

December 28, 2025—The First Sunday after Christmas
The Rev. James Wyatt

Becoming

Have you ever found yourself telling a story to a friend, and then caught yourself—“Wait, let me back up”—realizing that your friend needs some more context, maybe, to understand the point of the story you’re telling?

From that perspective, I find it interesting to look at how each of the four Gospel writers decides where the story needs to start. Mark starts off with the story of John the Baptist proclaiming repentance in the wilderness. As far as Mark is concerned, that’s “the beginning of the good news,” where it all starts. Then Luke says, “Wait, let me back up”—he decides the story needs to start a little earlier, so he begins by relating the miraculous births of John the Baptist and Jesus, which are woven together by the relationship between their mothers. Then Matthew says, “Wait, let me back up”—he figures the reader needs a little more context: his story begins with Abraham, and traces all his descendants down to Joseph, the husband of Mary. And only with that background out of the way does he tell the story of the birth of Jesus, which we heard last Sunday.

And then there’s John. John’s gospel starts by saying, look, to really understand the story I’m about to tell you, you need to go all the way back to the *very* beginning, the beginning of creation. Only then can you understand how God’s work of creation is still unfolding. So John starts his Gospel with the same words that appear at the start of Genesis: “In the beginning.”

In fact, this whole passage—John’s poetic prologue to his Gospel—comes across as sort of a sermon on the first verses of Genesis: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 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. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness... And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.”

John takes this story from Genesis and highlights the role of the Word in the creation of all things to help us understand the role of the Word in the ongoing work of creation.

He makes the important point that Jesus wasn’t some newcomer. He wasn’t a new God, and he didn’t represent a change in God’s nature, somehow. He was the same Word spoken in the first acts of creation, as recorded in the book of Genesis, the Word through whom all things came into being. That Word has been part of God’s being from the very beginning.

And that same Word is continuing the work of creation to this day. Creation isn’t something that happened in the beginning and then stopped. John uses the language of creation over and over again in this passage. The Greek verb γίνομαι—“to become or be born or happen”—is the root of the word Genesis, and in the Greek text of Genesis that’s the word we translate as “there was”—there was light, there was evening, there was morning. Light and morning and evening happened, they became, they were born. That same word shows up twelve times in these first 18 verses of John: In the beginning, “all things came into being through him”—“came into being” is the same word, describing God’s work of creation just like in Genesis. But God’s work of creation continues with John the baptizer: when we read, “*there* was a man who came from God,” that’s the same word. God’s work of creation continues when the Word *becomes* flesh—that’s the same word. And God’s work of creation continues today, in us, when we are empowered to *become* children of God, and when we are *born* of the will of God—those are both the same word, forms of the verb γίνομαι. The work of creation that began in Genesis continues even now, transforming the world and transforming us.

That is, in fact, the whole point—the whole purpose of our coming together as a church: for the people of God—for us—to be transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ, more and more into children of God and heirs of God’s eternal kin-dom.

Our reading from Isaiah this morning suggests that God's ongoing creative work in us is like plants springing up from the earth or from a garden—in the same way, righteousness and praise spring up in us. I love the way that image evokes lush greenery but also tenacious, stubborn growth, the way plants will take root in the smallest crack in concrete or a fallen log in the forest. It gives me hope that even when we don't feel like particularly fertile soil for the word of God to take root in, even then, the Spirit can take root in us and spring up like vibrant shoots or like tenacious little weeds of righteousness and praise. And when those take root in us, I am confident that, with God's help, we will eventually bear good fruit—like the fruit of the Spirit that Paul mentions a little later in Galatians, the fruit of love and joy and peace, of patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—the fruit that marks our transformation more and more into the likeness of Christ.

“To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.” “And because you are children,” as Paul says, “God has sent the Spirit into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’ So we are [now] children, and if children then also heirs, through God.” Having seen his glory—the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth—we are now called to *be* his glory, and to let it continue to shine in the world. “The Word became flesh,” became a body, and now, friends, that body is us. We are the Body of Christ, each of us individually parts of that body, and if the whole world is to see his glory, it will be through us.

It's one thing for us to denounce the hatred and division, the racism and nationalism, the greed and domination and warmongering that we oppose in the world—and denouncing all that is certainly a good start. But if we're going to show the glory of Christ in this broken world, we also need to live out the alternative: to show the world what a community built on love looks like, to demonstrate in our lives what grace, forgiveness, and hospitality look like, to be the change and the love and the joy and the peace we want to see in the world. We're not just called to protest the world as it is, we are invited to be a part of its transformation, first by allowing the Spirit to transform us and make us children of God, and then by embodying the heavenly realm of God in the way we live together in community.

We do that in the way we welcome everyone who comes into this place, reflecting God's open arms of grace and abundant love for all creation. We do that in the way we share responsibility for all the work that gets done around here, joining together in service to each other and to the community around us. We do that by being a community of equality, where children and adults and elders, men and women, gay and straight people, people of different economic standing, all worship together, eat together, learn together, celebrate and grieve together, and just get through life together.

And then, as we are transformed by the Holy Spirit in this community, we are sent from here into the world—into our workplaces and our homes and our civic life and our economic life, and we carry that transformation with us. The examples of our individual lives and our little church might not seem like much, but a little goes a long way—like a candle burning in the darkness, like a pinch of salt seasoning and preserving food, like a bit of yeast leavening a whole loaf of dough.

The Word, through whom all creation came into being, became flesh and lived among us, and continues that work of creation in us. And we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth. May we live out that grace, that truth, that abundant righteousness and praise, so the light continues to shine in the darkness, in and through us, and the darkness will never overcome it. Amen.