

Co-Creators with God

Tony Campolo tells the story about seeing his friend Peter Arnett from CNN in O'Hare Airport one day. As they were talking Tony asked, "Peter, I'm out of stories. Do you have any good stories for me?" Peter said, "I've got one for you. Last week I was on the West Bank, and a terrorist bomb went off. Bodies flew through the air and there was blood all over. A man came running up to me, holding in his arms a little girl that was badly wounded, bloody from head to toe. The man holding this little girl said to me, 'Mister, the soldiers have sealed off the area. They won't let anybody in or out. If I don't get her to a hospital, she will die. You're the press; you can get us through the lines. Please will you help?' What could I do? I put them in the back of the car, covered them with a blanket, and drove to the hospital in Tel Aviv. On the way there he kept saying, 'Go faster, please, mister, go faster,' and then he started moaning, 'I'm losing her, I'm losing her!' When we got to the hospital, we rushed the girl into the operating room, dropped her on the table, came out, and sat on the bench by the operating room; totally exhausted. I was taking a deep breath when the doctor came out of the room and said, 'She's dead.' The man convulsed in tears. He cried and screamed; I put my arm around him and tried to comfort him. I said, 'I don't know what to say. I don't have any children. I don't know what it's like to lose a daughter.' The man looked up at me and said, "That little Palestinian girl is not my daughter. I am a Jewish settler.' He stopped and then said, 'But maybe the time has come when all of us must learn to look on every child as a daughter or a son. Maybe the day has come when we must discover what it means to be part of the family of God.'"

There are children in our world who are hungry every day. With their bellies extended and their hair tinted red, they suffer from malnutrition. Relief for these children comes in food shipments from countries like ours, but these shipments are sometimes diverted by greedy government officials or hijacked by pirates.

Parts of the great Rain Forest have been cut down to supply the lumber needs of countries like ours. These trees were used to filter the air we breathe.

Beaches are closed because sewage drainage contaminates the waters along the shore.

Those who drink coffee in Styrofoam cups should be aware that if they sailed from Hawaii to California, a five-day trip, they would seldom be out of site of Styrofoam or other plastic items floating in the water.

Mountaintop removal mining, or “MTR”, is a destructive form of coal mining that uses three million pounds of explosives to blow the top 600 to 800 feet off of densely forested Appalachian Mountains. That 800 feet of mountaintop, which is called “overburden”, is often pushed into the adjacent valleys to become what is called “valley fill”.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. In 2007 there were 52,979 reports of child abuse or neglect, involving 77,481 children. And that was just in the state of Missouri.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1-NIV)
The Creation theme in the Bible proclaims the natural world to be God’s handiwork. God is the artist; the Creator’s hands gave us this planet. Later in Genesis God took the dust, the dirt, from the ground and shaped it and formed it and then breathed into it and this dirt became a living being.
Genesis 2:7 says, “God formed man [Adam] out of dust of the ground [Adam ah], and breathed into his nostrils a breath of life. Man [Adam] became a living creature.” The Hebrew word for ground or earth is **Adam ah**, and it is related to the Hebrew word for man, **Adam**. What this means is that we are all dirt people. “All came from the dust and all return to the dust.” (Ecclesiastes 3:20) There is this contradiction at the heart of what it means to be human. We’re fragile and defenseless; we come from the dust. And yet the creator of the universe has breathed life into us. And this divine breath is in every single human being on the planet.

This first inhabitant of the earth inherited a paradise, but paradise also came with a price, responsibility. God blessed humanity with a vocation. We are not meant to be idle. We are to be keepers of the garden and delegated sovereigns of the earth.

“The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.”
(Genesis 2:15-NIV)

There is another story about a shepherd named Moses, living in a land called Midian. God appears to Moses, speaking to him through a burning bush. God says, *"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."* (Exodus 3:5-NIV) Now Moses had been walking that land for forty years. It's not as if the ground all of a sudden became holy. The ground did not change. It's just that Moses suddenly became aware that he was standing on holy ground. So the question is, are we standing on holy ground all of the time? Are we passing burning bushes on the left and right, and because we are moving too fast and we are too distracted, we miss them? Two thousand years ago the world got a jump-start; a baby boy was born in a stable. There were other baby boys being born but this one boy changed the world.

McNair Wilson writes in his play *"The Fifth Gospel"*:

"Confusion gripped their minds. And it would not let go.

Darkness clouded their vision.

And it would not let go.

And a baby's tiny hand reaches out from a bed of wet straw and grabs the heart of all eternity and it will not let go."

Imagine the creator of this vast universe who has all knowledge, all power coming to the ones he created to make himself known. To communicate with us in the best way possible, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."* (John 1:14-NIV) God became flesh, he became one of the creatures he made; he came as a man, he came as Jesus. Why did God do this? Because our greatest need is a timeless one. It's not about what we can gain in this life, in profits or pleasure or making a lasting imprint on this earth. None of this is satisfying to the soul that is housed inside this earthen vessel. Ours is a spiritual need, one that we were created for, to have fellowship with the Creator and do Her will. Jesus came to earth because God loves us; He came to deliver truth in a world of false beliefs and he came to earth to show us how to live.

Jesus was always in communication with God, Jesus prayed. He prayed every day, over meals, in large groups, small groups, and he prayed alone. Jesus also prayed the Shemah: *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."*

Prayer for Jesus was not a passive acceptance of, “well I guess that’s just how it’s going to be” and it wasn’t an active kind of rebellion like “let me dictate the future.” Jesus’ prayer was openness to the God who is at work here and now. Jesus took very seriously the creation story in Genesis. In this story God creates, but what God creates is also capable of creating. So God creates trees and gives these trees the ability to re-create. God creates animals and plants and fish and then empowers them to create more. And then God creates people, and gives us the ability to pro-create. So everything in creation is essentially unfinished. God leaves this world unfinished, and invites us to take part in its ongoing creation. We become co-creators with the Creator.

Before Jesus left he told his followers, “*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans.*” (John 14:16-17 NIV)

So for us, the **Adam ah**, or dirt people, we have this cosmic connection that runs all the way back to the Creator.

The first five words in the Bible are, “*In the beginning God created...*” we are the children of God and we have the DNA of the Artist, the Creator of the universe. Our job is to create a new vision that is worthy of the children of God, and as divine co-creators it is our duty to create this new vision. If we do not create a global civilization where peace and justice reign and where a spirit of joy and celebration can flourish, then we have no one to blame but ourselves. The New Creation is calling us forth even as it is retooling us from the inside out, so we can bring forth its new images and reorganize society accordingly. The old wineskins will not hold new wine, they will explode and the new wine will be lost. We need new wineskins to hold this New Creation. We need to move from an *ego-logical* consciousness to an *ecological* consciousness. Our old inclination to battle with each other is not the way to be co-creators with God. There is a place for us at the table, where everyone and every thing is welcomed, and a place that was made only for you with your particular gifts. A place where everyone, as Meister Eckhart says “will be a mother of God.”

Clearly we have our work cut out for us. But the spirit of God, who wants creation to thrive, is with us. The kingdom of God is among us; and it is a kingdom not

just of word but also of power. The New Creation will be God's work and our work. We will truly be co-creators in this process of transformation.

Woody Guthrie wrote, "*This Land is Your Land*" in 1940. He wrote it in response to Irving Berlin's "God Bless America"; he got tired of hearing Kate Smith sing it on the radio all the time. Pete Seeger and Bruce Springsteen sang the song at the "We Are One" Obama Inaugural Celebration on January 18, 2009 at the Lincoln Memorial. Earlier you heard Sarah Goodman sing in response to the pollution images we saw during the offertory. Guthrie's song gives voice to the beauty of the United States and that land belonging to you and me. We're going to sing that song again, Sarah will sing the first verse and then the band will follow on the second verse and you can join in at that time. There are also some other verses that take the words about the beauty of the United States and expand it to the beauty of the entire world. There will be a verse from Ireland, Canada, India, and the Bahamas. I encourage you to sing your lungs out and celebrate the beauty of Gods Creation.

Benediction:

Make friends with a special place:

- By visiting that place in all kinds of weather and all seasons
- By growing focused in the use of all your senses while you are there
- By being aware of your innate "sense of place" during your visit
- And letting nature be your teacher

In goodness and with purpose, are all aspects of creation made in an unfolding, evolving living system of the Earth as part of an even bigger universe. We are indeed, as Thomas Berry says, "a communion of subjects and not a collection of objects." For even the rocks speak if you will only listen.

Amen