

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Let There Be a Big Bang

Sermon Reflection Notes

Science and religion are often perceived as diametrically opposed, but United Methodists see no conflict between the two. Instead, United Methodists recognize that expanding understanding of the universe enhances our understanding of God's creation and God's word. Martin Luther King Jr. said: "Science investigates. Religion interprets. Science gives us knowledge which is power. Religion gives us wisdom which is control." His words demonstrate the partnership between science and religion, the first offering knowledge, the second bringing wisdom.

Andy Bryan pointed out that scientific theories, like the Big Bang Theory, can explain vast amounts, but they do only take us so far. For example, the Big Bang Theory can take us to a millionth of a millionth of a second *after* the Big Bang, but it cannot explain what existed or happened before. Science gets us to the mystery, but it doesn't solve the mystery.

The Bible has never claimed to be a scientific historical document explaining how things happened. Rather, the Bible always invites us to imagine *why* things happen, to consider – through the ancient stories – who God is and who God calls us to be. To read Genesis, the first book in our Bible, is to hear a covenant story. It's a story about the covenant God makes with God's people and the covenant God's people make with God.

The bottom line is God created us, created all the world. And God called (calls) us to be made in God's image. And God proclaimed that all creation is good. So, we are made of stardust, in the words of Carl Sagan.

Today let us remember, once more, who we are! We are sons and daughters of God – all of us! And we are called to love God and to love each other! All of us!

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-5 (NRSVUE)

¹ When God began to create[a] the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Genesis 1:1-5 (NRSV)

¹ In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the 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. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Discussion Questions

1. Andy talked about polls discussing whether science and religion conflict. If asked a general question, 60% of people said "Yes, they conflict". But when asked if their specific beliefs about God conflict with science, only 30% say "yes". Why would people see science and religion as contradictory?
2. The United Methodist Social Principles state:
 - We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation of God's natural world.
 - We affirm the validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world and in determining what is scientific.
 - We find that as science expands human understanding of the natural world, our understanding of the mysteries of God's creation and word are enhanced.
 - We therefore encourage dialogue between the scientific and theological communities.What is gained by encouraging dialogue between scientific and theological communities?
3. Martin Luther King Jr. said "Science investigates. Religion interprets." What does that make you think about? What is the difference between investigating and interpreting?
4. Let's look at the Genesis text in two different forms, one from the NRSV and the other from the NRSVUE. How does the word choice of verses 1 and 2 change the imagery or effect of the verses?
5. When we go outside at night and look up at the stars, we usually aren't thinking about hydrogen and helium and the fact that 99% of our bodies are made up of elements that come from stars. Usually, we look at the stars and wonder about our place in the universe. Why?
6. Carl Sagan reminds us, "Even through your hardest days, remember we are all made of stardust."
How does this poetic imagery make our connections to each other and to God more compelling?

Prayer

Holy God, you created the universe and made us of stardust. We often fail to live up to the name you give us, but we are grateful that through your mercy and grace you never abandon us or give up on us. We pray this day for the wisdom and the courage to trust your promises. We pray that we will remember that we are all made of "stardust." Help us see the light in each other as we move through your beautiful creation. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, the One who showed us the way to be human. Amen.

*"Even through your hardest days, remember
we are all made of stardust." Carl Sagan*