

September 6, 2026—The Feast of Creation in Christ
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Who We Are

Here's a thing I have said already several times this year, and will probably say a lot more: Our stories tell us who we are. You might imagine that this is important to me, given that I've spent my whole other career working on a game that is fundamentally about giving people the tools to tell stories interactively, as a group, as well as writing a lot of my own stories. And when I say sometimes that my two jobs are not really all that different, that's because ministry, too, is about telling stories. It's about retelling the stories passed down to us by our ancestors in faith, and it's about connecting those stories to our own stories of the work God has done and is still doing in our lives, individually and as a community. And that's also why I like to read the first line of John's Gospel as, "In the beginning was the Story," which is as good a translation as any of the complicated Greek word *Λόγος*. In the very beginning of all things, God told a Story, the Story of all things—a Story of life and of light that shines in the darkness and will never go out. And when God began to tell this Story, all things came into being through the Story. This Story tells us who we are.

The first two chapters of the book of Genesis actually tell two different stories about the beginning of all things. The first chapter pictures a God who is little more than a wind sweeping over the face of the waters and a disembodied voice that speaks all things into being and then calls them good. The second chapter pictures a God who plants a garden and walks in it, who stoops to the ground and shapes the mud into a human being, and who splits that human into two in a procedure that sounds almost surgical. But the point of these stories isn't to tell us who God is. The point is to tell us who we are.

The first chapter suggests that God made human beings in God's own image as the final act of the whole work of creation—sort of a crowning achievement—and made us stewards over all the animals. That suggests a number of things about who we are: most importantly, I think, the idea that all human beings, of all genders, have inherent dignity and worth that comes from being made in God's image. And, also importantly, it suggests that we are meant to be caretakers, stewards of the world we inhabit.

The second chapter, the story we heard this morning, suggests that God made humans first, then planted a garden for us to live in and tend. It says God felt sorry for us, that we were alone, and made all the other animals of the world in an effort to find a "fitting counterpart" for us. This story, too, suggests a number of things about who we are: most importantly, I think, that we are meant to be in relationship—with God, with each other, and with all the animals God created. Our relationship with the animals is fundamentally different than our relationships with other humans—God realized that only another Human could be a "fitting counterpart" for the Human in the story—but still we named them, we know them, and we are fundamentally part of the same creation as they are. All of us, human and nonhuman, were formed out of the earth by the hands of a God who did not want us to be alone. And these two humans were created to be partners and companions to each other.

These two stories are not the same, they contradict each other in some important details, and they don't square with what we know about the origins of the universe from the work of generations of scientists—and that's OK. The authors and editors who first put the book of Genesis together didn't care that these stories are different, because both of them tell us true and important things about who we are in relation to God, to each other, and to the rest of creation.

The essential truth in both of these stories—which is also sort of the point of this Feast of Creation in Christ and the season of creation we'll be observing for the next month—is that we are part of God's creation, we are part of God's Story, the Story of all things—of life and of light that shines in the darkness and will never go out. And so are the heights of the heavens and the depths of the sea, so are the angels and the sun and the moon and all the shining stars, so are the sea-monsters and the weather, the mountains and hills, trees and beasts and

cattle, creeping things and winged birds. All things, in our Psalm this morning, are called upon to praise God, because all things were created by God, brought into being by the Word. All things are part of the Story God told, caught up with us in all the drama, tension, and romance, all the tragedy, despair, and desperate hope, and brought with us, as our collect said this morning, through death to resurrection glory. The Story is not just about us. It is so much bigger than us, because the creative imagination and the deep, abiding love of God are so much bigger than we can begin to conceive.

In the beginning, John tells us, in God's rich and infinite imagination, was the Story of all things, and when God began to tell it, all things came into being. This Story is a romance about God and the world God loves, about heaven drawing near to earth, about life and death and the beautiful, painful place where they meet and embrace. It's our Story, the history of our ancestors, and of our descendants; and it's the Story of all Creation—not just this world but the whole cosmos and everything in it. It's a Story of life and light—light that shines in the darkness and will never go out, a Story that will never cease being told.

And as God continues to tell that Story, the work of creation continues. God continues to work in the world, shaping and transforming, restoring and redeeming. And we have the glorious calling, the privilege and responsibility, of participating in that creative work. Because one other true thing that Genesis tells us about who we are is that God made us to take part in that ongoing work of creation. "God settled the Human in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it." Being made in God's image, we have a share of God's infinite imagination and boundless creativity. Like Miss Rumphius in the book Connie read for us a few months back, God invites all of us to use that imagination and creativity to make the world a more beautiful place, in whatever way we can. And God calls all of us to try to make our little corner of creation, whatever space we occupy, however far we can reach, a little more like that first garden we were made to tend and to till, a little more like the promise of God's new creation.

When we work for justice, when we honor the image of God in all of our neighbors, when we protect and restore the beauty and integrity of all creation, and when we are transformed ever more and more into the best versions of ourselves, the Story is creating in and through us. The light is continuing to shine in the darkness, in us and through us. And the darkness will never overcome it.

Thanks be to God.