October 21, 2018

Sermon for First Presbyterian Church, Richland

All This And More

Texts: Job 38:1-7, 24-42, Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?

Psalm 104:1-9, 24-35c, (My God is) clothed with splendor and majesty.

Mark 10:35-45, For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve.

We started with the reading from the Book of Job. In many ways Job is trying to understand who he is and how he fits into the world. He is trying to make sense of what is happening to him and around him. At the Book’s grand climax, God answers Job. God wrapped in splendor and majesty does not demean nor humiliate Job. Rather, God answers Job’s search by teaching him from Genesis, the Creation. The lesson is uplifting, reassuring, hopeful.

It is foundational to our faith that God created all that there is. Genesis opens with God created the heavens and the earth. God first created the heavens and all that is within, all those angels and those spiritual beings which serve God. Then God created the earth. We are reminded that God’s creation did not stop at Day Seven, when God rested, but God’s continued certainly through the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Enthronement of Christ Jesus. One can suggest God’s creation continues until the end of the Age, when God creates the New Heavens and the New Earth. In all of creation we are taught that God’s splendor and majesty are revealed. We most often learn that God is some powerful awesome force of nature or physics, a force which is as beyond understanding, as it is overwhelming.

God intends, the Bible teaches, something quite different. True enough, God is in control, be reassured. God provides, take comfort. God is majestic in what God has done, but there’s more, God cares for and loves all that God has created, be loved, accept God’s love, return God’s love.

Remember that the account of Genesis creation purposefully prepares for the creation of Adam and Eve. And remember Eve was created because in some way Adam was incomplete, lonely even for someone like him, Adam. Adam and Eve were created in the likeness of God. Now I wonder if this in some way opens an explanation for why God created the earth. After all God’s home, Heaven, was already created and populated, but within all of Heaven were there none “in the likeness of God”? Was God lonely, desiring to be in companionship with someone “like God”, and so Adam and Eve and all of humanity. Remember how God walked with and talked with and enjoyed the company of Adam and Eve? With sin that relationship was broken, but still desired and so did creation continue through Christ Jesus, to restoring that loving company God desired and created in the first place?

Back to Job. Now remember that Job’s faith has never faltered. God testified that no one loved God as much as Job. But Job has been seeking an answer for all that had happened to him. God summons Job and speaks, but does not put Job down. God does not humiliate the man, but teaches Job that all of creation was deliberately for Job. God is saying all this was and is for you Job. I did not abandon you. I was not absent. Do not be afraid. Take courage. I love you, Job. As Job accepts these Gifts of God, Job parallels the New Testament understanding that all must humble themselves and accept the free Gift of Salvation in Christ Jesus.

Throughout the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, Creation is cited with the same intent. Because God created, take heart. Do not be afraid. Stand up with courage. Freely accept with humility what God has created and given to you. And then, share it.

It is in this context I read Jesus’ instructing the Apostles on Servanthood. James and John were the first followers of Jesus. John becomes perhaps the closest to Jesus of the Twelve. So, Peter’s strong personality notwithstanding, James and John asked for a privileged position or status. Jesus instructs them that those with any privileged position within the Kingdom are the servants, the one who serves others. Jesus says that He Himself came not to be served but to serve.

True enough, Jesus came to serve humanity by giving Himself up on the Cross so that all who receive The gift of Salvation. But in the context of this morning, in the context of Creation, might Jesus be pointing to something greater. (I know this might be a stretch…) If the Genesis Creation is continuous and ongoing, reaching to the Crucifixion and beyond, including you, might the greatest example of Servanthood be God’s creation, serving you by creating all that there is, all that is needed, all that you have. As a servant is God demonstrating God’s Majestic love for you and desire to walk and talk, and love you? In serving you then are we to see the example of our, of my, serving others? With courage and confidence, and compassion, are we, am I, to provide for the widow and orphan in practical ways, as Scripture so frequently points out. Having accepted the Love of God in Christ Jesus, are we, am I, to point out that love to any who have nor accepted it, or have not yet heard of it?

As I might put myself in Job’s place, I too have suffered wants and hurts and loss and discouragement and apparent separation from God. But in some ways God comes and answers, pointing to all that God has done for me, starting with creation, reaching through the Incarnation, through the Crucifixion and Resurrection, to the reality of Life eternal in Christ Jesus. All this, and more beyond my understanding God has done that God might walk with me, not because of anything I am or might be, but simply because God loves me.

And so to you. All this and more, is for you, so that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, might walk with you, forever and forevermore.

Amen

Rev Kenneth G Hetzel, Honorably Retired