

Some Assembly Required

Genesis 1:1-2:3 (NIV84)

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. ⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. ⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. ¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. ²⁰ And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. ²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The creation story is one of the most recognizable and well-known stories from the Bible. I have always grown up believing it to be a true, factual, historical account of how everything came into being. God spoke, and there it was. Done in six, regular 24 hours days because that's what it says here: there was evening, and there was morning, the first day...the second day...and so on. However, the longer I've been a pastor, the more I have come to realize that this is one of the hardest teachings of the Bible for some people to accept. I can't read your heart and know what you believe about creation, but I know that God is always true to his Word and that he tells us that his Word, including this creation account, is truth.

If you wrestle with this idea that God created the world in six, regular, 24 hour days, can you accept that the same supernatural divine being that we call God, who was able to raise himself back to life from death, who was able to control the sea with a simple command, who conjured enough food for 5000 people out of just five small loaves of bread and two small fish, can we believe that he is capable of creating the whole world and everything in it just like he said he did? Martin Luther put it this way: "When Moses writes that God created heaven and earth in six days, let his words stand.... If, however, you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then give the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are." This morning, as we do every Sunday,

let's take God at his Word because I don't want to spend today's message trying to convince you of something that the Bible simply presents as truth. What I do want to tell you about today is how this creation account gives us marvelous insight into who our God is and what he does for us.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) Christians have always confessed that God the Father is the maker of heaven and earth. It's the truth that we confess in the very first line of the Apostles' Creed. In the New Testament Gospel according to the Apostle John, he tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-3, 14) John tells us that God the Son was just as actively involved in creation as God the Father was. Then in Genesis 1:2 we are told, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." God the Holy Spirit was also present and active in the creation account. To top it all off, God says on day six, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...So God created mankind in his own image." (Genesis 1:26,27) These are not typos as God switches from a plural "let us make man in our image" to a singular "so God created mankind in his own image." God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were all involved in creation. It was not three gods involved, but still just one God – one in essence, not in persons. The Triune God created the heavens and the earth.

This concept - the one that I tried to explain in the children's message that God is three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and yet is still just one God – is called the Trinity. You will not find that word in the Bible. Christians came up with that word back in the 3rd century A.D. so that every time we talked about God we didn't have to re-explain that concept, that he's not three parts that make up one God and not that he wears different masks at different times to be the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. Yet there is still just one God. Any more time we spend on trying to explain how that works will probably just make our heads hurt.

The purpose of knowing that the Triune God was involved in creation is to show us the kind of God we have. He is more complex than we can wrap our brains around. To me, it's a comfort that the one who made us is beyond our understanding. If we completely understood God and who he is, then why could we not be him?

This Triune God who surpasses my understanding made everything that this earth, this life, is. God made everything we can see, everything that we don't see, and all the things we are still discovering. Gravity caused by the distance between the earth to the moon, the earth to the sun for the perfect range of light and heat, energy – everything from solar, electrical, and atomic, every microorganism, the entire ecosystem he thought up and carefully crafted at just the right time so that we would have everything we needed. "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array," (Genesis 2:1)

Now, I am a poor handy-man at best. The times when I do build something, I quickly see the inadequacies. I see how things are crooked when they should be straight. I see how consistency lacked as I applied paint to a wall. I start swinging a hammer to then realize after starting to sweat that there was an easier, more efficient and better way to do this. I am flawed as a creator. I can spend time developing a plan, putting something together, only to think of ways it could have been done easier and better, which then causes me to go back and do more work on it. And it's never perfect.

Look at how God creates. He starts by making the heavens and the earth. We don't even get a good idea of what that would have looked like because we are told that "the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep." (Genesis 1:2) The earth was formless, empty, dark, and deep. God takes the earth and makes it into paradise in the most orderly and efficient way possible. First, he brings light – not the actual markers and regulators of light and darkness, those will come later. He brings light first because without light there is no life. Water is separated from water. Water is separated from dirt. Dry land is formed. Vegetation is then fully formed on the dry land. Fruits and veggies according to their kinds was created, ready to be picked and eaten by the life that would soon be formed. There already was light for plants to utilize their photosynthesis. Then God makes the sun, moon, and stars to serve as regulators of light and darkness, not just for the vegetation but also for all the creatures of the land and sea that are coming next, that they would all have natural, regulated times of work and rest. They also would provide the gravitational pull to keep it all in place. Then birds and fish were made followed by animal life as well as all the creepy crawly things needed for earth in a finely balanced and tuned ecosystem. Finally, God creates humans having everything else in place and ready for them to come in, live, be fruitful, increase in number, and care for this creation.

If it had been me, what would I have forgotten in the creation process? Would I have made man and woman before creating the vegetation, before the sun, moon, and stars were in place? Would I have put down animals before there was water for them to drink? I would mess it up. Not the Triune God. He made this exactly the way it should be and when it should be done. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31)

This was not just very good as in, "it's pretty good, but we could do better." No, this creation was complete. Everything was set up with perfection. All the systems were there. Nothing more needed to be done. All assembly done. No more assembly required. "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." (Genesis 2:2-3)

The Triune God created absolutely everything we needed and in the most perfect way. He didn't sit us down on earth and then say, "Some assembly required." God did not give us an incomplete world that we needed to finish out with our inventions and our technology. No, everything we needed was all set up and put in place. A completed world with no assembly required was handed to us by God. Our purpose was not to finish the world God started. No, God put us here with a different purpose: to fill it, care for it, enjoy it. God created us with no more assembly required. The Triune God truly made everything complete for us.

Then why do we lack? Why are there bad things in this created world? Why does fruit mold and spoil? Why don't creatures submit to us but instead run wild? It's because we messed it up. We fell for the lie that we weren't complete, that there was some more assembly required to the human being after creation, that we should be like God knowing good and evil instead of just knowing good. We brought destruction into the world. We brought hardships and toil into the world. We even brought death to it, a life that is no longer complete. We messed up our world. We made it lacking after it had been complete.

What did our Triune God do? Did he say, "Well, you made your mess. You go fix it." No. The same Triune God who made the world and everything in it complete for us - no assembly required on our part - did the same when it came fixing our sinful tinkering. When we disobeyed, when we tried to improve on what was already complete, God put forward his blueprints and his plans to fix it. He, the Triune God, would send God the Son to take on our flesh and live that complete and perfect life that we had messed up. He would then sacrifice himself to fix us. No assembly required on our part to be made perfect by God. Instead, the Triune God carried out the plan and executed it so that once again we would be complete.

God made you complete and with purpose. He still wants you and me to take care of this world that he created. He also gave us the purpose of going and spreading the message of what the Triune God has done for all of humanity. He tells us, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) Go and tell others how the Triune God completed everything for you. He gave you a complete world to take care of. He gave you completeness before God through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No assembly required when it comes to who you are and to be rescued from your sin. You are complete by what the Triune God has done for you. Amen.

June 11, 2017

Pastor Jonathan Klein

pastorklein@lightofthevalley-wels.org