

“Three”
May 18, 2008
Geneseo United Methodist Church
Pastor Craig Ferguson

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God 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.

Those of you who were here last week, I am sure that you remember that the sermon title was “Expect Chaos.” You witnessed your pastor get a little emotional as I shared about how God was working around us, and through prayer walking. You may have been nervous, or excited, or you may have just thought that your pastor was losing it all together. (my wife thinks that on a regular basis)

But to be honest, I felt from the pastoral perspective, that it was one of the most God honoring services I have led. I stepped out of the way, stopped following my written notes, and let the Spirit transform our practice of worship.

So is that good or is that bad? ... There may be parts of us that say, “I want the same worship every week, something that is comfortable, so that I know what to expect.” Unfortunately, it is easy for worship to become routine, even bland and boring. We get so used to the same format that we forget that it is about God. Whether a church sings songs with an organ, piano, guitar, drums, or no instrument at all, unless they sing to give glory to God, that Church has forgotten why they sing. The same thing can be true about prayer, Bible reading, and even for pastors in their preaching.

In our minute understanding of God, we must recognize that God is about changing things, transforming them, making them into his image.

Look at the first entry in the Bible. It starts, “In the beginning God created.” We have all heard that a time or two.

And while our beloved earth was still a formless void, a Wind from God swept over the water. This Wind that is referred to is none other than the Spirit

of God. The Greek word is πνεῦμα which means Spirit, breath, wind, or even Ghost, which is why we hear some denominations refer to the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, rather than the Holy Spirit.

So here in the second verse of the Bible we have a reference to the Holy Spirit hovering over the water, this dark chaos in the predawn of creation. This is the same Spirit that we talked about last week; the Spirit who brings the gifts of Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Fear of the Lord, and Reverence; the same Spirit that rested on the heads of the disciples like a tongue of fire.

And while last week we talked about chaos, and how the Holy Spirit can turn everything upside down, this week we witness how the Holy Spirit brought order to creation. Furthermore, as scripture references in John 1, and later in Hebrews, Jesus was also present in the Trinity at the creation. The word that is used in the Hebrew in Genesis 1:1 is אֱלֹהִים literally means God (plural).

So when we think about God saying “let there be light,” separating the water from solid ground, and creating the animals, that was God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together as one to bring order to the chaos of atoms we now call Earth.

Let’s think about it a different way. If we look down to **Genesis 2:7** “then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” Here we find that God formed the man out of the dust of the earth. If you break our bodies down we find that we are created out of the same atoms and simple building blocks that everything on earth is created out of. God brought order to the dust to form us. And even then we were still just dust.

It is only when the Spirit breathed into that dust that life was created. So although we may be tempted to think that the Holy Spirit only brings chaos, and disturbs the pattern of our existence, instead it is the Holy Spirit that brings order to our chaos.

The Holy Spirit also brings order to our daily lives. Let me give you some tangible stories.

Let me refer back to the chaos of Pentecost; the Disciples with tongues of fire on their head, and speaking in many different tongues. That was chaos. But out of that came life, came the birth of the Church.

A more recent story might be of a woman who shared about her final year in college. She was studying for her finals in her room. Unfortunately her

roommate was finished with her finals, and she invited a few friends over to celebrate. Well, the woman decided to be polite and just leave. She debated where to go and study, and felt like God was telling her to go to a local bar instead of the library. She didn't think it would be as quiet, but she went. When she got there was only a man at the bar and the bar tender talking.

She sat down in a booth and pulled out her books. But before she started going over her notes, she felt the funniest urge to go do a head stand. It was as if a little voice in her head was saying, "stand on your head."

She tried and tried to shake the feeling, but it just would not go away. (I am sure you have had those feelings before) She tried to study, but her mind could not focus. (Sounds a little chaotic doesn't it)

So eventually she decided she had to do a head stand. So she looked the room over and decided on a corner back by the bathrooms, next to the juke box. She got up quietly and move toward the back. The two men were still talking heatedly over something. Then, when she thought no one was looking, she quickly planted her head on the ground and did a head stand. As fast as she could she got down and marched quietly back to the table. But on the way she noticed that the man at the bar was now weeping uncontrollably. The bar tender put his hand on the man, and motioned for the woman to approach. She was a little nervous, but asked if there was anything she could do.

The bar tender explained that for the last 30 minutes the two men had been arguing about whether or not God was real. And that just before the woman walked in, the other man had said, "If God really does exist, then let him prove it. I want to see someone walk in here and go over and do a headstand by the juke box in back."

The Holy Spirit worked in that moment of chaos to bring order and life to both her, to the bartender, and to that man as well.

To bring it all closer to home, I know people who felt called to start a daily prayer time. They knew they were supposed to, but they didn't think they had the time. When they started it felt like chaos to them getting up a half hour earlier in an already busy day. But at the end of two months, they came back and told me how much more organized their lives felt just because they gave God the first 30 minutes.

Another good friend of mine tells the story of his finances. He was convinced that God wanted him to tithe, but could not see how he could do that and still take care of his family. He thought it would be chaos. But after 6 months of faithful tithing, he says God has blessed him with more than he had,

and even in times of less he has learned to be content. Because he put God first in his finances, he experienced an order that he had not ever felt before.

For me that experience has been prayer walking. At first I didn't think I would have the time for it, or the health to walk the distance. I wrestled with God about changing the size of the prayer map. I looked for ways around knocking on doors because I thought it would bring chaos. But instead what I have found is that it has brought me life. And from what a few people have said in my visits, it has been just the encouragement that they needed for that day as well.

When we put God first in our lives and surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit, it may feel like chaos at first as we are pushed outside of our comfort zones, but eventually we realize that what felt like chaos is abundant life.

I have told you that I am praying for each of you as members of the church and community. I am praying that the Holy Spirit is poured out on you, and that you are challenged to face the chaos of creation, the chaos of life, the chaos of faith. And that as you face that chaos, that God will breathe life into your spirit, and order into your existence so that you can see that God has a plan for you, a plan to prosper you, and a plan to use you for the glory of the kingdom of God. Amen.