



Namaste ... TouchPoint for June 3, 2020

Genesis 1 [THE MESSAGE] Heaven and Earth

¹⁻² First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

³⁻⁵ God spoke: "Light!" And light appeared. God saw that light was good

⁶⁻⁸ God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters; separate water from water!"

God made sky. And there it was. He named sky the Heavens;

⁹⁻¹⁰ God spoke: "Separate! Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;

Land, appear!" And there it was. God named the land Earth. He named the pooled water Ocean. God saw that it was good.

¹¹⁻¹³ God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants,

Every sort of fruit-bearing tree." And there it was. God saw that it was good.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ God spoke: "Lights! Come out! Shine in Heaven's sky! Separate Day from Night. And there it was. God saw that it was good.

²⁰⁻²³ God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life! Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!" God saw that it was good.

²⁴⁻²⁵ God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind: cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds." And there it was: God saw that it was good.

²⁶⁻²⁸ God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature. So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth." And there it was.

God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good!

Grace and Peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

"Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image' ...

And God saw everything that had been made, and it was so good, so very good."

The Biblical story begins in chaos. The world is without form and void. It's a mucky, gunky, swirling swamp of yuck. And yes, those are highly advanced theological terms that 4 years of seminary taught me.

The Hebrew phrase for this is "tohu wa bohu". It's one of my favorite Hebrew phrases. I don't know why. Well, maybe because it's the only biblical Hebrew phrase I know.

"Tohu wa bohu." It just floats off the tongue. The word "wa" means "and" so it literally reads, "Tohu and bohu." Chaos and meaningless. Yucky and gunky. It doesn't just refer to the physical form of something, but its function as well. Life can be yucky and gunky, both physically and relationally. And so when you've had a bad day, or a bad week it would be appropriate to say your tohu and bohu are acting up.

"Hi. How ya doing?" "Not well, my tohu and bohu are acting up." That should raise a few eyebrows.

So the world is full of *tohu* and *bohu*. Chaotic, meaningless, yucky and gunky. And what does God do. God creates a place, a space of goodness and grace. In the midst of the chaos and meaningless of life, God creates a space, a place of goodness and grace. God clears out, pushes back. holds at bay, the chaos of the world. And in the midst of that chaos God creates a space of goodness. The chaos is not done away with. The chaos is not eliminated.

The Bible is not that naive. It knows that chaos can break in at any moment. Are we not fully aware of that in our time? Everything seems to be humming along beautifully, and then chaos breaks in and transmits itself around the world. Or chaos grabs us by the neck and won't let go. No, the Bible is not naïve enough to proclaim that chaos is eliminated in creation. The Biblical writers are much too aware of human history to make that statement.

But the Bible speaks of a goodness even within the chaos. Of a God who works from the inside out of creation. Creating goodness in the madness and chaos. In the '*tohu*' and '*bohu*'. And it is this 'goodness' that I want to talk about today. This 'goodness' in the midst of all the madness and chaos. And I am not trying to be Pollyanna or gloss over what is happening. But I think it's important to get our foundation secure in how we address the world.

And to look to the Biblical story for our foundation means that this book is not some political prop, or photo op. It is not to be held up as a defense for own narcissistic world view. Rather, it is the ground in which the roots of our social, economic, political and cultural lives are planted. And from which our place and purpose in the world is given direction and meaning. For how we understand the foundation of the world, will be the genesis of how we treat the world.

From the Biblical perspective creation is founded on 'GOODNESS'. Let me repeat that: "Creation is founded on 'goodness'. But what's even more remarkable about the Biblical story is that there isn't just 'goodness' that's created, but 'very goodness'. And that 'very goodness' isn't a time and isn't a place. That 'very goodness' is you and me. You see, after God created humanity and put God's Divine image within us God looked and said "very good". So the 'goodness' of creation lies outside of us, but the 'very goodness' of creation lies within us.

7 times, if I counted correctly, God creates and then sees that it is good. And the last time, after God creates us humans, God sees that it is **very** good. I want you to think about that. God's first word, first observation about you ... is goodness.

God's first word to creation—to you—is a word of grace. Grace is not something added after the fact. Grace is not something given after you mess up. Grace is not a patch on the pants of failure. Grace is at the core, the beginning of creation. It is inherent in creation. It is inherent in you. We don't have original sin in us. We have original goodness. We have original grace. To put it in computer language. "Your default, is not your faults". Goodness and grace are our origins. Our foundations. Our defaults.

You were created good. VERY GOOD. You were not created "lacking anything". You were not created "not good enough" or in "total depravity". You were not created to pass a test. Or to prove to God or the world you are worthy. You were created "VERY GOOD". Rest in that. Live FROM who you are. Don't try to live FOR something. Don't try to live for approval or acceptance. You were created VERY GOOD! Live and love others knowing they were created very good as well.

That's the starting point, the genesis, for how we see ourselves and others. If we start from the point of total depravity in ourselves and especially in others, then we will think it's okay to step on the necks of our brothers. We will think it's ok to see our sisters as second-class. We will think it's okay to call people on the other side of the political aisle, “deplorables”. And we will build economic, cultural, and political systems to separate people out. To draw distinctions rather than commonality. To demonize rather than divinize. But to start from the point of you and I being made in the image of God. And you and I being made very good — is to see that there is hope in the midst of the chaos in this world. And to see our responsibility, not as stomping down on what we define as the depravity of our neighbor, but bringing out the Divine image in which they were formed.

The Hindus greet another one another and say **Namaste**, which means, “the Divine in me recognizes the Divine in you”. To put it in Genesis terms, we would say “the Divine image in me sees the Divine image in you.” Or to put it in New testament and Pauline terms, “the Christ in me honors the Christ in you”. You know, kind of like, **“I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me drink.”** Instead of seeing the depravity of the person we see Christ in the person. And hopefully we won't reply, “When did we see you hungry or thirsty?”

And why, as Christians, should we above all others, be able to see this? Because in the night in which he was betrayed our lord Jesus took bread and wine and said “this is me” and put himself inside of us. And the next day we got to see **“Christ in Jesus”** as he hung from the cross. And we got to hear his word of forgiveness, as he honored **“Christ in us.”**

In the midst of the chaos of this world. All the coronavirus and riots. All the neck stomping and gunning down. All the political theater masquerading as reality. In the midst of the chaos of this world, we take time out to proclaim that there is not only a goodness, but a VERY GOODNESS. And it is not only in the spaces around us, but in our brothers and sisters as well as ourselves.

Christ is present in those we chose to hold down. Christ is present in those at whom we wish to chant, “Lock them up.”

“I was in prison and you visited me.”

Christ is present. The divine image is within all.

Let us pray:

“Living Christ, give me your eyes, to see the Christ in others, as you see yourself in me.” Amen.