
Memories of Wesley Mimico UC
Wesley Mimico United Church
June 15, 2014
by Rev. Dr. Paul Shepherd

Based on Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Matthew 28:16-20

I have always been intrigued by the first creation story in Genesis. In particular, it is such an interesting contrast to the second creation story found in Genesis. Because the second story - which I invite you to read at your leisure - is an earthy, agrarian story where God creates by growing things. Every time I read the story in Genesis 2 I check my fingernails for dirt when I'm finished reading it, and even when I find that my fingernails are clean, I can still smell the soil. By contrast the first creation story which we just read is clean and pure. Nothing is dirty or messy. God somehow separates land from water without getting mud. God creates by speaking, not by shovelling. The story is impersonal and clinical. The story - even though it is about creation - seems somehow sterile. Obviously, it is an adaptation of an older story, in this case the much older "Enuma Elish" story from Babylon. But why is it that the creation story so lacking in life?

Actually, if you browse online you will see that many people pick at the Genesis creation story. People criticize the story because it violates the second law of thermodynamics - but I'm sure you all knew that. People criticize the story because they feel that the story has been used to justify exploitation of natural resources using what is known as "Dominion Theology". I'm not sure about that, but in any case, the story invites questions. I always wonder if we would have been better off - overall - if God had stopped after day 5. Or perhaps God should have put in 1 day of overtime and made things just a little better.

So today, I want to join that parade and lift up my personal issue with the creation story, because it is very relevant to our celebration today. And so I will admit to you that I have always had deep issues with the text, "God saw everything that was made, and

indeed, it was very good.” I struggle with those words. I struggle with that text because I refuse to believe that creation is just good. For me, that is too simplistic. Instead, I believe that creation is a mix of good and evil. How do I know that? Simple. I myself am part of creation, and I just need to look in my own heart to realize that I myself am a mix of good and evil. Creation cannot simply be good, or else I don't belong.

Does anyone remember the TV show, Star Trek - I mean the original Star Trek with Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock? Now I know that most episodes involved meeting aliens made of plastic and ended with a fist fight where Kirk got his shirt ripped open. Oh - and there was always a crew member who beamed down to a planet in a red shirt and never returned. I know that some people found that show just too unrealistic. But some of the episodes were very thoughtful.

In the episode called *The Enemy Within*, Captain Kirk beams up from a planet and moments later the transporter beams up a second Captain Kirk. It takes very little time for us to realize that the transporter has created two Kirks - one is Kirk's good side and one is his evil side. The evil Kirk is very easy to spot. He is irrational, he drinks from a bottle while he staggers down a hallway. He tries to rape Yeoman Rand. He is rude. It doesn't take Spock long to lock him in the brig.

But it takes practically the whole episode for us to understand the good Kirk. The good Kirk is pleasant, he is rational, he is not aggressive. He is not rude. The good Kirk seems to be better than the original Kirk. At least - until near the very end of the episode - when a crisis with the Klingons that had been building all along comes to a head. It turns out that the good Kirk is indecisive, he can't make difficult decisions. He cannot weight up pros and cons. He is docile and useless as a commander.

And so in the last minutes of the episode we come to realize that the good Kirk is *not* better than the original Kirk. Kirk's ability to command came from the balance of good and evil within him, and from the way that he managed that balance. The good Kirk, although easy to put up with, was bland, boring, useless. The creation called “Jim Kirk” was a mix of good and evil, and it was in that balance the he was truly himself. Creation is a mix of good and evil. And therefore, as humans we are all a mix of good

and evil too. Thanks be to God.

Evil is not something we need to defeat. Evil is something that we have to embrace into our world view. We need to accept and manage it - within ourselves and within each other. We need to find a healthy balance between the good and the bad in our own lives, in our society, and even in this church.

Today, we are celebrating the life, faith, and love that has happened in this building over the last 92 years. And as we all reflect on our stories, our memories, the hopes and dreams that have lived in this place, the prayers that have been spoken, the baptisms, the weddings, the funerals, the healings. And those stories will include a mix of good and bad too. We are invited to share our stories - all of our stories. Our stories will be about life, and real life always includes good and bad, joy and pain, life and death. You are free to name whatever stories are meaningful to you today - in silence or shared with the congregation. And as we share stories with each other, let each of us listen with open hearts. Because we will be the vessels that continue to hold and cherish our stories and our memories as we prepare to leave this building.

[invite sharing of memories]

[remind it is open-ended]

Thank you for sharing those stories. Those stories from our past. Those stories that are still part of our present. But Jesus calls us to go to the world, and so we know that our own story will continue. Actually, we are already living proof that our stories are continuing. Many of us here today have moved on to other places, and yet are still part of our story.

Our work continues. Our life continues. Our call continues. Our story continues. Thanks be to God.

Amen.