

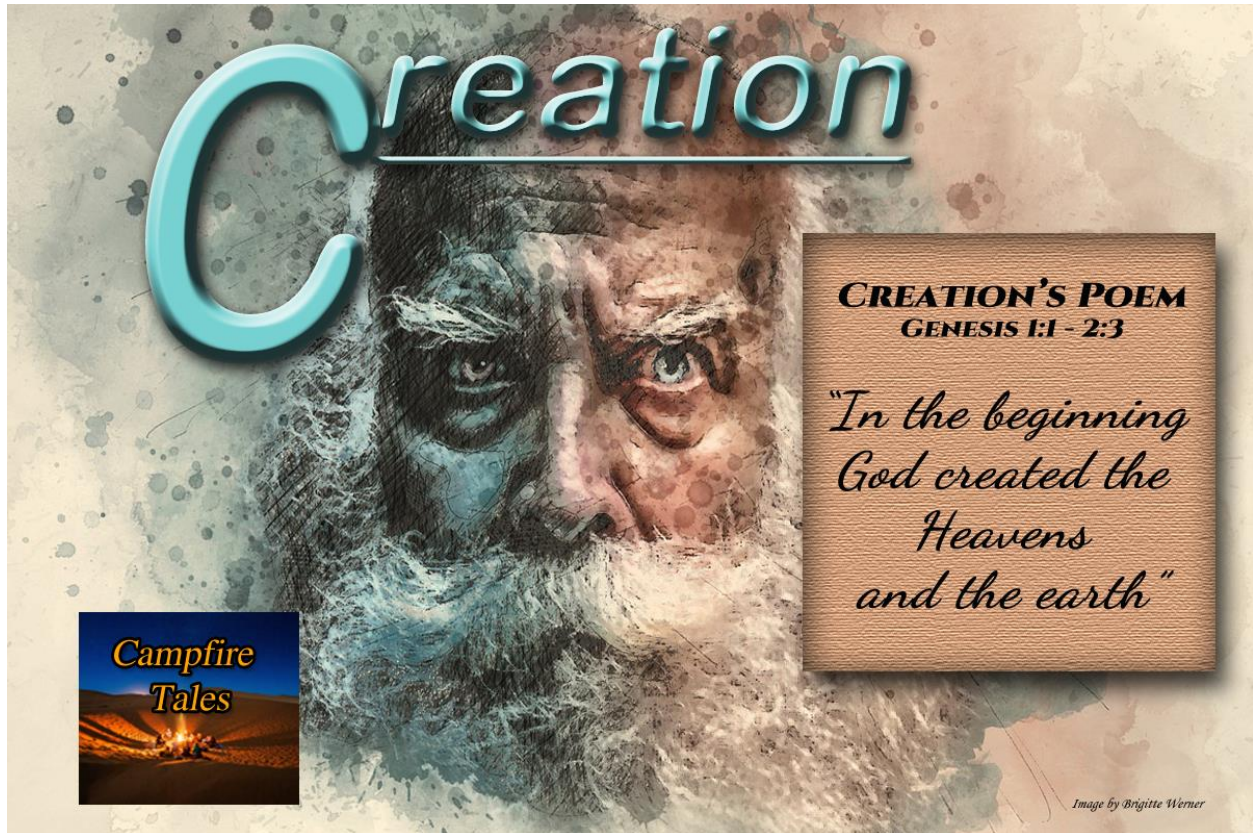
CREATION'S POEM

June 5

(Pentecost Sunday)

The Poem in Genesis about Creation

Genesis 1:1-2:3



Special Music: "So Will I" (100 Billion X)

Hillsong United

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2U7ffUM5Ec>

An unobscured crescent moon and a thousand stars light up the night sky. The nearby bonfire cannot extinguish the glory of the heavens. Here in a meadow, surrounded by tents and animals, the nomads gather for their nightly ritual. The elders of the tribe sit together in a place of honor while the other men take their place in a circle around the flames. Sitting on the blankets made from animal skin, they watch the gathering of the tribe. In the background, women scurry about bringing food and wine to the men. Children play and listen from the shadows, bursting forth with an occasional squeal which brings a quick admonishment from the mothers.

An elderly man, leaning on his staff and accompanied by his young apprentice, slowly makes his way to a section of the circle that has been set aside for him. His leathery face is channeled with the deep wrinkles of age, and a stool has been set in place for him to sit comfortably. There is history and wisdom in his eyes and his bearing suggests that he carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. His long grey beard, bushy eyebrows, tangled hair, and colorful robes gives him an air of sageship. He carefully takes his place on the stool and looks into the eager eyes of the men surrounding him. His apprentice sits near his feet and mentally takes notes of all that is happening.

The people begin to quiet as it becomes obvious that the old man is about to start speaking. The silence isn't awkward. It is the silence of meditation and worship. The fire crackles as sparks reach for the sky. There is an eager anticipation as the people wonder what story the old man might say this night.

He clears his throat. In a deep and somewhat raspy voice, he brings the message to the people:

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.”

7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.

8 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so.

10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so.

12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years,

15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so.

16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.

17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth,

18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.

19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.”

21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”

23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.

25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The old man stops speaking and takes a deep, rattly breath. The people wait in silence with an air of respect and appreciation. The storyteller uses his staff and carefully rises to his feet, gathering his robes around him. His

apprentice stands help him. Together they walk in silence back to their tent as the fire continues to crackle and burn. The elders nod to each other, compose themselves, and rise to their feet, quietly exiting the circle. Once gone, the people begin to murmur and talk among themselves, going about their evening business. The children resume their play, and the fire begins to wane from lack of tending. Such is the nature of the passing of knowledge among generations of early humans.

Have you ever had a child ask you where they came from or how babies are made? It is an uncomfortable question, and your answer may be reflective of the child's age, assuming you don't avoid it completely. A teenager does not need the same answer as a six-year-old. Adolescents have a need for understanding the details of procreation, but a young child is often content with a less complicated answer.

The human race is a child in the eyes of God. We can't begin to understand the complexities of creating a universe. God knows this. It is one reason God is gentle and patient with us. I had a good friend ask me the other day about the meaning of Matthew 18:3. I always find such input from others invaluable in both my studies and my sermons. Matthew 18:3 reads:

And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Why does Jesus tell us this? How is this possible and what purpose does such a statement make? How do we become like little children? We have tendency to focus on the logistics of such a question rather than the implications. It is very similar to the statement Jesus makes in John 3:3:

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

And Nicodemus responds with the question:

“How can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus’ statement is not about logistics, but Nicodemus wants to focus on the logistics. Our minds want the world to be black and white, clearcut and bold. We want our answers now even though we don’t even know how to ask the right questions. And if God were to give us detailed answers, we wouldn’t understand them.

Even with all that we have learned, we still can’t begin to comprehend the details involved in even the simplest of questions. Why do rabbits have fur? Why do fish have scales? Why did God make a world where the sun always rises in the east? If we are only a small speck in God’s eye, why did He even bother to create the rest of the universe? Why are some people gay and others straight? Why do we have different colors of skin? Why did God create a situation where we would fall into sin? Why? Why? Why? Like a child throwing a tantrum in the grocery store.

While we may be able to determine some of the scientific reasons for certain things that we did not know in the past like “why is the sky blue?” and “why do we have both fresh and salt water?” there are other things that we may never have an answer for. We go to school to learn what answers can be gleaned from teachers and scientists who have studied the world around us. But because we are on the path to discovery, we often find that our answers are wrong, our assumptions and our math are fuzzy. What was true yesterday is not true today. Yesterday, you could have been executed for saying the world was round, or that the earth was not the center of the universe. Today, we learn about genetics, cellular biology, germs, light, space, astronomy, physics, language, and so much more. This is knowledge the earliest humans did not have access to. What we do know today is that we have barely scratched the surface with regards to the makeup of the universe and how it came to be.

So, imagine being in a tribe of nomads trying to come to terms with God hurling the Milky Way Galaxy into existence with a single word. Those nomads asked many of the same questions we ask today, “Where did I come from?” and “Why am I here?” Now think about God responding to those tribal people. “Let me show you how this works. The universe is constructed of atoms which are so small you cannot see them. They are bound together through different processes such as heat, cold, vacuum, etc. And here is a picture of the periodic table and how molecules are formed. And while we are at it, let me tell you about DNA, physics, chemistry, microbiology, geology, atmospheric, and algebra.”

Is that what we tell our young children when they ask us where they came from? Of course not. It would not make sense to them. There is no reason to explain something to a child with language that is foreign to them. You simply can't have a complex discussion with someone whose basic vocabulary is limited to "I love you," "I'm sleepy," "I'm hungry," "I need to potty." It is far too confusing for them. They do not have the foundation for understanding the complexities of the universe. Their world is a world of creating that foundation so that they will be able to begin to understand the process someday in the future. Instead, we often give them a much more simplistic answer based on things that they do know, even if it is not entirely accurate. "There's a baby in mommy's tummy."

But here's the thing about children. They always believe they are older and more responsible than they are. Most adults are like that as well. We all seem to want to be more important than we were yesterday. But children, bless their hearts, are constantly looking for that next step up the ladder towards adulthood. It becomes ingrained in them that stepping into adulthood is their ultimate goal. We want them to grow up but we don't want them to grow up. The great dichotomy. Little do those children realize, no matter what you tell them, they really don't know what it means to step into adulthood. But that doesn't deter them. I hear mom's and dad's wishing that their children could remain young and innocent because they know the pain that comes with the growth process.

So, as my friend asks, what does Jesus mean when He says:

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus is telling all of us that we are too big for our britches, that we need to rethink who we are and examine our place in the universe. Just because we might know a little more than the next guy or gal, our knowledge base is next to nothing compared with our Creator. We need to drop our ego and our hubris, step back and acknowledge that we are not the Creator, and we never will be. But just like a mother loves her child, God loves us even when we start talking about things that we actually know nothing about.

Have you ever seen how a child will make up answers to questions for which they have no answers? Especially if there isn't a parent to help them separate truth from fantasy. We are not God. We are not God. Supposition and opinion do not become fact just because we say it out loud. When we don't look to our Heavenly Father for answers to our questions, we are doomed to make up our own answers and if we shout them loud and long enough, they can begin to sound like truth to us.

So, preacher, what has this got to do with Genesis 1?

God needed to give us something to hang our hats on when it comes to the Creation. Just as Jesus used parables to explain concepts that seemed unclear to His disciples. God reduced the Creation story into something that we could understand and repeat back. Something that will bring out the awe in us, causing us to realize that WE ARE NOT THE CREATOR. WE ARE NOT GOD. There was no

way that God could explain the deliberate process, the design, the purpose, the science, behind creation to our distant ancestors. We were, and still are, children in His eyes. As smart as we think we are, we cannot understand. God wants us to realize that fact and to stop trying to be adults before we are ready. He explains Creation to us in terms that we can understand. Genesis one is not a device manual. It doesn't tell us the details of how the universe was created.

I have a new watch given to me by a dear friend. It came with a set of instructions. And while the instructions are accurate and true, they are not complete with regards to how the watch was constructed. Those instructions do not give me a list of materials or how those materials were made. It does not give me size and placement of every gear. It doesn't need to. I only need to be able set it up and maintain it. I am not a creator of watches, nor do I need to create a watch to use one. The gift is a lovely one and so very appreciated. I can enjoy the watch and also be in awe of watchmakers.

God does not mind that we are curious. He loves it when we explore the depth of Creation, search for the building blocks of the universe, speculate on the words, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** It does bother God when we decide that we really don't need God to understand the universe, that we have all the answers or are even well on our way to finding them all out.

God hates hubris. He hates it when we claim to be more than we are. When we start to believe that we no longer need God because we are smarter than that, we step into the very trap that satan lead us to. While we may think that we know so very much, the truth is, we know very little. God wants us to adjust

our thinking so that we return to an understanding that we are little children in His eyes, not co-authors of the universe.

This week I want us all to consider the words of the Creation story in Genesis 1 and the beginning of Genesis 2. Read the passage to yourselves out loud and hear God speaking to His children. God's gift of enlightenment to each of us, a glimpse into a creation process so complex that we may never understand it. Let us find our way back from our know-it-all attitudes to a simpler attitude of curiosity and wonder. Let us find our way back to being little children before our God.

There is an eager anticipation as the people wonder what story the old man might say this night. He clears his throat, and in a deep, somewhat raspy voice, he brings the message to the people:

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

AMEN

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