

**Two Creation Stories—One Truth—Genesis 1-2:1**  
*April 22, 2018—3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter, Earth Sunday*

**Another Creation Story** (*this was read in the service following the Genesis reading*)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

We have heard the echoes of creation, in 1964, two astronomers inadvertently discovered a noise of extraterrestrial origin. The noise did not seem to emanate from one location but instead, it came from all directions at once. It became obvious that what they heard was radiation from the farthest reaches of the universe which had been left over from the creation of the universe, from the Big Bang some 13 billion years ago.

The universe began, with every speck of its energy jammed into a very tiny point. This extremely dense point exploded with unimaginable force, creating matter and propelling it outward to make the billions of galaxies of our vast universe.

What existed prior to this event is completely unknown. This occurrence was not a conventional explosion but rather an event filling all of space with all of the particles of the embryonic universe rushing away from each other. They are still rushing away from each other and the universe is still expanding in every direction.

All the matter found in the universe today -- including the matter in people, plants, animals, the earth, stars, and galaxies -- was created at the very first moment of time.

All of it has been entrusted to us, and indeed it is very good.

<http://www.umich.edu/~gs265/bigbang.htm>

<http://www.exploratorium.edu/origins/cern/ideas/bang.html>

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Two creation stories, separated by three, possibly four millennia, both are the product of peoples who struggled and struggle with the same questions—where did we come from? How did it all begin? Two creation stories written by peoples grappling with mystery using the resources they had at hand, both in their own way are true. Both use the gifts of intellect and imagination, the difference being that the more contemporary story arose at a period in time of great scientific knowledge. This story gives us a picture of creation that is simply awesome--a universe born of extreme power and turbulence, still expanding ever outward from that point of origin. According to this story we are all one, not just you and me in some trite way, but literally all of creation. The stuff that makes us and the world came from that singular birthing explosion. According to this story creation is a child of mystery for we know neither the cause of it nor what existed before it.

The other story also uses the gifts of imagination and intellect, but its conclusions and truths come not from technical expertise but rather from the well of faith. Faith is also a way of knowing, of knowing the truths that can only be grasped in relationship: love, the power of vulnerability, losing one's life to gain it, grace. Our faith story is written with a deep sense of gratitude and reverence; creation is a gift and it is good. We have been entrusted, given dominion over this good gift. But, dominion over creation today cannot mean domination. Dominion in our time means restraining our hungers. The earth takes care of us, but only if we take care of it. We have the ability to deplete and destroy creation and ourselves in the process. Care of the earth is care of ourselves. It is a sacred trust.

This is a great truth of our biblical creation story. At this point in our history I think the truth in Genesis has as much importance as the scientific truth, not as fact, not as an alternative, but as a compliment to science, grounding the science in reverence, goodness and gratitude. I don't think I need to recite here all the apocalyptic signs of creation's pain. You are well aware of global warming, the rate at which glaciers are melting, the epidemic of plastic in our oceans, the extreme storms and droughts. You are well aware of the loss of the rainforests. You are well aware of the state of our air on humid days, of the rise in asthma rates. The way we live is not sustainable.

Really, environmental destruction is nothing new. Ronald Wright in his book *A Short History of Progress* traces the demise of every civilization in the last 10,000 years to environmental destruction—everyone from the Romans, to the Sumerians to the Easter Islanders to the Mayans. Civilizations, he writes, get caught in “progress traps.” “A small village on good land beside a river is a good idea, but when the village grows into a city and paves over the good land, it becomes a bad idea.” The society begins to exhaust its natural resources—woods, water, and topsoil.” Finally there is no room left to grow food or absorb the shocks of droughts and floods and other natural fluctuations. To survive, they take out “new loans from nature and humanity”, overworking the land and the people. But in the end nature forecloses, “with erosion, crop failure, famine, disease.” Wright notes, that in the past survivors simply moved to other places where resources were abundant, the difference today is that there is nowhere left to go.<sup>1</sup>

Our consumer, market driven lifestyle as it exists now is not sustainable. We are all implicated in this system of destruction. We are all entangled in a web that is trapping us in behaviours that will destroy us. Let me give you an example. My first church was up in Hornepayne, Ontario, about a four-hour drive north of Sault Ste. Marie. Hornepayne got road access sometime in the nineteen sixties, before that the only way in our out was by rail. Before the road, the town had its own dairy, butcher and other businesses as well. As soon as the road came people started shopping out of town, driving 120 kilometres to Hearst, 220 to Kapuskasing and up to 400 and 500 kilometres to the Sault, Thunder Bay and Timmins. The dairy, the butcher and a slew of other businesses closed

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress*.

down, now there is no local option for many goods and services. How do we get ourselves out of such progress traps, where do we begin?

For those of us who call ourselves Christian, faith is our starting point. Faith tells us that creation is a gift—we are entrusted with something good, and our actions and behaviours need to flow from this relationship of grace. We need to see ourselves as stewards of creation, not owners; we need to see ourselves as connected to each other, the water, the air, the soil, the plants and the animals. We need to acknowledge the debt we owe to the land, and the responsibility we have to future generations. I'm not going to say what each person should or should not do, that really is up to each of us to reflect on our faith and to let our actions flow from that place of deep connection. Maybe you'll decide to drive less, to shop locally, to grow your own food, to buy less, to turn down the air conditioner, to write a letter to a corporation or an MP.

The only thing that is not an option from a faith perspective is to let helplessness take over. The late American anthropologist Margaret Mead is famous for having said, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. In fact, they are the only ones who ever have." Do you remember acid rain and ozone depletion? If you don't it's because they were the environmental issues of the seventies and eighties. They aren't the issues they once were because people were moved by the site of lakes devoid of life and the thought that the convenience of aerosol cans and air conditioners were destroying our protection from ultra-violet radiation. The changes that came didn't start with governments; they started with people who felt a responsibility and a connection to creation. Margaret Mead said it eloquently but an African proverb says it plainly, "If you think that you're too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with a mosquito."

Where did we come from? How did it all begin? Regardless of the creation story that speaks to you most profoundly the fact remains that creation is not of our doing, it is all gift, pure gift. Grace abounds, let us live in creation as a grateful people, with respect and with joy. Amen.

Rev. Joe Gaspar