

God's Voice, the Living Word
May 18, 2008

A great void, a hollowness, bleak, dark, & windy, a trackless waste...covered with a swelling deep...the cosmos at the time of its beginnings. Indefinite, unpredictable chaos...the earth waiting as God's creative breath stirred.

- **In the beginning, God spoke to the chaos;**
- **in the beginning God's creative breath moved - bringing dimension and life;**
- **In the beginning God's voice - became a living Word.**

We've joined our voices this evening in the retelling of the creation story of Genesis 1; a story of great hope and possibility as we consider the sacred space we inhabit each and every day, if we would but have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts open in welcome.

Creation all around us calls us to communion with our Creator.

Most days, I travel to Swiss Village across country roads. There only a few short miles between our home and the entrance to Swiss Village, but I look forward to their brief passage – especially as the out of doors awakens again following the quiet and cold of winter. Mornings seem especially delightful. I've been counting creatures as of late.

Creatures...the works of the Creator's wistful word. Creatures...beginning with the cats that wait for the morning scraps – a bit of old bread soaked in bacon grease. Mother kitties looking lean and worn, scarred faced tomcats slinking in, too. Now, in spring time families of kittens found under feed bunks and in calf pens are beginning to totter forth on forays of their own.

As I turn north on CR 300 W, I am greeted by the eager faces of the yearling heifers lined up for the morning feeding. I watch with expectancy for the Amish horses with gangly colts and the new neighbors' llama. I have my foot ready for the break pedal as I crest a rise anticipating that Tracy's free range chickens may well be seeking worms on the damp road. Just over the Wabash a really nice flock of sheep is usually grazing...looking very biblical! These domesticated creatures seem as friends and I am glad for them standing along the fences, grazing on new grass or hustling to safety with wings held high, with clucking on their faces.

And then the daily gift of surprise...the cardinal which swoops across the roadway, the gray squirrel that bursts out of the roadside grass, the blue heron fishing near the river or the cottontail that hops out of the bushes – leaf in mouth – just as I pull to the curb to park. **Creatures breathed into life at the invitation of God's voice.**

God's voice...think of it a bit...usually we hear of the "word of God." Tonight, imagine what the nuanced differences may be. God's voice calling creatures and creation into being, into life, into abundance. In contrast, God's word in our time often referencing a bound volume and all that that might mean. Sometimes not only bound in paper, but in spirit.

In this great liturgical text...we are given glimpse into the ways of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of Elizabeth and Mary. Other gods, other peoples also had creation accounts. Throughout the ancient near east these creation accounts also found a great watery morass as their place of the worlds' beginnings. **These creation accounts tell of gods competing with one another and the elements in conquest of creation.**

The ancient Babylonian creation account of the *Enuma elish* ends with the chief Babylonian god, Marduk, creating the universe out of the body of the slain Tiamat, the female goddess embodying the seas. The account tells of Marduk, cutting Tiamat in two, making half of her into heaven and half into earth. He pierces her eyes to let the Tigris and Euphrates flow forth; the various tributaries of the Tigris flowing from her breasts. The rest of the Babylonian story relates Marduk's organization of the rest of creation... **with the goal that creation would be subjected to the pedantic rule of the gods. Humanity was understood as being created to remain in servitude to these cosmic rulers.**

The Genesis account, in contrast, bears witness to a very different story, a very different God. Yes, the watery void is also present but a very different spirit broods in the darkness. Watery chaos is there, but there is no conflict between it and God, as in other ancient myths. In our Genesis account, God **speaks creation into being in unfettered joy and freedom;**

- *separating* darkness and *inviting* light.
- *calling together* the waters to appointed places
- *making* the two great lights
- *creating* green-growing creatures and all kinds of animals –from winged birds to creatures that glide and teem in the waters...and things that creep upon the earth
- *blessing* humankind with, as the Scripture states, “the likeness of ourselves.”
- *seeing and exclaiming* at the goodness of it all!

I love the sound and images that spring from these creative, dynamic words:
separating and inviting; calling together, making, creating, blessing, seeing and exclaiming! YES!!

We may take for granted the goodness of this one we name as God, this one we know as God. It is good for us to remember that as part of creation, we've been called into being by a God who is a God of creative conversation. We've been created for communion with one another, with creation and with God. The voice of God **inspires** us with an invitation to relationship...and not only in the Genesis account...throughout Scripture God's voice invites us to an ever re-newing of creation...an ongoing resurrection from chaos and its fright to a place of goodness and rest. Friends...

...in the squirrel leaping from the roadside grass
...in the heron poised in the pond

God's Voice, the Living Word
May 18, 2008

...in the hen duck looking like Mary
as she incubates her eggs...
the Word of God...alive

May we listen...together...for God's voice, our living Word!

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork,
day discourses of it to day,
night to night hands on knowledge.

No utterance at all, no speech,
Not a sound to be heard,
But from the entire earth the design stands out,
This message reaches the whole world.”
Psalm 19:1-4

Words of reflection before communion:

This evening's gospel text is an invitation to be the people of God...to live joyfully and abundantly from our place in creation. Jesus speaks to his disciples of his authority to anoint us to this ministry...authority based on his presence as the living Word “in the beginning.” Friends, Jesus is trustworthy, we can go in his creative name, bearing the very image of God. We go inviting others to share in his renewing work... understanding that his command is not to do good, but to share the Good News. We, together with all of creation, are invited to newness of life – for with God nothing is impossible.

The bread of life...
The cup of salvation...

Take & eat... and remember.