

Creation: The Beginning of Life as We Know It
Genesis 1-2:3, Hebrews 11:1-7

First of all I want to say thank you. Thank you for being here this morning. I really appreciate your support for this adventure we're taking through the Bible.

Last Sunday, right at the end of the sermon, I closed by saying, "Will you join me in this adventure?" And at both services I could see in your eyes, you were ready. You were ready to read through these 31 foundational stories in the Bible. And when I asked that question, "Will you join me?" I remember one man, who looked right at me, and nodded his head, and let me know without a doubt, that he was in.

And there's nothing that makes a pastor more proud of a congregation, than when people have a desire to read God's Word together, and learn and grow together. And God will bless you for that.

Today we start at the beginning.
God created the heavens and the earth.
Will you say that with me? "God created the heavens and the earth."

In just seven words, we just confessed our faith in one of the foundational truths of the Bible.

Now some people have tried to divide Science and Faith.
But the truth is, some of the greatest scientists in world history,
and even today, are believers.

Just listen to Francis Collins, the director of the Human Genome Project, explain why he sees no contradiction between Science and Faith.

This is what he wrote for CNN.com.

-- I am a scientist and a believer, and I find no conflict between those world views.

As the director of the Human Genome Project, I have led a consortium of scientists to read out the 3.1 billion letters of the human genome, our own DNA instruction book. As a believer, I see DNA, the information molecule of all living things, as God's language, and the elegance and complexity of our own bodies and the rest of nature as a reflection of God's plan.

I did not always embrace these perspectives. As a graduate student in physical chemistry in the 1970s, I was an atheist, finding no reason to postulate the existence of any truths outside of mathematics, physics and chemistry. But then I went to medical school, and encountered life and death issues at the bedsides of my patients.

Challenged by one of those patients, who asked "What do you believe, doctor?", I began searching for answers.

I had to admit that the science I loved so much was powerless to answer questions such as "What is the meaning of life?" "Why am I here?" "Why does mathematics work, anyway?" "If the universe had a beginning, who created it?" "Why are the physical constants in the universe so finely tuned to allow the possibility of complex life forms?" "Why do humans have a moral sense?" "What happens after we die?"

And he concludes:

I have found there is a wonderful harmony in the complementary truths of science and faith. The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome.

God can be found in the cathedral or in the laboratory.

By investigating God's majestic and awesome creation, science can actually be a means of worship.

How about that for a witness to the power of God? - the power to connect the grand story of Creation with the story of one man's life

How about you?

How has God's story connected with your life story?

If someone asked you what do you believe, or why do you believe, what would you say?

If you still have questions, that's okay. And if you don't have all the answers, that's okay too. That's why we're here - to learn and grow together.

And to let God's Word speak to us and bring us life.

Today we heard the story of God creating the world and everything in it.

So let's find our place in that story.

How does that ancient story speak to our lives today?

We know that when God created the sky and seas,

and the plants and the animals, and every living thing he said, "And it was good."

And then when he created Adam and Eve on the 6th day, he said, "And it was very good."

You and I are made in the image of God.

Nothing else in all creation was made in God's image. We are the crown of God's Creation.

Do you believe that most days?

Do you believe that you are fearfully and wonderfully made?

Or do you get down on yourself, like so many people, and wish you were smarter, or more athletic, or taller, or thinner, or you fill in the blank _____.

Do you wish you could be more like someone else?

Do you wish you could take back some of the mistakes you've made?

As I was growing up, I was very blessed to have parents who built me up, and encouraged me. The messages I have ringing in my ears, besides, "Marty clean up your room" are things like my Dad telling me: "Son, I'm proud of you."

Or my parents saying, "Son, you have gifts from God, and God's going to use those gifts some day."

Now, I'm not going to lie, and say I didn't ever disappoint my parents. But, even when I messed up, they were gracious and forgave me.

Some people believe that there may be a higher power, a God who created this world billions of years ago, but now just watches us from a distance, and doesn't have anything to do with our day to day experiences.

But that couldn't be further from the truth.

The Creation story does not end with the creation of the world, and everything in it. The Creation story is the story of a God who created us for a purpose. God created us to be good stewards of this world, **and** to live in relationship with our Creator.

Where was God when Adam and Eve bit into that apple?
God was not distant, from them.

Rather, God pursued them. They tried to hide from God, just like we do when we sin, but God called out to them and pursued them in love. Just like he pursues us in love, when we break God's commandments, or live our lives as if God didn't exist.

Even when we fall, God says,
"I'm not letting you go. I made you in my image, you are fearfully and wonderfully made."

It's true God said, "Do not eat of that tree in the middle of the garden."

Why?

Because it represents that God is our Creator.

It was the part of Creation where we recognize that God is God, and we are not.

We are beloved sons and daughters of God, but we are not God.

To eat of that tree, would be the same as trying to take God's place, to set ourselves up as our own gods. That was the Original sin.

And that's the sin that's in all of us. The desire to take God's place, and live according to our own selfish desires.

I heard a pastor once, give a great illustration to all the kids at Vacation Bible School. He told them to take their right hand and raise it up in the air. And he called this his “God hand”

I think we should all try this. Raise your right hand, and say, “This is my **God** hand.” And then he told them to take their left hand and raise it up, and say, “This is my **Me** hand” Say that with me.

And then he told them to join their hands together like this: (fold hands together as in a prayer) and bring them down. And he told the VBS kids, “Look what happens when we pray. “You and God get really close together.”

That’s one of the best ways to find our place in God’s story. That is God’s intent. That’s God’s plan as described in the first chapters of Genesis, that we would be in a close relationship with God,

that God would be our Father, and we would be God’s children, that we belong together.

(Pastor Marty puts his clasped hands up over his head again)

When Adam and Eve sinned, we call that the Fall (Pastor Marty’s **Me** hand falls away from the other).

And sometimes we say, “I didn’t fall, Adam and Eve fell.”
“It’s all their fault. Because of them, our world is messed up.”

But Hebrew word for Adam, when it’s translated literally into English, is mankind, or humankind. So whenever you hear the story of Adam and Eve, you are not just hearing the story of our first ancestors, rather the story is talking about us.

So when you hear the story of the Fall, it’s the story of our Fall.
When Adam and Eve fell, that’s us falling.
When Adam and Eve rebel, that’s us rebelling.
When they try to blame each other, that’s us blaming each other,
or trying to rationalize, or minimize our sin.

Whether we are sinners in big things, publically visible things,
or things that are easier to hide, sin is sin.
And sin separates us from God.
And no matter how many good things we do, we can’t close that divide.

Martin Luther said it this way, “I can’t by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, or come to him.” On our own, we can’t find our way back to God.

But here's the good news.
The Creation story is not about two trees in a garden.

It's the **beginning** of a story about a tree that was formed into a cross.
The tree on the hill called Calvary.
The tree where we see most clearly God's love pursuing us in the person of His own Son,
in Jesus' love even to the point of death on a cross.

It was on that tree that God reached into our story, the story of our fall, and declared to us,
that when we feel like a moral failure,
when we can't lift our heads, because of the weight of our shame,
when we can't find God,

God will find us. And God has come down to forgive us, and bring us back to life.

We've fallen, but God won't let us go. He is pursuing you in love.
Today, he may be knocking on your door, will you let him in? Amen.