Creation and Recreation

Gen 1:1-5

St Francis 25th October 2015

We don’t often hear sermons about the first chapter of Genesis. It seems to be a dead end for many. We are either told we need to believe that God made the world literally in six days or else we are not a proper Christian, or we simply ignore the beginning of the Bible and it becomes irrelevant to us. What I want to show is that it is meaningful and useful to our lives today.

The first thing we need to hear is that Genesis 1 is not scientific treatise. It was written down maybe 2500 years ago and at that time there was no concept of science as we know it. Instead we have to see it in terms of what was going on at that time. At that time people thought that the creation of the world was as a result of battles between so-called gods and mythical creatures. For example in Babylonian culture, creation happened like this:

*Apsu and Tiamat, the father and mother of the gods, go to war against their offspring because of all the chaos the youngsters bring to their peaceful kingdom. Both divine parents are killed by the greatest of the junior warrior gods, Marduk, who goes on to fashion the universe out of the various bits and pieces of the vanquished gods.*

At that time, people thought the world was made as a result of random conflicts between a set of *gods* who have no interest in the wellbeing of human beings.

Instead, Genesis 1 says something totally different: the world all of us humans experience is the product of the creative power of the God of Israel and no other god, period.

Yes, He starts with chaos and darkness, but what is the result? There is order, there is care, and there is structure.

There are no battles, vying personalities or fantastical creatures, just a regular ordered sequence of creation. And there is a loving God who wants a relationship with people like you and me, created in his image. Behind the entire cosmos, in all its intricacy and variation, there is just one God.

The universe is not a mindless collection of unpredictable forces, but the ordered accomplishment of a single creative genius.

Whether it’s 6 days or 6 billion years doesn’t matter. Genesis 1 says there is a single loving God who creates a good creation, and that is something amazing to give thanks for.

Secondly, God is a god who has never stopped creating.

God is continually present and continually creating, if only we are open to him. This brings me to a different way altogether of looking at Genesis chapter 1.

That is, to see it as a picture of how God is present to us in our personal lives. One of the authors I read over the summer, Bob Ekblad, described his work among prisoners. He does a weekly Bible study with a bunch of mostly Mexican illegal immigrants in a USA prison. He says for people who aren’t used to the Bible it’s good to start at page one, Genesis 1:1, like you would any book.

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.

Bob really wanted to get them beyond arguing about whether God made the world in 6 days or not, so he asked what conditions were like before God created the world.

“It was chaotic. There was nothing,” someone ventures. “There was darkness over the deep,” another man adds.

“So do things ever seem that way now? Or has everything changed since then?” Bob probes.

“It’s the same, man. Things are dark now too, really dark,” someone ventures. Others nod their agreement. The men lament their situation, how no-one contacts them, how they have no place to call home, how there is no hope.

But in the midst of this, Bob stresses, God is creating! Have you ever thought of that? That in the middle of darkness and chaos that is when God is doing his stuff, making it happen. Looking back on your life, or my life, it is often the darkest times that God is doing his most important work.

So if God is creating in the middle of darkness, how is God creating?

We all say of course “let there be light”. God speaks and there is light, there is illumination, the darkness is on the retreat. Praise God if that is your experience today, that God is bringing into your situation and giving you a clear way forward.

But have you ever noticed that even before that, God is present: the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. The key word is hovering. Is God forcing or pressurising?

No He is there, hovering.

One of Bob’s prisoners described it like this.

*“No,” continues Juan, “he’s around all of us. Not bothering nobody, just hovering. It doesn’t say messing over the water, making the water make bubbles. He was letting the water be. The water is us. God is hovering around us. It’s like you, you’ve always accepted me for this brown crazy Mexican that I am. I think you’d accept me if I were pock-dotted. We just need to accept him.”*

Bob is struck by Juan’s insight regarding the Spirit’s respectful presence. A God who is creating in the midst of places where chaos and darkness reign is a consolation to people who feel hopelessly unworthy and alone. A Spirit of God who flutters rather than invades, is respectfully present and not busting doors down with search warrants or slapping on handcuffs, is unexpectedly good news to ordinary people.

God’s spirit is hovering over the waters in a gentle, respectful, continually creating way if only we are open to him. Creation is not a once-and-for-all act: the universe, and we as individuals, comes more and more into being over time. “Continuous creation” expresses God’s intimate Presence within creation. It means that God continually calls forth, lives in, and provides for creation and provides possibilities of change for you and me.

The other week at our football academy on a Sunday afternoon, I was struck by something that happened. We had 16 boys there and we always get them to sit down and do a little talk at half time. We started off by asking the question, what is important to you, then what is your purpose. Some said they want to be a footballer, others and engineer or a football coach. The Colin, our Kick London coach chipped in and said when he was growing up football was the most important thing, but now it is Jesus. Jesus is the most important thing to him and actually he enjoys his football more because Jesus is the centre. It was amazing as the boys were all listening–it’s as if God’s spirit was just hovering and popped up there in the words of Colin, creating and recreating these young men in his image.

Perhaps you think this world is stuck in chaos, perhaps your own life is stuck in darkness and trouble.

We started in Genesis today but in Revelation 21, right at the end of the Bible, the one true creator God says something extraordinary,

**21**Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rev+21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-31055a)] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

**5**He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

The water of chaos and trouble is gone (there is no longer any sea). Instead there is newness, there is recreation, there is peace. So the message of Genesis 1 is that we live in a universe purposefully made by a single, loving creator, and that He is still active, not blasting us but hovering respectfully, carefully waiting for us to turn to him and saying Yes I want to follow you.

Amen.