

September 6, 2015 “A New Dawn” Genesis 1:1-31

There is a difference between theology and science. Only fools (on either side of the equation for that matter) get their shirts in a knot when the 2 fail to align detail for detail. Science seeks to measure. More than anything else it wants to tell us “what is” measured in time, measured in size, by weight and height and volume. I recently listened to a discussion led by a theologian in which several scientists stated they had more faith in the big bang theory than any other scientific theory that is out there. They stated they believed the theory of the sudden explosive creation of everything out of nothing most aligned with the observable, measureable facts. 2 of the three scientists said that the creation of everything out of nothing was less than logical, but they found it a more believable hypothesis than the alternatives. Ironically what they were saying was they were willing to make this statement, an act of faith so long as God was kept out of the equation.

That is the precise point at which the Bible and theology diverge from science. The testimony of the Scriptures and therefore of theology is to make this specific statement. God is real and God is present. And because HE is God, and not of the created order, He is first and foremost the Creator God, the creator of all that is. And without him nothing that was created, made, came into existence. Biblical theology (and by the way there are other types...non Biblical theology....and yes, non Biblical theology can get weird. It can deny faith. It can deny God's existence. It can postulate that God died. And it can do so because it has cut the anchorchain, the tap root of theology.

The whole of the Book of Genesis can to some degree be summarized by the first verse...”In the beginning God created the
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heavens and the earth.” Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 begins by informing us and declaring before us and to all the world that this book and the whole of the Book which the Genesis account begins, the Bible, is about making a statement of faith. The Judaeo Christian experience begins and ends in the making of a statement of faith. It is a sign of the degree to which wise old John the writer of the 4th Gospel understood this. So he begins his account of the birth, life, ministry and death and resurrection

of Jesus with these words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and (to be even more explicit) the Word was God, He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” John deliberately ties the history of Jesus ministry to Genesis chapter 1 verse 1.

He is saying we have not changed the God we are talking about. Remember John was a Jew long before he was called a Christian. He is saying the Christian understanding of Jesus is in fact only possible if you build that understanding on what the Jewish Scriptures already told us and continue to tell us about God. It is the one and the same God who redeems and saves and makes all things new.

We are about to begin what has always been my favourite season of the year. Call me strange. Call me a fossil sprung from a kid raised in the wilderness, the sticks of northwestern Ontario. But this is a fact. I have always loved the Autumn of the year more than the summer. But then, especially when I was younger, I always claimed at least to love the winter too. I have always found it hard to accept that there are those who would appreciate a world without snow, and ice, and minus thirty degree weather.

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Friday, following our routine when we are at the farmhouse, we rose from our beds and took the dogs for a walk on our side road. And I insisted Barbara who always has her Iphone at hand use that technology to take pictures of the first branches of bright red maple leaves just a few hundred yards from our farm house gate. Technically we still call it summer. And because none of us is as consistant as we would like to think we are, I am in no rush to put on sweaters and jackets and even a down filled parka, than anyone else. But I love the artwork of the Holy Spirit of God as he touches the earth in our part of the world. The forest transforms into a floral bouquet. And on Ohara Road in Madoc Township you would be hard pressed to find a Sumac that has not begun to sport red leaves and even branches as the forerunner of the festival of Fall colour. To me the Fall of the year is a festival of faith. The undeniable experience is that Lord is present and among us and the power of His creatorhood is to be seen everyday as he covers our part of the earth with His art work.

In the beginning....before anything was created.... “the Spirit

of God was hovering over the waters.” That's the 2nd statement of faith in the first 2 verses. And then God speaks. It should be obvious but to some it is not, that means God uses words to do the act of creating. And John says that powerful word, so powerful scientists can now call it the big bang! John says that Word is none other than Jesus. “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”

But our singular province of study this morning is Genesis 1...”And God said let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness,and there was evening and there was morning, the first

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day.” That is the 3rd statement of faith in this Genesis creed. That God is responsible for the details of the day. The details of the night. The solar system working as it does to provide us with the unique experience of crystal blue skies with the trees in their glory, and the darkness of the sky in which we can see the stars like a spray of lights, and with the moon shining so bright we can see our shadows as we walk down a country road. And I say country road because the street lights in our communities mask that reality from our view.

There was evening and there was morning...the first day. It was literally a new dawn. The first dawn experienced in the world, on this planet earth that we so often forget is our singular home. A new dawn. A new dawn in which so many things suddenly become possible. And Moses as the author of record for this document continues to make statements of faith as he unfolds the creation of the details of life....the sky, the division between the water and the dry land, the vegetation, the details of the universe in which we are located, the creatures of the seas and lakes, the creatures of the land, and finally people...mankind. And Moses states his faith here in the facts that the world into which he was born, in the midst of which God called him to faith and service...God made it all. And part of his statement of faith is that God made it and it was all good...including mankind...until mankind mucked it up.

This ancient manuscript professes a faith position in which there is one thing that God did not make. He did not create sin. Adam and Eve, people, did that. Tempted by the serpent yes, But sin's arrival on the

scene is uniquely the product of human activity, human decision and human choice. And there is a degree to which sin as the contribution of the good people God made wrecks the system. It ruptures the relationship the people had with God. It

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transforms life so that work becomes a matter of survival. Sin makes work hard, makes surviving hard work. In a sin disrupted environment the man has to sweat to find food and sometimes he fails. And child bearing becomes an agony for the woman. And sex gets as messy and messed up as we see it to be in the times in which we are living.

Statements of faith about the nature of life and the nature of our world. And primarily, always primarily about the presence and the grace of God and our having a primary relationship to the Lord our God because He has ordained it to be so. We are created in God's image because we are His children first and last. For us and for God it is a new dawn. God has discovered what it is to be a parent. And people have discovered we are not only His children, sometimes we are just plain childish. We deny our nature. We deny we are sinful. We deny our dependence. We deny our mortality. Because first of all we deny what Moses knew, what we have come to recognize, God is. He really is!

I keep saying the whole of the Bible leads us down this road. I keep reiterating that God is the same in the Old Testament and the New. And of course I keep saying that Jesus represents the great new dawn that bursts upon our lives when we return to recognizing God through faith in His Son who is the Word of life, the light that brings light into the lives of every one who becomes able to see that God is real, and that life which includes faith is better than life without faith.

What the Gospels and the New Testament letters make plain is that it is not so simple as that a person chooses to believe. Just like the Creation story of Genesis, the faith adventure begins for

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all of us (whether we recognize it or not), it begins for us with something God does. The artist has portrayed Jesus as standing at a door bearing a lamp, the light, and the door has no knob or latch on His side. The metaphore of that painting is that God comes to the door of our lives and He knocks. But we on the other hand must open the door.

When I first retired to this area, I joined the Quinte Men's Gospel Chorus. I remember first hearing an old hymn and learning it with that Men's Chorus that has the refrain: Time after time HE has waited before/ And now he is waiting again / To see if you're willing to open the door....O how He wants to come in. It is a hymn about the ultimate New Dawn for us.

Let us pray;

Lord we give thanks for the first signs that the season is about to change. We thank you that your finger prints are all over the world you have made, and have given, and that surround us. Help us to see and to remember when it is hard for us to do either one, that our faith and love for you was preceded by your love for us and your reaching out to be part of our lives. Call us to the light. Help us to open the door to your Sovereign presence. In Jesus name we ask. Amen