

“The Other Creation Story”

Genesis 2: 4b-7; 15-17; 3: 1-18

For our summer sermon series, we are going to go back to the basics. We are going to spend our summer with the Book of Genesis. Just think of it as a large version of Vacation Bible School for all ages.

As we continue our journeys of faith, we sometimes need to be reminded of where we have been so that we can have a better idea, a better understanding of where we are going and how we got there. So this summer, we are going to get back to the basics of our faith. We are going to be talking about courage, forgiveness, broken relationships, remembered promises, and how all these things come together to help us become the people God created and calls us to be.

This Sunday, we are talking about the “other” creation story. We are more familiar with the first creation story, the one that starts out “In the beginning” and then goes on to tell us about the next seven days. Then we usually skip a few verses and end up in the Garden with Adam and Eve, thinking it is all part of one big story. But if we take a look at the beginning of Genesis, we actually see that there are two separate creation stories, each one with its own description of how the world came into being.

The “other” Creation story is not as lyrical or poetic as the first one. And it is certainly not as dramatic. It is more down to earth, literally. We are told that God plants a garden in Eden in which God puts the man. Now here is where we get Adam. God doesn’t give this man the name Adam. The name Adam comes from the word A-da-m in Hebrew which means human. It is a play on words-A-da-m (human) is taken out of the earth (Adamah) which is Hebrew for earth. This play on words reminds us that we humans are made from dust, literally dirt, molded by the hands of God, and given life by God’s own breath. Talk about getting back to the basics. This is a wonderful reminder that God is our Creator. We miss this reminder because we are in such a hurry to get to the snake, and Adam and Eve!

We miss the very foundation of our faith because it is not as exciting as a talking snake! But when we take a look at the “other” creation story, we see that knowing and understanding, and more importantly, accepting God as our Creator shapes the rest of our faith story as well as shaping our identity as people of God. This accepting God as our Creator is the foundation that shapes how we live out our faith as the people of God in all our relationships.

Let me explain: As we take a look at the “other” Creation story, it is probably easier for me to say what this story is not about rather than jump right in and say what it is about. I want us to take a look at what this story is not about because this particular creation story has been used and abused way too many

times over the years. Honestly, thanks to Christian tradition, we read stuff into this story that is not even there. So for us to get back to the basics, first, we need to realize what this story is not about.

First, this “other” Creation story is not God’s failed experiment. It is not like God purposely planted the tree of Good and Evil in the Garden, told the humans not to eat of it, all the while secretly hoping that humans would eat of it. God didn’t do that. It is not like God purposely set human up to fail so that God could work from the beginning of time to keep saving us from God’s evil plan. God since the beginning of time has wanted to be in relationship with God’s creation, us included, because God loves us. Not because God has well, a god-complex and needs us to fail so God can look good redeeming God’s creation. That’s not how God’s works.

Second, this “other” Creation story is not about how evil entered into the world. Nowhere does it say Satan disguised as the snake tricked the woman into taking that first bite. We are told that the serpent was “crafty” which is a good translation of the Hebrew. However, the word “crafty” has negative connotations in English. These negative connotations lead us to think that the serpent was up to no good, or had some devious plan to once again get humankind to fail miserably.

We need to realize that the word “crafty” in Hebrew is found in other places in the Old Testament such as in Proverbs. This word can also mean “sensible” or “prudent”. The serpent could have very well just been making conversation with the woman. We really don’t know what the serpent’s motives were in this case. More than likely, he is just there as a literary device to help move the story along.

However, one thing we do know is, the devil or Satan doesn’t appear in this story to try and trick the woman because she is the weaker sex.

Which leads me to another misunderstanding about this story. This story of the Garden of Eden is not about sex and it is certainly not about males being better than females. Eve does not use her feminine wiles to seduce Adam into eating the fruit from the tree. In fact, if we go back to verse 6, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.” Eve wasn’t alone. She isn’t discussing theology with the snake while Adam was miles away, ignorant of what was going on. He was right there, standing quietly. Adam was right there, as an equal partner in the disobedience.

Now, people over the years have said, Well if it is not about sex, then why are Adam and Eve so ashamed that they are naked? Yes, they are ashamed but it is not because they are naked. Key phrase we need to remember is “Then the eyes of both were opened.” Think of it this way. Adam and Eve when they ate the fruit

from the Tree of Good and Evil, they experienced a loss of innocence. We probably all can remember a certain experience during our teenager years, during our young adult years when we tested our independence. During that defining moment, I'm sure we had two conversations running through our minds. We had one voice telling us not to do because our parents said it was wrong. But then we had this other voice, this other voice that told us to give it a try. We had this other voice telling us we knew better. This other voice that told us we were smarter than our parents, that we understood the ways of the world better than those old folks. We had this other voice speaking a lot louder telling us to just give it a try.

And in that defining moment of teenager years, young adult years, we followed that other voice. And depending on the circumstances, we either got caught or we didn't but, but in that moment, everything changed. Our eyes were opened.

This is that defining moment for Adam and Eve. They got caught and now they are facing the consequences. Adam and Eve are having to face some harsh realities because of their own actions. This defining moment literally strips away their blinders. Adam and Eve have to own up to the fact that they didn't listen to God's voice which offered them life but rather chose to listen to their own voice. They followed their own wants first. Adam and Eve decided to think of themselves as God-like. That's when things started unraveling, which is usually the case. You

know that moment when we decide we don't need God and that we can do things on our own, right?

The same goes for Adam and Eve. They didn't listen to God's voice which offered them life. They chose instead to listen to that other voice. They listened to this other voice that allowed them to construct a different reality, a reality in which they are in charge. But when that different false reality doesn't work and begins to fall apart, they make matters worse by trying to fix it on their own. Here's why I say this: We are told in our story, that they sewed fig leaves together and made loin cloths for themselves.

Well, that might as well been poison ivy! Fig leaves are really scratchy. It was probably like wearing sand paper right up against their skin. Adam and Eve may have eaten from the Tree of Good and Evil but they missed the Tree of Common Sense.

You see, the original audience having heard this "other" creation story would have gotten it. They would have understood that this story, this story of the Garden of Eden, this story of how Adam and Eve both ate the fruit, this story of how they had their eyes opened, the original audience would have understood that this story was about humankind's need to control our lives. This story is about how we tend to think we can do it better. It is about humankind's failed attempt to think

we are God and the consequences that follow when we forget that God is our Creator and not the other way around. The original audience would have understood that our hardest faith struggle really boils down to our unwillingness to accept who we really are. All because we don't like not being the ones in charge. As humans, we tend to think that we have got it all figured out. We tend to think that we can do it all on our own, with no help needed. We like to think that we are in control and that we are running this show, we call life.

Except when we start thinking like this, except when we start acting like this, we begin to fail miserably. We begin to lose our way. When we start thinking we are God, in our arrogance, we make things worse rather than better. We disrupt the balance of all Creation. When we start thinking we are in charge, things begin to fall apart quickly. And we don't have to look very far even in modern times to see that this is true. Just look around our world. Our waterways and air are polluted. Creation is slowly dying with each passing minute. Humanity is becoming more and more broken through poverty and disease. All because humanity has put profits over personal relationships with Creation. Things are falling apart due to our arrogance all because we think we are the ones running this show.

You know, I find it fitting that one of the first stories in our Bible is about becoming and claiming the person God created and calls us to be. You see, God

tells the man to till and keep the garden. The better translation is “to be indebted to” or “to serve”. God creates us to serve God’s creation. God creates us to be in relationship with God’s creation. God creates us to be in connection with God’s creation.

God made us for a special task but time and time again, we as humankind have rejected that special task. And through our arrogance, we have made matters worse.

This “other” Creation story is about reminding us that we are humans, made of God’s creation, made by our Creator who gave us the breath of life, are literally dirt. We were created to be in relationship with God and with all of God’s creation. This “other” creation story reminds us that the goal of our life of faith is to discover God’s voice of life for us. That even in the midst of all the other voices, including our own that tell us we can do it all on our own, we are called to listen for God’s voice of life. We are to listen to that small still voice that reminds us who we are, that reminds whose we are. We are to listen to That small still voice that reminds us we are called to be in relationship with all of God’s creation.

Because you see, the story doesn’t end with God being angry. The story ends by God showing God’s grace to humankind once more. Yes, I know it says God kicks Adam and Eve out of the garden. And I’m not going to deny that it sounds

pretty harsh. But if we take another look at this other creation story, we see God's grace shining through. God makes garments for the man and the woman. And interestingly enough, this act of ignoring God's voice of life is not call sin here or anywhere else in the Old Testament.

Instead, God choose to not destroy humankind and tends to their new needs, once again, always working to bring healing and wholeness to God's creation once more.

So if we are really getting back to basics, we need to remember that The goal of our life of faith is to remember to always humbly give thanks that God's grace is always there, calling us back. To always remember whose we are. To always know that God's grace is there, encouraging us to allow this life giving identity, this identity that reminds us God is our Creator, to allow this life giving identity shape the rest of our story as the people of God. Amen.