



*In the Beginning*

First in a sermon series on Genesis

*Genesis 1:1-2:4a*

Trinity Sunday, June 11, 2017

First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois

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Text:

“Let us make humans in our own image”; in the image of God they were created; male and female, God created them. (v. 27)

My wife got me one of those DNA tests for my birthday; the kind that you spit into a tube and send it off to be analyzed. After a few weeks the results come back, not only genetic heritage but whether or not you have a gene that gives you a propensity for a particular disease. Well, when my results came back there were a few minor surprises. For example, I am more Irish and British than I am German. This was a verification of an earlier test that received from The National Geographic. I am also more Northern European, and northern Spain with a bit of Basque than German. All of which goes to explain why I don't really like German food all that much. I also learned that my “people” were among the first wave to leave East Africa and that I have more Neanderthal than 90 plus percent of the people who have been tested.

Now you may wondering if my fascination with my DNA doesn't go against our reading in Genesis. It doesn't. You see, Genesis presents a new reality. It is not the reality of Science with its limitations of discovery nor is it the reality of the Mythology of the ancient world with its pantheon of gods and goddesses. It is about a Transcendent reality that over arches all realities standing above and apart from them.

In the beginning God. That is how Genesis begins. It begins with God. It always begins with God, not us. As a matter of fact, it's never about us. It is always about God. And in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. The first thing that God created was Light. Light was created before the luminaries in the heavens, the sun and the moon, the stars and the constellations. The gospel of John consciously picked up on God's Creation when he started his gospel with these words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...He was the Light of the world.”

There are two creation stories in Genesis. Years ago before I attended seminary I was in a Bethel Bible Study at my home church. You may have been a part of a class like that. I found old curriculum of Bethel when I first arrived. Bethel surveyed the books of the bible with large posters containing symbols portraying the stories of the bible. At that time I was told that the two creation stories were like two different views, one from the New York Times and the other from the Peoria Journal Star. That's not quite correct, but it is helpful. The first creation story is about how humanity is the height of God's creation while the second story tells us how human sin destroys the individuals, relationships, and communities.

God created us as the pinnacle of creation. God created us simultaneously, male and female. In his commentary on Genesis wrote that any discrimination between the genders is more a sign of human sin than divine intention.

Being created in the divine image means that we have a Resemblance to God. The older I get the more I see the shadows of my ancestors staring back at me. When I look at my daughters and grandchildren, even before they are aware of what they are doing, I see little unconscious mannerisms or expressions that are a reflection of my own. There is a definite resemblance. We have a resemblance to God. We are not god-like but we can make decisions. We know the difference between good and evil. To a limited extent we can share the world around us.

Having a Resemblance to God means that we a Relationship with God. Last night I received a text message from one of my daughters who is on vacation asking if she could call me in a few minutes. These texts always make me nervous so I responded "Yes, is there a problem?" She replied "No, my grandson wanted to talk to me." My grandson wanted to talk to me! Pop! Not Mimi but Pop! Wow! Can you imagine how happy that made me!

Imagine how happy God must feel when we want to talk to Him! God wants us to ask His advice and take the time to actually listen to Him. Imagine how happy the Almighty is when we actually do what God wants us to do!

Having a Resemblance to God and having a Relationship with God also means that we have a Responsibility to God. I like the way that The Voice bible renders God's charge to humanity; Then God blessed them and gave them this directive: "Be fruitful and

multiply. Populate the earth. I make you trustees of My estate, so care for My creation and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that roams across the earth.”

Do you remember all of parables that Jesus told about being a “trustee”, a “steward” of God’s. The parable of the talents. To bury our talents that have been given to us by God is an affront to the Almighty. Or the parable about the landowner who leaves and entrusts the care of his property to his servants. They were to be held accountable for their trusteeship.

We have a responsibility to God for how we use the resources that God has given to us, our talents, our gifts, and our opportunities. Recently my university lost their basketball coach to Ohio State University. This is not the first time that a coach left for a larger university. I lamented through email with my classmates that Butler was just on the verge of being a powerhouse not unlike Duke if only they had a coach with the tenure of Coach K. One of the classmates replied that it is all about the money. Well, let me ask; how much money do we need? When is enough? How big of barns do we need to build before we realize that we cannot take anything with us? We are only temporary possessors of the things that we call “ours” and “mine”. God will ask us how we used the things that He gave to us to build His Kingdom here on earth.

And finally, we Resemble God, we have a Relationship with God as well as a Responsibility but we are also God’s Representatives. Did you know that you may be the only Bible that someone reads? Did you know that you are being watched and judged, not by God but by others who are wondering who is the god that you worship. Paul called us Christ’s ambassadors. We are God’s representatives in the world, speaking for God, doing the work of God and honoring God. We had better listen carefully to God and present a clear message of His love for as ambassadors, we are speaking for the King of kings.

To God be the glory. Amen.