

In the Beginning, God . . .
Genesis 1:1 – 2:3
June 15, 2014

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 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. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day. And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. 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. 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. And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day. 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, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 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. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day. And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." 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. 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." And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day. 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. 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. 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." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 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." 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. 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. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their

vast array. 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.

In April of 1992, scientists threw their usually cautious language to the winds with an outburst of enthusiasm. NASA's cosmic *Background Explorer* satellite had gathered new data regarding the big bang theory of the universe's origin.

Scientists had become increasingly critical of the theory, but this new evidence gave increased credibility to the big bang. Carlos Frank, an English physicist, said: "This is the most exciting thing that's happened in my life as a cosmologist. What these people have found is what I would call the Holy Grail of modern cosmology."

Nowhere in the press releases was there any mention of God. Most of today's secular literature presupposes that the universe and our world gave birth to themselves, and now continue on their own under natural laws. God is usually not spoken against; he simply is ignored.

We, however, are people of faith. By faith we believe that he is God from eternity, who formed our world and the entire universe. We believe in the triune God, trusting that he has been, and always will be, our creator, redeemer, and life-sustainer. We know he's still God, who is present in the realities of creation and in our redeemed lives. This is the God whom we worship.

Today we are going to consider some things about this God we worship. We will look at God's presence, God's power, and God's purpose. In response to those things, we will consider our response to God.

None of us has ever seen God. However, we have all seen proof of God's presence in the splendor and majesty of nature. Psalm 19 tells us: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands* (Ps 19:1). The uniformity of all of nature, and all the creatures of the earth, doesn't speak of evolution. It speaks of intelligent design. It speaks of God.

There's another witness to God. This is something that defies all laws of probability. It's the human conscience. Scripture says: *They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts* (Rom 2:15). All 88 major civilizations of the past and present have the same basic code of morals. Their laws all seem to have come from one source. That's because they have come from one source. Speaking through Jeremiah, God said: *I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts* (Jer 31:33). There is a universal understanding of right and wrong because God implanted it on human hearts and in human minds.

God has also revealed his presence in Scripture. Only there can we find a true knowledge of God. Scripture is where we find God identifying himself in the plural. God the Father spoke the powerful Word as the Spirit hovered over the deep. In

contemplating the creation of humans God said: *Let us make man in our image* (Gen 1:26).

Later, Scripture tells the story of the human race. As the story unfolds, God reveals himself more clearly as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the God who makes himself known. God gets into the middle of our lives, assumes the responsibility of our sins, and gets hurt at our hands. Then, God puts his name on us in holy Baptism and saves us. In today's Gospel reading we hear Jesus say: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28:19).

God continues to be our God. God cares enough to daily forgive our sins. God cares enough to never leave us or forsake us (Deut31:8). God cares enough to accept us even when we can't accept ourselves.

We believe in the mystery of the Holy Trinity not because we understand it, but because it is the truth of God as God has revealed truth to us. We worship God in the Holy Trinity not because we understand it, but because God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is worthy of our praise.

We also believe in God as the Almighty. We believe nothing is beyond the powerful control of our God. In the text, we see God's power clearly displayed. All things were spoken into being. All things except humans. Man and woman are the works of God's hands. Only humans bear the image of God. In our text, God says: *Let us make man in our image, in our likeness*" (Gen 1:26).

God's power didn't stop at creation. God sustains all life on earth. Every plant and animal is endowed by God with the power to regenerate according to its own kind. God provides all this world needs. And, while God's provision is not always handled properly by people, that doesn't negate God's provision.

Here's an example. In the last 50 years the earth's population has grown from 2 ½ billion to over 6 billion. Still, God provides. The tragedy of starvation isn't due to a lack of food. God has provided the necessary elements and human ingenuity to produce more than enough food for the 6 billion people. Starvation exists because of poor distribution, politics, and greed. The blame lies in man's sin not God's provision.

God's presence and God's power lead to God's purpose. Creation itself declares God's glory. Humans were created in God's image to rule over the earth, to care for God's creation and thereby bring glory to God.

However, our sin frustrates God's purpose. Adam and Eve refused to allow God to be the God of their lives. With the help of Satan, Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Their sin changed everything. Because of that sin, we live in what C. S. Lewis, in his book *The Case for Christianity*, called "enemy-occupied territory."

The world that God beautifully created to be our home has been ravaged by evil stewardship, world wars, racial strife and hatred, broken families, and our own personal selfishness. All of this is the result of people attempting to be their own God.

Consequently, since before the creation of the universe, God's purpose has been to save people from their self-destructive nature. Even though we constantly rebel, God is not a vengeful God. Instead of giving us what we deserve, he gives us what we don't deserve. God puts his triune name on us at baptism. He re-creates us in his own holy and righteous image. He restores us to himself.

God the Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to cover the sin of the world with his death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit gives us new birth and keeps us in the one true faith. That's why, in 2 Corinthians, Paul says: *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*" (2 Cor 13:14).

Consider this. All things exist because God spoke them into existence. And, just as God's powerful word brought all things to be, that same tongue could justifiably speak our condemnation. Yet the word God speaks to us is a word of grace, justification, forgiveness and salvation.

God's presence, his power, and his purpose demand our response. We respond to God in three ways.

First, we confess God. To confess God is a far greater thing than to assert a belief in some higher power. To confess God is to boldly declare God as he has described himself to us. To confess God is to trust him to be who he says he is. To confess God is to trust him to do all the things he has promised to do. To confess God is to allow him to mold us into his image through his Word and the Holy Spirit.

Second, we serve God. True service to God flows from an irresistible compulsion to do God's will. That drive to serve God comes from an unending love and thankfulness for what he has done for us. Service to God always manifests itself as service to others. When we care for others' needs, when we work for justice for everyone from the unborn to the elderly, when our lives become a force for peace, when we spread the Gospel message of Christ, we serve God.

Third, we worship God. God called for a Sabbath rest so we might stop and worship him for whom he is. But our worship must never be a Sunday thing. Our every thought and deed should be an act of worship. Our speech and our attitudes should be an act of worship. Every moment of our lives should be an act of worship to our God.

In the beginning, God spoke all that is into existence. God created you and gave you the breath of life. God redeemed you from your sins and made you a joint heir with Christ in the riches of his kingdom. God daily provides you with all you need. God has promised to be with you to the very end of world.

When you leave here today, take this word of advice and comfort from the Apostle Paul:
Aim for perfection,. be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:11 &14).