

## June 7, 2020 (Focus: Genesis 1:26-31)

In Genesis books 1 and 2, we find a story (actually two) of the creation of the world, and the narrative of its first people, but it was not written to be a scientific explanation of the origins of life on this planet. Like most if not all ancient peoples, the ancient Israelites had a narrative of the creation of the world. But their creation story, their creation myth, was developed as a protest against the creation story of the Babylonians.

The Babylonians saw the origins of the universe as violent and bloody. Found among the ruins was a Babylonian creation story referred to today as *Enuma Elish*. It is a story about a highly dysfunctional divine family engaged in a major power struggle at the dawn of time. The heart of the story is where the god Marduk kills his nemesis Tiamat and then fillets her body in two, making the sky out of one half and the earth out of the other. Thus, Marduk claims the throne as the high god in the pantheon. Marduk later uses the blood of one of the other gods to create humans, who were created to serve the gods.

In contrast, The Israelites told their children a different story, a story rooted in goodness and blessing.

Light was brought by God from the deepest night, they said, and order from chaos. The sun and the moon and the stars were set in the over-arching sky as signs of beauty and the changing of the seasons, providing light and direction and the keeping of time. God filled the earth with vegetation that was fruitful and nourishing, moved the waters back from the land and provided a home for the creatures that crawled across it, walked upon it, and flew over it.

In the midst of this loveliness, the garden of this earth, God tenderly placed human beings, blessing us and calling us to be caretakers and stewards of God's work. And then God looked upon all of this, and found it good--pronounced it good.

Interesting to note that in the midst of this Eden, what we consider to be paradise, there was work to be done. God called us to be caretakers and stewards of God's creation. God entrusted the very work of divine creation to humans. Yes, we could eat, we could find substance for ourselves, but we were to also care for creation. Not exploit or dominate, but have dominion – treat it as God would treat it, treat creation as the Creator would treat it.

Conference Annual Meeting yesterday passed a resolution: A Kairos Call to Action: 10-year church mobilization on climate and inequality. In this time we are called to education and worship around the issue of creation care, and challenged to “be the church” that makes changes to improve our environment, both changes to our building, our life as the church, and also advocating for other changes through value-based voting. There is a lot of information to share on this initiative, which we will continue to do in the coming weeks and months and years.

A Kairos call to action. K-a-i-r-o-s. Kairos time: ripe, pregnant, urgent time. It feels like the time is ripe, pregnant, urgent, for action on a lot of fronts. If it feels like, wait, we are already committed to being immigrant-welcoming, we are now asked to focus on ending racism, and yet another thing is to do things to care for creation – that’s a lot to do. Yes, it is. But note one thing: because of poverty and housing discrimination, people of color are more impacted by pollution than whites – care of creation can also be a way to help end racism, and efforts to end racism can also have aspects of care of creation and being immigrant welcoming. Systems that oppress people also oppress the earth.

Now: freedom to consume, with responsibility for the earth; freedom to take power, with responsibility to not leave others behind, not use power against others (throughout the bible, that’s what sabbath, jubilee year, helping widow and orphans all about)

Freedom to love God, but with responsibility to love others

## **Children's Message: "Protest and Protestant"**

Some say protest is political action, and church shouldn't be involved. But the thing is, can find protest marches in the Bible.

Moses, Exodus (Pharaoh oppressing the people, making them slaves, not right, Moses and brother Aaron tried to talk with Pharaoh, but Pharaoh wouldn't budge; had to get heard, save his people)

Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (Palm Sunday); seems happy celebration, but also a protest march. Jesus used a donkey to show the Roman army and the temple leaders that the kingdom of God Jesus preached about was a different sort of kingdom, a kingdom of love and peace, not hatred and war. They hadn't listened to him before this, so he had to get their attention another way.

Peter's speech at Pentecost

Martin Luther (and others like Calvin and Zwingli) tried to talk to the leaders of the church that they were doing things that were against what Jesus taught, but the leaders wouldn't listen, so protested against them...called Protestants, which is what we are (as opposed to Catholics).

Civil Rights marches often led by pastors and other people of faith, to protest against the discrimination of and violence against black people.

Men's march

Women's march

Climate march

Youth march against gun violence

Now Black Lives Matter – years and years (really more than 400 years of racism in this country, including violence against people of color – things are changing, leaders aren't listening, so protest to get heard

Violence, destruction of property not good; not about destroying things, but about getting rid of bad policies and practices. Dismantle or take apart racism and discrimination, but peacefully...may sound angry, and that's ok, its hard not to be angry at some of the things going on, way to get attention, get heard. And not just dismantling, but more about building up a better world.