

June 6, 2021 The Garden Genesis 2:1-17

Dearly Beloved;

I want to begin by thanking those who sent along their memories of Betty Faulkner, and her family, as part of the St. Andrew's Church. I confess, I struggled with her funeral which was no more than an interment service. Between the brevity, and all the other Covid-19 restrictions...masking, distancing, hand sanitizer and so on, I felt I had failed to make the moment anything other than it was...a burying of the remains, all be it with prayer and the reading of the Word. This was the only graveside funeral I have had to conduct in the time of Covid-19. I sorely missed the fellowship we have continually extended to those who asked for our assistance at such times. It is another face of the pandemic and what it has taken from us.

Once again my thanks to those who shared.

As the numbers continue to decline in Ontario, I am sure it is a matter of time until we will have some form of in person worship returning. I have no more insight than you do at this time, as to when that will be. Stay tuned and continue to pray for the safety of the individuals who make up our fellowship. I miss you, and you are precious to me. With that we turn to the lesson for this precious day.

The radishes in my small garden poked their leaves through the surface of the soil about two weeks ago. The carrots followed suit this past week. I fully expect when we get back to the farmhouse we will see bean plants sprouting next.

The zucchini should make their appearance in short order as well.

Beside the obvious provision of food, the sprouting of the seeds in the garden provide me with a much needed spiritual moment. Hence my turning to Genesis chapter 2. It is a characteristic of Jewish writing, and the Old Testament documents in general that we are told things, and then we are told them a second time. There is an old saying about preaching that goes “I tells ‘em, I tells ‘em what I tolds ‘em, and then I tells ‘em what I tolds ‘em again.” That seems to follow the Biblical model. The modern mind has a tendency to question the Creation story in Genesis, followed by the Creation story in Genesis 2. And there is a real tendency to get our shirts tied in knots over the fact that the accounts are not precisely the same, if it is just a repetition of the facts.

As I look back over sermons I have preached and shared in manuscript form, I notice that I have a tendency to use a well worn phrase that runs, “in other words....” I have a tendency to repeat the point but seldom in the very same words I used the first time. Illustrations multiply and facts get included in the other words, that were not included in the first words. I justify my style based on the fact that I am somewhat like if not imitating the Genesis 1 and 2 models. So here we go, once again looking at what the Bible teaches about this beautiful world coming to be, and people coming to be, and their making a home in the garden which this earth was made to be.

Chapter 2 begins by making the point that the seventh day of the week is a holy day, a holy moment in the unfolding of what we now call weeks and months and years. Above the desk where I write and compose these messages there hangs a calendar. (By the way the desk was a gift from my parents at Christmas preceding my graduation from Public School and the beginning High School. My Father told me I would need a place to do my work. I am still working at that double pedestal wood desk.) The pen and ink gave way to a typewriter, and now of course the computer monitor, keyboard, tower and printer.

I was about to say the calendar reminds me the 7<sup>th</sup> day is Saturday. The Jews call it Shabbat. We and our culture call it Saturday. One of the signs of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, is that the Christian community moved with such ease to recognize a new holy day. They were all of them Jewish in their culture and former beliefs, and yet the ease with which they moved to worship and gather in the morning on Sundays is testimony to their recognition God did a new thing to be recognized on a new day. It is mentioned in the last chapters of all the Gospels, which is to say they made that change almost immediately after the stone was rolled away...that very night.

Genesis 2 goes on to say that nothing was growing or green. The reason for this apparent bareness, (no shrubs, no plants) no dogwood, no radishes, is two-fold. God had not sent

the rain. And there was no man to work the ground. It may seem like I grasp at the merest of coincidences, but the radishes appeared after our first rain shower. And of course they appeared at that point because I had worked the ground, and Barbara had planted the seeds in neat little rows across our 6 foot by 4 foot garden box. We need the rain. And we need to work the ground if there is to be a crop of vegies. The process is under way because those fundamental processes have been met.

The NIV translation chose to translate vs. 6 by telling us streams of water came up from the earth. The KJV (most accurate word for word translation every done) says a mist went up from the earth. And to give credit where it is due, the NIV has a note at the bottom of the page that the word streams could be translated mist. Clearly what is being described in very sound language to which science bears testimony is the cycle of moisture evaporating below, creating clouds, and returning that moisture to the land in the form of rain. It is rather profound when you stop to think about it, that we have always understood something of how rain works.

And then it gets even more exciting. God creates the man “out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” As many of you are aware I had a graveside service for a former member of St. Andrew’s from years ago. And I said the ancient words, “ashes to ashes and dust to dust in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.” Mankind has always

had a fundamental understanding that the turning of the body to dust of the earth is a returning to the material from which we sprang. But here is another fascinating insight. The NIV says the man became a living being. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is certainly more comfortable with that language. But what the KJV says is “the man became a living soul.”

What I find fascinating about that is that it does not say, God gave man a soul as opposed to his body. And there have been those who spent their lives looking for a way to define the soul in that it could not be located on the dissection table. It is a profound insight into the nature of our humanity. There is no question we have bodies. And for all its short comings, I like the one I have. But what the KJV captures in its word for word translation is that men and women are more than just bodies, conglomerates of tissue and cells. For better or for worse, we are spiritual entities with a physical nature. We do not so much have a soul, as we are one, just as surely as we are a body. And when body and soul are together, we are the unique individuals we are, as we work, and think and plan and dream. And believe.

And we all believe. Believing something is not, is as much a statement of faith as testifying that something is. And it is there in the word in verse 7 of Genesis 2. Mankind became a living soul. A physical-spiritual being. Each one of us is a walking, talking, thinking miracle. Hard to explain? You bet. Undeniable? Right on.

One more thing...a bit of an announcement. Next week we will take a few moments at this point to celebrate the Lord's Supper. So make preparation. A glass of wine, and a piece of bread. Remember a soda cracker is akin to Matzo bread, Passover bread. And if you do not have wine...juice will do.

Let us pray.

Lord we give thanks for the Spring of the year and the visible transition to summer. We thank you for the greening of the earth, the smell of the grass when we cut our lawns, the smell of new mown hay. Here in Southern Ontario, the farmers have taken off the first crop of hay. We praise you God for the fruitfulness of the ground, and the promise of harvest we see in the germination of every seed. Grant us the vision to enjoy the earth in its beauty and to return thanks to you, our God and Redeemer. Amen