

## **“This is Good!”**

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Sunday, May 31, 2026 – Confirmation Sunday

Texts: Genesis 1:1-2a and Matthew 28: 16-20

“Throughout the narrative, God judges the results of [God’s] work ‘good’ (1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25),” writes Walter Brueggemann in his commentary on the Genesis passage. That’s five times that God pronounces creation “good.” It gets better! “In verse thirty-one, God pronounces the whole ‘very good.’ The ‘good’ used here does not refer primarily to a moral quality, but to an aesthetic quality. It might be better translated ‘lovely, pleasing, beautiful’ (see also Ecclesiastes 3:11). The shift from the sixth day to the seventh is perhaps, then, not just that time has run its course, but that God knows satisfaction and delight in what God has wrought. God rests not because the week ends but because there is a satisfying, finished quality [to creation] (page 37, *Interpretation Bible Commentary: Genesis*).” It is about the same feeling I have this morning as we confirm two young women after their year of work that has led them to affirm their parent(s) decision to have them baptized as infants. They are choosing for themselves to be a part of this congregation in a different way, and to claim their faith. I don’t know about you, but this is good!

There is a lot to talk about regarding the first Creation story. It is the one we find in the first chapter of Genesis. In the second chapter, there is the much more talked about Adam and Eve story which is perhaps the most misinterpreted story in the whole Bible. But that is for another week. Besides, there is plenty of controversy about this one. This, too, we’re going to “bracket” as we say in theology, as it would take a three-week (or more)

series to talk through it all. Bible study is a suitable place to have that conversation.

Nevertheless, there are a few things I want to share with you about this story that not only matter for our lives, but tie directly to the celebration we are having today.

What few people know is that this scripture was not really about who created the world so much as it was written to an exiled community in need of assurance. “To the despairing exiles (who were presently in Babylon), it is declared that the God of Israel is the Lord of all life...It continues to be a ground for faith in this God when more immediate historical experience is against it. Its affirmation is this: this God can be trusted, even against contemporary data. The refutation of contemporary data may include sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, that is, every human experience of abandonment (Bruggemann, p25).” There are a lot of people in our world who are convinced that either God is dead, or at least asleep at the wheel. They reject God because of life circumstances—or worse, because of the actions of some of God’s followers! There is little that is worse in the world than being exiled and living under the rule of a foreign power who not only wants to defeat your country, but your God at the same time! That’s the condition in which this scripture was first shared, but it has meaning today just the same.

What if people started to talk about the hope that scripture brings in the midst of the difficulties of life, rather than argue about who created the world and how? What if the Christian church became a beacon of hope in a world that struggles daily with the onslaught of everything from natural disaster to economic hardship, to war, famine and disease? I passionately believe that if we did a better job of this, few people would be

talking about the church not being relevant. Fewer people would be leaving. The church could quit being overly concerned with its survival.

Another thing we often miss from this story is that it also makes the statement that God, through speech, makes things happen. “The world of God which shapes creation is an action which alters reality. [Put bluntly] Israel is concerned with God’s lordly intent, not [God’s] technique.” (Ibid, p26). Further, this story is grounded in the “faithful commitment” of God. This commitment, like the commitment that comes in the person of Jesus Christ is “one of free, gracious commitment and invitation.” It is also about “God [having] a transforming disposition towards the entire world. Creation faith is the church’s confession that all of life is characterized by graciousness. Well-being is a gift which forms the context for our life of obedience and thanksgiving.

The Creation story is also fitting for today as it reminds us that, “the grace of God is that the creature who God has caused to be, God now lets be. God then makes and invitation not a demand (see also Mark 2:11; 3:5; 5:41; 10:21,52).” In essence, yes, God created us however you want to imagine that happened, but more importantly now God invites us to participate in the glory and the goodness of creation. Remember, the creation that God pronounced good five times and very good once more. Just like our youth have had the freedom to choose their faith, so it is with each of us. There isn’t only one way to believe, and to trust, and to know that God is the ultimate Source of love, peace, contentment and most importantly, joy!

If you remember nothing else from this message today, let it be that “A repeated verdict is pronounced over creation. It is “good.” And in verse twenty-two, the creatures are blessed. And by the way, that first blessing comes before humanity is blessed. Every creature on earth has its own relationship with God. This, too, is something to remember as we treat creation with so little care and respect. In all our faithfulness to God, we are also called to be faithful to all creation. And yet, it’s still true that “human persons are honored, respected, and enjoyed by the one who calls them to be. And this gives human persons their inalienable identity.” There is still only one way in which God is imaged in the world: humanness! And yet, we degrade humans all the time.

The last point today is that “God is known,” writes Dr. Bruggemann, “peculiarly through this create who exists in the realm of free history, where power is received, decisions are made, and commitments are honored, God is not imaged in anything fixed but in the freedom of human persons to be faithful and gracious.. he contrast between *fixed images* which are prohibited and *human image* which is affirmed represents a striking proclamation about God and about humanness.”

On this special day when we honor our youth and their freedom to choose faith, let us also rejoice in our own freedom—a freedom greater than anyone, anywhere on earth could ever give us. A freedom that comes from God who spoke the world into existence and called it—and called us—good. Let that be the starting point for a new kind of relationship—a new kind of faith, really – in a God of unconditional love and unbounded grace. In whom, and through whom, we have our being. Let us rejoice! Let us celebrate! Let us love all creation just the same as the one in whose image we were created! When all that

happens, God's kindom will truly come, and God's will have been done. Until that day, we can just know that we have not been abandoned.

This is good!

In the many blessed names of God...Amen.