going down the river as it's flowing along, so if you put your foot in you are not going to touch the same molecules. But is it really a different river? Don't

we define river as a thing that has a continual flow of water? That's why it's a river.

What I'm suggesting there is that, again, there's a certain randomness, a difference, that's going on and a consistency, the boundedness, of what is there. There's a flow that starts to happen. I think that's what God has given us. If you think about it, time is a little that way, too. We flow through time. What makes a difference in the flow of time? One thing that makes a difference is what we do.

Notice in Romans that we read today, why would creation groan? It's groaning because of what we have done as human beings. The flow that has happened has not been a great one. The difference between a river and us is that the way the flow goes is dependent on our decisions and we can take ourselves in bad directions with the way we affect the flow.

God has created a world in which the way the flow goes, the way life ends up going, is dependent on you and me. Why does Jesus come? Because God loves the world, and he sees things that are going wrong, and he wants to invite us to live in the light rather than in the darkness. He wants us to change the flow. He wants us to do things differently. He wants us to flow into life and into everlasting life. He wants to change where things are going.

The incredible thing is that the decisions you and I make matter, and together they matter. It's bounded. God bounds things, but how the flow goes matters. It matters what you and I do, the decisions we make. Whether we live in the shadow or in the light, whether we bring darkness or light to life, so the flow goes—the life God has given us, the earth, given us.

Lord, it is incredible to think about who you are. To think of you as creator, capable of entering into the world, changing the world, and yet you have given us earth. You have given us the opportunity to make a difference. You have called us to be a people who live in the light. You have made what we do matter, and that's incredible. We ask for your guidance. Help us see the light that Christ has brought. Help us see the wonder of the resurrection that leads us into life. Help us see where you would take us that our decisions might bring that light to life. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.