

# IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Second Sunday of Pentecost (Series A)

June 11, 2023

Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND

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The Old Testament lesson comes from *Genesis*, chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse 2. It's the second part of what we started last week. Last week we considered what Genesis 1 has to say about the nature of God. This week we will consider what it says about his creation. Please stand as you are able for God's holy Word. From Genesis 1, beginning at verse 1, we read in Jesus' name.

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." <sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup> And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was

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good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

<sup>2:1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

*Father, these are your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.*

You may be seated.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Where did everything come from? There’s a point in life, I suppose in early childhood, when we discover that everything comes from something. When babies are born, they probably don’t know this yet. They might think that everything just is. But as children grow, and as they discover that they are growing, and as they see things around them come into existence or go out of existence, they begin to realize that everything that exists has a beginning. They learn that they had a beginning, and their parents had a beginning, and their home had a beginning. It has not always been there. And this city has not always been here. The trees have not always been here. And they begin to ask, “Where did these things come from?”

For example, they might ask, “Where does apple juice come from?” So a grownup says, “It’s made out of apples.” Then they ask, “Where do apples come from?” “They grow on apple trees.” “Where do the apple trees come from?” “They grow from apple seeds.” “Where do the apple seeds come from?” “An apple.” “Where did that apple come from?” “A different apple tree.” Then there might be a pause, and they say something like, “Where did the first apple tree come

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from?” And a wise grownup says, “God made it.” Then there’s another pause, and, with a puzzled look, they eventually ask, “Who made God?”

And so children naturally stumble upon what we call “the problem of infinite regression.” Everything has to come from something. But the chain can’t go back forever. At some point, there has to be something that just is. There has to be something that can exist without being caused to exist. There has to be something or someone who has, as his nature, eternal existence.

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“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1). Everything that began to exist was created by God. He is the one being in the universe who can create out of nothing. And he is the only one who can bring life out of non-life. Man is also creative. We make things. That’s a product of being created in the image of God. We can take the material God created and fashion it into something, but we cannot create something out of nothing. So we might say that God creates, while man can only form.

Now, when we confess that God created all things, we mean that he actually created them, and he created them in the manner he says he did. But you probably know that many people in the world believe that nature did everything, and that God has nothing to do with it. They believe that billions of years ago, there was a big bang. Eventually, somehow, life began. And then that life evolved from bacteria into plants, animals, humans, and every other living thing.

This theory is so widely held that Christians are routinely mocked for believing otherwise. So I think it’s important to say something about this. I’m not a science teacher, but where science and theology overlap, pastors need to know about it. I’ll try to be brief and simple, so if you want more detail, and even if you think I’m wrong, I hope you’ll ask me.

First of all, no one was really there to see how the universe began. That is, no one except him who created all things. When we theorize about what happened, at best we might come up with a theory of how it could have happened, but demonstrating that it could have happened a certain way does not prove it did happen that way. The only way to really know is by observing it. So when the theory of evolution is presented as fact, someone is trying to solve a historical question with a scientific theory. This is inherently unreliable. The only way to really know is to observe it.

And that is precisely why Christians can be certain that God created the world in six days. It is because the Son of God, through whom the world was created, also became man, died, and rose again. Our certainty is actually grounded in the resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection proves that he is God, and he knows what he’s talking about. So, in him, we actually have a human eyewitness of the creation of the world. We reject naturalistic explanations on theological grounds.

But we should also reject evolution as bad science. Here’s why:

The theory of evolution has two main components: genetic mutation and natural selection. The natural selection component is basically correct. Species in a certain environment will, over a few generations, adapt to that environment, and there will be observable changes in the species. Those creatures who are ill-suited for that environment will die off, while those who are well-suited will survive and procreate. This looks like a change or evolution of a species, but it’s really just a thinning of their genepool. The less beneficial genetic characteristics get weeded out, and it can result in noticeable differences, even though it’s the same species. This process of natural selection is true, and it’s observable all over the world. The old theory of evolution thought this could account for the development of all life, from single-cell organisms to complex animals and human beings. But it was wrong, and it’s not even debated anymore. Natural

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selection cannot account for one kind of creature evolving into a different kind; it can only work with what's already in the genetic code.

The modern theory of evolution combines natural selection with random genetic mutation. This is where it might get a little bit foggy. When organisms reproduce, genetic code gets copied from the parents to the offspring. You get your genes from your parents. This genetic code determines what the new creature will be. It contains all the information for your heart, your lungs, your brain, your skin, your stomach, your blood, and every part of you. A genetic mutation is when a piece of information gets copied wrong. Usually, if a piece of information gets copied wrong, the organism will die. Something doesn't work the way it's supposed to, and the creature dies.

It's kind of like computer code. I don't know if you've ever seen html code, or some other kind of computer language. But imagine what would happen if one extra character was randomly inserted in a code, like you're walking past a computer programmer's desk, and when he's not looking, you press one random key. It could be rather benign, leading to one word somewhere being misspelled or something being a different color. That's not a big deal. But it could also affect the way a website or program functions. That one little character could break part of it or the whole thing. And that's the way it is with genetic mutation. It could be rather benign, or it could break part of the offspring or just cause it to die. Rarely, if ever, do these genetic mutations yield a beneficial change, because they're random. But the modern theory of evolution depends on random, beneficial mutations. And then, once a beneficial mutation occurs, that new organism is better suited for survival, so it spreads through a species through natural selection. That's the modern theory of evolution.

The problem is that this is extremely unlikely. Many parts of our bodies are complex systems which cannot function until everything is complete. Consider, for example, an eye. An eye consists of several parts, including an optical nerve, a retina, a cornea, etc. And all of these parts depend on complex genetic code. Furthermore, none of it works until all of it works. And none of these individual components provides any benefit until the whole thing is put together and starts working. Natural selection cannot provide any help until a part begins to provide some benefit. So the modern theory of evolution depends on a complex series of beneficial mutations happening at random. And it's not just eyeballs. We have this kind of complexity all over our bodies. And we find the same kind of complexity on a cellular level.

Now, is it possible that we could have all these random, beneficial mutations occurring at just the right time and in just the right places? Sure; there is some mathematical probability. Whatever it is, it's a decimal point, followed by a lot of zeroes before we get to a real digit. And evolutionary theorists know this. However old they say the earth is, it is not nearly enough time for this to happen at random.

So the proponents of the theory are creating more supporting theories, like the multi-verse theory. That's the idea that there are many different universes, because, if there are many universes, that increases the likelihood that somewhere, in one of these many universes, there is one planet where life could develop. Or some propose the theory of panspermia. That's the theory that a lifeform from somewhere else seeded life on this planet. These theories have no evidence. The only reason people believe them is because they need to. If you're committed to the belief that everything came about without God, then you need these theories, even if they are improbable at best. And that's why I say that we should reject the theory of evolution as bad science.

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I think a lot of people don't really know what's in the theory, but if they did, fewer people would actually believe it, because it's so unlikely. You don't even have to listen to a Christian to see what's wrong with the theory. You can look it up and learn about it from someone who actually believes it. When a creationist hears what evolution is credited with, they say, "That's ridiculous." When someone who believes the theory hears it, they say, "That's amazing." And these seem like two opposite responses, but they're not. They're actually the same, because both recognize how unbelievable it is that such delicate complexity could randomly evolve.

But even if we assumed, for the sake of argument, that this could happen, there is still no solution to the problem of infinite regression. The big bang theory doesn't solve it. If there was a small ball of extreme density and heat, which supposedly exploded into the universe, we still have to ask, where did that ball come from? At some point, there has to be something that is capable of existing without being caused to exist. There must be an uncaused cause for everything. Logically, at some point, the scientist has to admit the existence of God. Like it or not, science inevitably runs into theology. So some people try a hybrid theory, where God caused the big bang and guided the process of evolution. But if we're going to admit God into all of this we might as well just accept that he did it the way he says he did. It is far more reasonable to believe that the guy who rose from the dead really is God, and he really does know what he's talking about.

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So, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void" (1:1-2b). *Formless*: that means "without structure." *Void*: that means "empty." So God's act of creation solved these two problems. He solved emptiness by creating matter. And he solved formlessness by creating structure. That is, in addition to simply creating the material of the universe, he also created the laws that govern the universe. He wrote all the laws of gravity, thermodynamics, and everything else. Beyond that, he also wrote the laws of morality. All of these laws are the code of how God desires his creation to function. And this, also, is very good. God designed water to function a certain way. He designed animals to do certain things. And he designed humans to do certain things. And all of this was very good. In Genesis 1 we see how God wants his creation to be.

We see that man is the pinnacle of God's creation, for man is created in the image of God, and God only declares the creation to be "very good" once man is created. We see that God created male and female after his own image. And yet, we reflect the image of God differently. Male reflects it in a certain way, and female in another, but balanced when together. The image of God is not male only, nor is it female only. But man is male and female, and together they reflect the image of God in balance.

The image of God is foundational to our identity as humans. But our world is very confused at the present moment.

One of the great theologians of the present day, Carl Trueman, has said that the problem isn't simply that we're losing the ability to define male and female. It's much worse. We're losing the ability to define what a human is.

We're losing it because we don't recognize that man is created in the image of God. The image of God is what distinguishes man from animal. And it's what gives man inherent dignity. If we don't have the image of God, and if we're not created, but instead evolved along with all the other animals, then there's no intrinsic basis for human worth.

The theory of evolution is inherently racist and bigoted. If we have evolved, then we're still evolving, and whoever is more evolved or closer to the next step in evolution is more valuable.

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But whoever is farther behind in evolution, not only can be discarded, but should be discarded for the sake of progress. And whoever gains power gets to declare which is which.

If this is true the value of other humans depends upon whatever benefit they can provide us. And the value of ourselves depends on how we feel.

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But creation in the image of God declares the opposite. Every single human, male or female, big or small, old or young, smart or dumb, capable or incapable, is created in the image of God. Therefore, every human has equal dignity, equal worth, and the same rights.

You are created in the image of God. And this is good. God cares about what he created. And he especially cares about those created in his own image. If we can just grasp onto this simple idea that God cares about what he created, then we'll know what he thinks about us, and we'll know what he thinks about other people.

Even though we have become corrupted, he cares about us. We have fallen into sin, so we do not reflect the image of God as we should. We do not recognize it in others, so we do not treat them with the dignity they deserve. But God cares about restoring that image in us. So the Son of God, Jesus Christ, became man. He is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). He bore our sin in his body. That is, he accepted our corruption. And he rose again, perfectly restoring the image of God in man. And when he raises his believing children from the dead, that image will be perfectly restored in us.

God cares about what he created, and he is faithful to it. In Genesis 1 we see God's will for how he wants his creation to be. And it is very good. God has not given up on his "very good." It is his will for his creatures, especially those created in his own image, to live in eternal perfection. And God's will cannot be stopped. He will get his "very good" again. Amen.

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Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Amen.