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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity

October 24, 2021

Text: Genesis 1:1–2:3; John 4:46–54

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Admittedly, the Old Testament reading from Genesis 1 and 2 is much longer than we're used to in our worship services, possibly three times longer than normal. But it's good to hear regularly how all things came into existence. This is the world the Lord God created for us to live in and enjoy. The Biblical creation account is not mythology, nor is it science, at least, not in the way we moderns tend to think about "science."

The creation account from Genesis 1 and 2 is the truth, as true as the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for the redemption of this created world. It reveals the means by which the universe came into existence. God the Holy Trinity created the world from nothing, that is, there wasn't some preexisting stuff God used to make the world; and He created all things by the power and wisdom of His Word. And God said, "Let there be" And what He said came into existence immediately and perfectly.

The New Testament gives even further clarity and insight into God's creative work by declaring that God the Father made all things through His Son (John 1) as the Holy Spirit superintended or hovered over the Father's creative work (Gen. 1). God the Father spoke the world into existence by speaking through His Son, the Word of God who was with God in the beginning. John's gospel says that the Word, through whom the Father made the world, became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). This is why I said at the beginning of this sermon that the creation account is as true as the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. To deny Genesis 1 and 2 would necessarily mean denying the Lord Jesus.

The New Testament regularly connects the creative work of the Son with His redemptive work. Consider Colossians 1:13–17:

¹³He (God the Father) has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption,

the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Redemption from sin, death, and eternal judgment is established upon the forgiveness of sins won for the world by the death and resurrection of God's incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus. We Christians are used to thinking about Jesus in this way. And thanks be to God!

But did you notice the seamless transition from the Son being the source of redemption to being the source or agency of creation? For by Him, the Son, all things were created. In addition (secondly), the purpose and goal of all creation is the Son. All things were created through him and for him. Finally (thirdly), the Son provides the cohesive integrity of the universe. In Him all things hold together. Christ our Lord is the agency of creation, the goal for which creation was made, and the integrity of creation. And through this same Lord, we have redemption from the domain of sin and darkness, the forgives of sins and life eternal. The creation of Genesis 1 and 2 is as true as the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we consider the life and deeds of Jesus recorded in the gospels, we ought to think that these are the deeds of our mighty God. In cooperation with the unbegotten Father, the eternally begotten Son created the universe by the grace and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

It is this creative work completely by our gracious and loving God that we must keep in mind when reading about the life and ministry of Jesus in the gospels. Today's gospel text from John 4 fits hand in glove with the Old Testament reading from Genesis 1 and 2. The key verse in the gospel text is found in vs. 50, "Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way." As we set out the particulars of this miracle, we must note here that Jesus speaks with the creative power and healing virtue of God the creator come to redeem His people and His world. As the Father spoke through His Son to bring the world into existence at the very beginning of creation so now the incarnate Son speaks to His creation His word of redemption.

In vs. 46, we learn that Jesus has returned back to Cana after observing the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. Cana is where Jesus performed His first miracle of changing

water into wine. Through that miracle, our Lord's disciples saw His glory and believed in Him. In the meantime, Jesus was teaching Nicodemus in John 3 and ministering His word of judgment and grace to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Then Jesus returns to Cana of Galilee. Upon His return, a government official from Capernaum traveled the 15 or so miles to Cana in order to ask Jesus to come and heal his sick son (vs. 46). What's remarkable about this request is that Jesus hasn't performed any other miracles except for changing water into wine. Otherwise, Jesus has been teaching and preaching. But this governmental official believes Jesus has the authority and power to heal his son. Based upon what he heard Jesus preach, the official believed Jesus could heal. The preached word gave substance and birth to faith in Jesus as the Savior.

This official has a sick son. In faith, mingled with fatherly anxiety, He goes to Jesus believing He can heal his son. Come to Capernaum and heal my son! Travel the 15 miles and save my boy! This is remarkable faith born from Jesus' preaching and teaching. Again, Jesus hasn't healed a single person from any disease or affliction and yet the man believes!

Though this father has saving faith in Jesus, he does need correction. Vs. 48, "So Jesus said to him (the official/father), 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe'" (vs. 48). You think I can only heal if I actually go to Capernaum, travel the 15 miles, touch the boys, and so forth. There you are mistaken. You don't have to see Me work the miracle. The father doesn't understand completely. Who can blame him!? He's desperate. So the father responds, "Sir, come down before my child dies" (vs. 49). But Jesus refuses to go to Capernaum.

Now we come to the heart of the matter. Vs. 50, "Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.'" Right there is where we need to focus our attention. Who is speaking here? God. The same God who is the agent of creation, the goal of creation, and the integrity of creation. Everything that we considered at the beginning of this sermon about Genesis 1 and 2 must now be brought to bear upon John 4:50. God the Father almighty is speaking through His incarnate Son who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The Father says through Jesus by the grace of the Spirit, "Go; your son will live." This is the creative voice of God working redemption and salvation for this father and his sick son. The God who created this boy also brings to him salvation and redemption.

The rest of vs. 50 reveals the heart and substance of our Christian faith, “The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.” At its core, Christianity believes what God says and lives according to it. We Christians don’t need signs and miracles. We have God’s Word. There we place our confidence. Later, when the father returned to Capernaum, he learned that his son was healed at the hour when Jesus spoke (vs. 53). His faith in Jesus and His word were not misplaced. This is the second sign Jesus did in Galilee.

What makes us Christians so different from non-Christians is not our holy lives, our good deeds, or our brilliant works of theology. Instead, it’s our confidence in the words, life, and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture. We believe that God created the world from nothing by speaking it into existence. He alone gives it coherence, integrity, and meaning. That same God entered into time and space for the purpose of saving His beautiful creation from the wrecks of sin, misery, and death. God’s Son became man for us and for our salvation. He says that He sheds His blood through a sacrificial death on a cross for our forgiveness. He says that He rose from the dead three days later not only to destroy the power of death but to give us and all believers in Him eternal life. We Christians believes that Jesus and His revelation of the Father and the Holy Spirit gives meaning, purpose, and beautiful to everything: to the existence of the universe, to our being created male and female, to our marriages and families, to our country, to our joys and our failures, to our death, to our hope of the resurrection and the life to come, literally to everything. That’s what makes us different. The trends of human wisdom and power wax and wane and change over time. They are unstable and uncertain. But the Word of the Lord endures forever. Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our strength, our certainty, our joy, and our victory rest upon Christ and His Word. Vs. 50 describes us: We Christians believe the word that Jesus speaks to us and we go on our way.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.