

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 20<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, October 7, 2018.**

Our lessons this morning are not about Justice Kavanaugh, though the issues these lessons raise might make their way to Court deliberations.

If you were to ask people on the street if there is a difference between creationism and evolution, most would say yes, there is a difference. And most of these folks would say that evolution is science-based, and creationism is religion-based. Fair enough.

This dichotomy, though, is unfortunate, because it misses a remarkable similarity – the common ground if you will - between the two understandings. The areas of agreement are **sequencing** and **responsibility**.

Both schools of thought begin with something out of nothing. We don't know if that beginning is a Big Bang or the simple Divine command: Let there be ....

And both schools of thought follow up this “something out of nothing” with a progression from simple to complex.

Creationism treats this journey in broad strokes:

From nothing to something.

From non-living to living.

From simple life to more complex life.

From more complex life to really complex life with advanced thoughts, including artificial intelligence.

And here we are.

In big picture terms, isn't the sequencing of creationism consistent with the sequencing of evolution? So where is the difference?

Well, the difference lies in attribution. Creationism holds that there is a Creator orchestrating this sequencing. The evolutionists don't necessarily take this attribution step. Many believe that the Creation unfolds for reasons other than an engaged God.

The result of this attribution difference is a gap, and this gap is difficult to bridge. In their better moments, these two understandings seek to respect one another. For many in each camp, however, crossing the bridge is a challenge. This morning's question is whether this challenge is insurmountable? I don't think so, particularly when there are beliefs in each camp that lend themselves to a healthy and interesting exchange.

The Story of Adam and Eve is an example (**Genesis 2:18-24**). The Hebrews understood that someone needed to be in charge of the Creation. Someone needed to be the adult in the room. Someone needed to care for the other elements of Creation. The rock couldn't be that caretaker. The fish couldn't be that caretaker. The snake couldn't be that caretaker, though the snake tried. It was the human being who seemed best equipped to look after all that was made.

And not just a single human being, but human beings in total, humanity, both male and female. Each had strengths and gifts and priorities. And together they were responsible for keeping the species moving forward, including the passing along of wisdom and experience.

This wisdom and experience took the form of inspired stories. These teaching vehicles developed in every culture over many centuries, with a consistent theme, the theme of **responsibility**. Who is going to take care of the Creation? Who is uniquely equipped to do so? Why is it that over time the human being, rather than other creatures, discovers and puts in place new ways of caretaking? Is caretaking development haphazard or purposeful?

You and I believe that the unfolding of history is purposeful. Yes, the human being is the chief caretaker, but is subject to the authority of, maybe to the direction of, and certainly to the love of, the One who proclaimed "Let there be ..."

We might be the chief guardian of what God has provided, but we do not act alone. Enter the notion again of attribution. We don't ask people to pray to us. Rather we invite people to pray with us to the One ultimately in charge. From this morning's psalm: "O Lord, our Governor, how exalted is your Name in all the world!" (**Psalm 8**)

One of the principles of the Universe is that everything is in motion. Things are not static, even when they appear so. What this means is that, as caretaker of the Creation, we have to be nimble. We have to be prepared for change, for discovery, for breakthroughs, for epiphanies, both small and monumental. At one point in history, the human being cared for a flat world, only to discover that the world is not flat. At one point, the human being looked to the heavens and saw a relatively small number of points of light. Today, we look to the heavens and see points of light beyond our imagination.

The Creation is on the move, so we must be on the move as well. Part of this response is being open to the Creator who is on the move. Again, we are not alone in our caretaking responsibility. This is the theme of today's Letter to the Hebrews (**Hebrews 1:1-4: 2:5-12**). It is a reminder to the early Christians that this caretaking business is a joint venture.

The author writes, "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word."

Now, it is true that not every person, who sees himself or herself as a caretaker of the Creation, believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the answer to effective caretaking. But I am certain that everyone who accepts a caretaking responsibility understands that we do not act alone. At a minimum, we act in concert with other caretakers.

So, yes, there are "in concert" options. But, for you and me, the primary option is the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Later in the Letter to the Hebrews is this verse: "It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Have you ever thought of Jesus as the "pioneer of salvation"? Maybe we need to think of ourselves as "assistant pioneers in charge of Planet Earth," with the understanding that there will be some suffering.

But, if we, in our caretaking endeavors, endure some hardship, so be it. That's the nature of the task. And would we want it any other way? I don't think so. Think of the caretaking you are doing right now. Maybe it's running a business. Maybe it's caring for family. Maybe it's assisting in a recovery effort. Maybe It's in regaining a sense of purpose so that you can resume caretaking. Whatever position we're in, we are not alone as we face our various challenges.

In today's gospel (**Mark 10:2-16**), the disciples were trying to protect Jesus from being overwhelmed by parents with little children. "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

You are I are blessed, and with that blessing comes a responsibility to take care of God's creatures, including the planet on which we live, and which our children and grandchildren will inherit. This planet, and no doubt others, will need taking care of. That's the role of the human being. You and I in this setting understand that this role has been assigned by the Creator. Others have reached a different understanding about the source of this responsibility.

But, aren't we all on the same caretaking team? And don't most of us profess a similar big picture understanding of how the Creation is unfolding? Therefore, whatever our religious or non-religious beliefs, surely we can rally around a common custodial responsibility. We are One in our humanity, and, more to the point, we have the same home, at least for the time being.

Amen.