

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

The Chaos of Creative Disruption

Old Testament Lesson

Genesis 1:1-5 and Genesis 1:26-31

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²The earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female He created them. ²⁸God 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 air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seeds in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Gospel Lesson

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sermon Focus

Based on the creation story portrayed in Genesis 1, the sermon invited us to imagine the angst God may have experienced in deciding whether to create a creature who could think, speak, and act – a creature who would be independent enough to say “yes” and to say “thank you” – but also independent enough to say “no”. At the end of God’s musings, the decision was made to move forward with creating humanity. The sermon also invited us to remember that we are created in the *image* of God – and therefore we are also called to create. We are especially called to create a life, and we are called to create community. The two can never be separated.

God’s decision to move forward with humanity was done with a knowing that God would have to forever stay close by. God would forever have to pick up the pieces and breathe new life into this creature who would, more often than not, choose to say “no” to love and justice and peace.

At a most critical juncture, God came among us in the form of Jesus. In Jesus’ final conversation with his disciples, Jesus invited us again to say “yes” – to say “yes” by living and loving the way Jesus lived and loved. Jesus invited us to share the good news that God loves every last one of us unconditionally, and God will never leave us alone.

Discussion Questions

1. Did the re-telling of the creation story spark any new insight?
2. What does the image of “being a creative person” usually bring to mind for you?
3. “We are created in the image of God” is a statement that often lacks clarity. What are some of the traits of God that are important to you, and what are the traits you value in creating a life?
4. Do you know a “Leila”, who is creating a life and creating a community?
5. Why are the words “chaos” and “disruption” used in the sermon title?
6. Discuss what you think about this passage from Parker J. Palmer’s book. Consider what is meant by “let your life speak”.

“Ask me whether what I have done is my life.” For some, those words will be nonsense, nothing more than a poet’s loose way with language and logic. Of course what I have done is my life! To what am I supposed to compare it? But for others, and I am one, the poet’s words will be precise, piercing, and disquieting. They remind me of moments when it is clear – if I have eyes to see – that the life I am living is not the same as the life that wants to live in me.

Seeking a path more purposeful than accumulating wealth, holding power, winning at competition, or securing a career, I had started to understand that it is indeed possible to live a life other than one’s own.

Then I ran across the old Quaker saying, "Let your life speak." I found those words encouraging, and I thought I understood what they meant: "Let the highest truths and values guide you."

Source: Palmer, Parker J. *Let Your Life Speak*. Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 2000: pp. 1, 2.

Bible Focus

God's nature and God's promise are always about creation of new life. It is a story that keeps showing up throughout the Biblical text. The text from the Gospel of Matthew suggests that Jesus' final conversation with his disciples was another creation story. Could we imagine that baptizing someone is announcing to that person (and to the whole world) that that person is God's beloved child? In the proclamation and naming of baptism, creation, new life, is announced again and again.

Discussion Questions

1. You are invited to remember together those places in the biblical text where humanity has said "no" to truth, peace, justice, and love – but God has kept the promise of new life.
2. What are the ways in which baptism is the truth about new life?
3. As an adult, and if you have been baptized, what does your baptism mean to you? If you have not been baptized, what does baptism mean to you?
4. In a world where whole groups of people are not valued, where so many people are seen as "less than" – how does baptism call that kind of injustice into question?

Prayer

Holy and grace-filled God, we are grateful that you created us because you wanted to be in a loving and grace-filled relationship with us. We remember those places where we said "no" to you, where we announce that we are in charge, and where we believe we have all power and all wisdom. We remember other times and other places when we have shrunk ourselves into creatures who cannot decide, who cannot create, who cannot find our voices. We remember those places where we have silenced voices we did not want to hear.

Forgive us, O God, where we bring chaos and disruption into this relationship with you and with each other. We are grateful for the ways you stay with us on the journey. We pray all of this in the name of Jesus our Redeemer, and in the presence and power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

*"Ask me whether what I have done is my life." Parker J. Palmer,
in Let Your Life Speak – Listening for the Voice of Vocation*