1-10-21, The Holy Way

Sermon on Genesis 1:1—5

1. Introduction
2. Last week we looked at John 1, which speaks about the presence and activity of the Word in the process of creation. This morning we’re looking at the creation account from the book of Genesis.
3. This is the point were some Christians choose to do battle with science. I don’t have any interest in doing that. For me, I believe that God is the creating force behind everything in the universe or universes. I also believe that God has created intelligence and skill and given them to scientists to study and seek to understand the creation of all. If, by chance, a scientist were to tell me that God doesn’t exist and played no role in the creation, my response will be that I disagree, but I refuse to be unkind or angry in that conversation.
4. You have heard me speak before about the Hebrew word *ruach*, which we will encounter in this passage. This word can variously mean Spirit, wind, or breath. Some of the time context will advise which translation we should use. In this passage, I don’t think context really helps. However, we are driven to understand that the force that swept over the face of the waters was God’s Spirit, God’s breath, or God’s wind. God is the constant, and that’s really what we need to know.
5. Prayer
6. The text
7. (v. 1 & 2) In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep [This is supposed to be seen as an ominous environment.], while a [*ruach*], a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.
8. (v. 3—5) Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.
9. What shall we take away from this text this morning?

When we reflect on the nature of God, there are two concepts that frequently come to the surface. These are holiness and grace. This morning, though, I want to talk about another aspect of God’s character: creativity.

God’s creative handiwork is seen all around us. The exquisite beauty of the full moon rising in the desert, the night sky with innumerable stars, the sunrises and sunsets, the sweetness of a baby’s smile, the feeling of someone holding your hand, the beauty of wildflowers, all of these testify to God’s beautiful creative nature. And I believe this creative nature goes farther.

I myself do not believe that God is the source of suffering. I believe that violence, disease, grief, greed, all are the result of a fallen and broken world. But I have also observed that God seems to make a practice of bringing some kind of beauty, some kind of good, out of even the worst events. I have come to believe that this is a manifestation of God’s creative nature.

I suspect that each of us could identify some good or beautiful thing that God has brought out of disaster. This past week, one of my sisters at The Holy Way was sharing with me that, although she and her husband had rarely if ever used Zoom prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, now it is a way for them to remain in closer contact with family members than they did before the pandemic. Now none of this is to suggest that the Covid pandemic hasn’t been so bad after all. No, the pandemic has been horrible and has brought a kind of suffering that this country hasn’t seen in a hundred years. But God, as is God’s nature, has, in the midst of this disaster, created something which is both good and beautiful.

I believe that we are invited to participate in God’s creative nature, because we are created in God’s image. So, how do we do that? We begin, I think, by living with our eyes open. We need to have eyes to see what God is up to. We also need to have eyes to see where there is pain and suffering in this world.

And let’s be honest here. It sometimes feels better to look away from other people’s needs. How easy is it to make eye contact with the man on the median holding a sign? In order for us to be a part of God’s creative nature we need to have our eyes open and we need to put our judgementalism aside.

In addition to having our eyes open, we need to be ready to act. How many times have you made a phone call or written an email or written a note, to learn later that you had made contact at precisely the moment when it was needed? Anytime that happens, you can take pleasure, but not pride in being a part of God’s creative activity in the world.

A second idea for us to think about will have some clear echoes from last week’s sermon. The first of God’s commands in the creation story is this: “Let there be light.” Now it happens that I’m someone who has usually been fairly comfortable with nighttime. I worked a lot of graveyard shifts, both when I was working for Phelps-Dodge Copper Company and when I was working in law enforcement. And even before that, I can remember how often as a teenage I would leave the house at 9:00 or 10:00 at night and walk along the country roads for an hour or two. The night still feels like a pretty comfortable environment for me, even with vision that has decreased a lot in the ensuing decades.

Even so, we tend to connect light with hope and assurance. God’s first act of creation, as it’s told in Genesis, is to create light. Light, and the transition from darkness to light, must be awfully important to God. And you all know what’s coming next. You could almost say it with me.

I’m inviting you to reflect the light, the light of God’s love, everywhere you go and to everyone you meet. When you are feeling well and doing well, your life shimmers with the beauty of God’s light and love. And when you’re weary (as the Simon and Garfunkel song says) and feeling down, the love of God shines through your own brokenness, offering hope to all around you.

God is the post powerful and beautiful creative force in all creation. And God invites you to be a part of it. God invites you to be the beauty God creates out of disorder and chaos and ugliness. Will you say yes? Are you ready? May it be so. Amen