

**“God’s Own Image”**  
**Genesis 1:1-2:4a**  
**Pollocksville Presbyterian Church**  
**Sermon #59**  
**2nd Sunday After Pentecost**  
**14th Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
**6.14.20**

## **Genesis 1:1-2:4a**

1 When God began to create the heavens and the earth— 2 the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters— 3 God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared.4 God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

6 God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other.” 7 God made the dome and

separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. 8 God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

9 God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened.

10 God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. 11 God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. 12 The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

13 There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

14 God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. 15 They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. 16 God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. 17 God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

19 There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

20 God said, "Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky." 21 God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the

waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. 22 Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

23 There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

24 God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened.

25 God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. 26 Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

27

God created humanity in God's own image,

in the divine image God created them,

male and female God created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. 30 To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. 31 God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

**2** The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. **2** On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. **3** God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. **4** This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Genesis. The origin of the cosmos. The first humans. The first lie. The first murder. The first flood. The first covenant. The origins of the Hebrews. The beginnings of civilization. The beginning of the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and what has become the Christian Bible. The Creator God is the primary actor. Order from chaos. New life from an old barren couple named Abraham and Sarah. There's so much in Genesis that I love.

I realize there are many theories as to who wrote it and when. I'll acknowledge them and ask for us to set them aside, particularly Moses as the author. Let's look at this book through a different lens that some in here may have considered and others may not. For me, it's a game changer when I look at this book through the point of view of an exiled people. Remember the exile?

Remember when the nation of Israel split in two after Solomon and both kingdoms were eventually taken into captivity? Let's look at the creation story and, ultimately, this book through that lens.

It is believed that Genesis became part of literature during the Southern Kingdom of Judah's exile. The chosen people had lost their way after being told over and over again to repent, but failed to do so, are now in the aftermath of losing everything and living as strangers in a foreign land. Out of chaos, there is order. Out of destruction, there is new life. Out of despair, there is hope. In the midst of foreign powers telling them who to worship, Genesis is full of stories to educate these chosen holy people who the one true God is.



And it all begins in a shapeless dark void. Chaos. And God's Spirit, like a momma brooding over her children, constantly worrying about the state of affairs, moves back and forth over the face of the earth. New life. Light and Dark. Stars. Moon. Sun. Sea. Land. Vegetation. Creatures in the water. Creatures on the land. Seasons. You name it and God made it.

And here we have the beginnings of the animal kingdom. The cycle of the year. Plants. And God called them good.

But, God wasn't done with it. God had someone else in mind:

*God created humanity in God's own image,*

*in the divine image God created them,*

*male and female God created them.*

And God called us supremely good.

I keep thinking about how it must have felt for the Israelites in exile to hear this story that had most likely been passed down for years to hear this in a strange land. Imagine hearing this story knowing that your homeland is far away and desolate and you may be one of the few survivors of your family to carry on the lineage.

To hear that humanity was created in God's own divine image is remarkable. And it's not something I focused on as a child. I was told to accept that this is how creation began and that Moses was the author. End of story. But, hearing this story again in light of a people who were conquered and exiled, this old story takes on a different meaning for me and I hope it does for you, too.

Why would it be so important for the Israelites to hear about humanity being created in God's own image? Why would the author of Genesis want to emphasize God's intent of creating humanity? Maybe it reminds them of what the prophets had told them before and during their captivity that they had forgotten: Love the LORD your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

If we are bearers of God's own image, how does that influence the way we treat each other? Friend, foe, neighbor, stranger, rich, poor, Native American, white, brown, black, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, conservative, liberal, moderate, Atheist, people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender?

You're right, I'm about to call out white supremacy again.

I'm tired of having to call it out because it's 2020 and I remember a time when blatant white supremacy was shunned. I remember when lynchings seemed like a relic of the past, but I was wrong. Lynchings are being recorded on people's phones. And yes, white

supremacy is as blatant as people putting on their klan robes waving Confederate flags or proudly wearing their swastikas. It's as blatant as people of color being murdered simply because they are people of color. It's also more subtle. Its subtlety is found in policies that keep people poor and segregated in their own neighborhoods that we declare unsafe and uninhabitable.

What we are witnessing today is not an anomaly, but something that has been in the works for hundreds of years. For some, you're probably thinking it's 1968 all over again. It's really a different verse of the same song. One verse is about slavery being brought to North America just 4 hours from here around 1619, another verse is of Jim Crow, another of Japanese Internment Camps during WWII, and another is of the Trail of Tears. And we're just an

example of countries around the world who have a stain that needs to be confronted. Apartheid in South Africa and the Holocaust in Germany are but two examples of many more.

Yet, God made us in God's divine image. And there is a better way for us as we move forward! I'm hopeful just as previous generations were that we can work for the common good and it starts with acknowledging the Divine Image each of us hold.

If each of us are made in the Divine Image, then how do we love and treat our neighbors? How do we come up with solutions in an age where we suspect anyone with differing opinions?

I don't have the answers for you, but I can tell you that each of us are made in God's own image. It says so in Genesis 1:27. Our thoughts and actions are to reflect the Divine Image of God.

Anything that unashamedly or subtly dehumanizes anyone is heresy.

This sermon is not the last word. My hope is that it is the beginning of a much needed conversation. It's a conversation that will not feel good because we have to take a hard look in the mirror and at our past and the present. It's just like those deep conversations families have to address the root of the problem in order to create a healthier family system. It takes courage, vulnerability, and honesty.

As a global human family, we have to do some soul searching. We are a family in this country and we have to examine ourselves. We are a family in this state, in this community, and in this church and we need to take a hard look at the way things are. And this local, national, and global family, like our ancient ancestors in exile, has forgotten we have been created in the Divine Image of God. And we have forgotten two words God spoke after we were made: Supremely good.

If we are made in God's Divine image and we are declared "supremely good", what does God expect from us?



In the name of God the Source of Love, God who is Love made  
Flesh, and God the Transforming Power of Love. Amen.