

Thomas R. Cook  
St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota  
8:00 and 10:00 p.m. Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist  
Trinity Sunday – June 11, 2017

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“A Lament for the Sixth Day”

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Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Trinity A

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I know most of us have heard the Creation story from Genesis a thousand times, but I want to dwell with that this morning, because with all that is going on in the world nowadays, you know what I think lately whenever I hear it?... *I really, really do hope that God doesn't regret the sixth day.*

Yes, the sixth day, the day when humankind is created in God's image. Now, I don't mean “regret” in a scary or threatening or an angry sort of way, like the story of Noah and the flood. You know, God feeling “I wish I hadn't made them” and being so angry and upset that in one fell swoop and a major 40 day rainstorm, God covers the earth in water and drowns the Creation that is so disappointing in order to just start over. I don't mean that kind of regret. I've never been a big fan of that story anyway.

No, what I think I am trying to say is more akin to earnest disappointment, to sadness and confusion. With so much in the Creation for which our species might be

grateful ---with the beauty that surrounds us, the extraordinary resources that have given us much to have and much to share, the potential to do so much that is good in this world--- I guess I might say with all the blessings that accompany the wondrous, challenging, sometimes difficult, sometimes marvelous experience we call life--- so many people created expressly in the image of God spend so much time in the pursuit of the trivial, in consuming life rather than nurturing it, in sowing the seeds of harm, in fearing their neighbors or causing their neighbors to live in fear, of behaviors that are so dishonest, selfish, destructive, and unbecoming in light of the gift, and, yes, the burden of life.

I know I am reeling a bit from the incessant incidents of brokenness and violence unleashed by human beings on the world and its inhabitants and by the constant, even daily, revelations of dishonesty and ineptitude coming from our government, the mean-spirited relationships trotted out in the halls of congress and plastered all over the news, the petty intrigues, insinuations, and threats in the press, violence in our streets and homes, the unraveling of social contracts that help us provide for those in need, and the dwindling understanding within the human community that, with all the challenges this life brings, we are somehow in this together. I know that none of this is particularly new to the human experience. We've never really lived in the idyllic conditions expressed in the Garden of Eden. But having garnered so much experience, so much technology, so many resources, so

much learning, I had hoped that we might also have garnered so much understanding, so much compassion, so much intention for each other's well-being that the news might instead be covered with stories of sharing, of healing, of peace, of diplomacy, of mutual respect. And yet... here we are.

So, maybe I might better say it another way, for I take scripture at its word when it reveals that the Creation came into being by the will of God, and upon seeing what was made, Day 6 included, the pronouncement over beast and humankind is: "It was *good*." And when Jesus shares the underlying sentiment of the Creator when he tells his friends, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...", I understand that the regret of which I speak didn't come in the creating. It has come in the living... the harsh and unhelpful way of living so many choose, or the harsh way of living so many do not choose but must endure, in the brokenness that has permeated our experiences since the proverbial 6<sup>th</sup> day. What I think I am trying to say is... I am sorry. The regret of which I speak is really a *lament*, a sorrow born of an understanding, perhaps of a hope, that life could be lived some other way, some healthier, some less selfish, less violent, and less dishonest way. That destructive way of life brings so much sadness, and so we struggle. And I have to believe that this struggle is known in the heart of God. It's a struggle that Jesus experienced with us. It's a reason he invited us to love one another even as he loves us.

And lament, while sad, gives me hope. Because a lament is born of a sadness that recognizes that there must be another way. A lament for this world reveals that we know or believe that things could and should be different from the way they are. To lament the Sixth Day means to feel the urge to change. To lament the Sixth Day means we feel that this Creation and our fellow human beings are important enough for which to feel sorrow and hope. We would not lament that which doesn't matter to us, that which we do not ultimately love and appreciate. If you have wished for the world to be in a better way lately, not just for yourself, but for others as well, I think that is a rudimentary expression of faith and... love. And love has the power to change us for the good. And how to begin? I think of the angels who visited our ancestors in faith and so often started their conversations by saying, "Do not be afraid." Sure, easier said than done, but the invitation is not to succumb to the daily invitation to despair or apathy or prejudice or fear. Hold to a vision of a more just and peaceful world that God intends, and then give something of yourself to help make it come true. Just a heart more open to the plight of people who are troubled or poor or sick or lonely or frightened or threatened or not like you is a step in a good and growing and faithful direction.

There is another thing about the Creation story in the book of Genesis. I don't know that I had really considered this before. But have you noticed how each day of Creation ends in a certain way? "And there was evening and there was morning, the

first day.” “And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.” And so on and so on throughout the week. See, the fulfillment of each day’s work is measured not by the deepening of the darkness, rather by the rising of the light. And so for us human beings and for this Creation in which we dwell, even in the darkest of times, we hold this hope: “God saw everything God had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

So might we feel sorrow for this world now? Might we voice our lament for our struggles? Of course. There is much in the world to lament. But we can’t lose sight of the many acts of kindness and love and beauty that also accompany our way. In times of struggle, remember this ... *there was evening, and there comes a morning, for the sixth day.*