

The Eighth Day of Creation

Genesis 1: 1-2:4a

What can you tell me about the creation story in Genesis 1? I guess the most important thing is that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, then rested on the seventh (Sabbath) Day. It is a story of beginnings and serves as foundation for the salvation history of Israel through the Hebrew scriptures.

There have been many beginning stories. Recently, physicists Chet Raymo offered this scientific and poetic story of the beginning (from Dr. Timothy Johnson's book *Finding God in the Questions*)

The universe began 15 billion years ago with an explosion from an infinitely small mathematical singularity. The singularity was not "somewhere." The fabric of space-time came into existence with the explosion. There was no "before," at least none that we can presently know. Space swelled from the singularity like a balloon inflating from nothing.

During the first trillion-trillion-trillionth of a second, matter and anti-matter flickered in and out of existence. The fate of the universe hung precariously in the balance; it might grow, or it might collapse back into nothingness. Suddenly it ballooned to enormous size (after all, we are here), in what cosmologists call the inflationary epoch, bringing the first true particles of matter – the quarks -- into existence. Within a millionth of a second the rapid swelling ceased, and the quarks began to be confined into protons, neutrons, and electrons. The universe continued to expand and cool, but now at a more stately pace. Already the universe was vastly larger than what we are able to observe today. Within a few more minutes, protons and neutrons combined into the first atomic nuclei – hydrogen and helium – but still the universe was too hot for the nuclei to shag electrons and make atoms. Not until 300,000 years after the beginning did the first atoms appear.

Irregularities in the gassy universe of hydrogen and helium were accentuated by gravity. Within a billion years after the beginning, the first stars and galaxies were born. There were not yet any Earthlike planets orbiting the stars of the earliest galaxies, because there were not yet significant quantities of the heavy elements (these would be cooked up later in stars). Nor had the Sun yet been born. But within a few billion years, the universe had begun to look familiar on the largest scale.

Timothy Johnson points out that, were this story found in the traditions of any of our world's religions rather than proposed by science, it might well be dismissed as fanciful myth.

Now for a short test -- can you remember what was created on the first day, according to Genesis 1? God said, "Let there be light". God created light dark, day and night.

What about the second day? That's when God separated the sky from the primordial waters above and below. Essentially, God created the sky and the sea.

What did God create on the third day? That's when the dry land appeared. God separated the land from the ocean and provided trees bearing fruit for food.

What about the fourth day? On the fourth day, God made the sun, moon, and stars. On the fifth day, God made the fish, ocean mammals, and birds. On the sixth day, God made all the land life: cattle, reptiles, bugs, and human beings. Finally, God reached the culmination of creation by creating a holy day marking God's resting from creation.

The Genesis one story of creation is mythic and poetic. It is a liturgical (worship) document based on the ancient Babylonian creation myth called the *Enuma Elish*. Possibly written during Israel's Babylonian captivity, the Genesis one account focuses on the one God as creator of everything. Rather than many gods warring against each other, there is only one God. The movement of creation is toward the institution of the Sabbath.

Do you notice a pattern in the account of Genesis one? On the first day, light and dark are created and on the fourth day it's the sun, moon, and stars. On the second day, the sky and seas are made and on the fifth day it's the fish, ocean mammals, and birds. On the third day, dry land appears and on the sixth day it's land life: cattle, reptiles, bugs, and human beings. Finally, on the seventh day, God creates the Sabbath by resting from the work of creation. And then what?

Assuming the work of creation never really stops, what does that mean for us? You and I live in the eighth day of creation. This is symbolic language to be sure, but it is deep with real meaning. We are co-creators with God, creating a world

What are we creating? What do you want to be creating in your life? This creativity takes place at different levels, so let me ask more specifically. What is it that you want to create in terms of your personal life? How about your professional life? What do you want create in your life of relationships? To think a little larger, what do you want to help create national and globally?

To help in your creative endeavors, consider these questions for yourself.

- Where are you most creative in your life?
- Where are you most destructive?
- How do you envision your ideal world.
- What is your growing edge right now?

What are we creating here at Crossroads Church? Knowing that creation is an ongoing process, what we envision is not fully created yet. This is what I see as in the process of being created.

- A community that enables worship that is interactive, passionate, and challenging and that guides our spiritual journeys individually and as a body

- A community honestly seeking to live and serve in the Spirit and seeking to shape that uniquely Christian form of community called *Koinonia*, based on Christ-like love
- A community focused on justice and inclusiveness through what we do in our partnership ministries (Neighborhood Partnership, Guatemala sewing machine ministry, joining our voices to those voices in our community crying out for a more just society) and focused on justice and inclusiveness through who we are as a welcoming and inclusive community of faith
- A community of sacred artistic expression
- A community of grace
- A community center for honest and inclusive learning
- A community with the vision to bring about *Shalom*, God's peace and wholeness, to those we touch

What will it take to keep creating, knowing that we're not yet there? It will take an investment of talent, energy, and vision. It will take an investment of our personal journeys – an ongoing investment of commitment, presence, and money. We have an opportunity to invest ourselves in the future of this church, in the living of the vision expressed above.

God calls us to be co-creators. We can only respond to that call by faith. That faith affects how we pray. It affects how we make all our significant choices. That faith affects how we parent and how we grow up. It affects how we work how we invest ourselves.

God of creation, whose mysterious ways are above our knowing, yet whose footprints we see in the universe, let us not grow weary in the creative work to which you call us here and now -- in this place, through this church, and in all of our lives. Our mission is to shape a world based on your shalom: God's peace, God's justice, God's love -- shaping a world that will shape all who come after us. Let us be faithful in Jesus' name. Amen.