

Mid-Week Lent 2006  
Wednesday, March 8, 2006

Pastor Dick Blomker  
Lake Edge Lutheran Church  
Madison Wisconsin

Last Wednesday evening we began walking with Jesus on the sacred journey of Lent. The sign of the cross was made on our foreheads from the ashes of Palm Sunday. "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return". We were reminded that in the beginning God, with a great burst of energy, began creating everything that exists, including us, formed from the dust of exploding stars. By that same love we are forgiven and restored to fully live from God's love. We also live from God's promise that we will one day not just become dust, we will be given eternal life.

These are also the thoughts and images of the writer of the gospel of John. "For God so loved the world." But the Greek word in this passage for loved is not just past tense, meaning that God once loved the world, but may no longer love it. The verb tense means that "from the beginning God has loved the world", which means that God always has and always will love the world and everything in it, including you and me.

That is important to know for our next weekly Lenten step this year. Often when we take another step in life we do not think about the world around us. We can be preoccupied with our own lives, often for very good reasons. Love for this world inspired and directed Jesus' Lenten journey.

As you leave the sanctuary tonight I invite you to look at the creation doors in the narthex. They show God beginning to create the whole cosmos. Galaxies flow from the hand of God. In the palm of that hand you will see the cross of Jesus Christ. You may be surprised to see it there in the beginning of all things.

The cross is there as God's promise. "For God so loves the world" from the very beginning that God has been inseparable from everything in creation. God will never stop loving the world. Diogenes Allen writes of Jesus: "This love enters the creation and bears the destructive effects of creatures whose nature is no longer directed by the Creator's love. Divine love bears this as a creature (Jesus), and bears it humbly. Such love is divine, a love that allows the creation its own freedom, and is willing to enter that realm as a creature to bear its ill effects." "For God has been loving the world that God, out of that same love, finally gave God's only begotten Son"

If we are going to walk with Jesus this Lenten season, we will need to share his feelings toward the world. Jesus who was sent into the world bears the love of God for the world. Now forgiven and freed we share that same love as we walk with Jesus.

There are times when we do not feel that this world is such a blessed place. Then it is more difficult to love the world. When bad things happen we ask, "Why is this suffering happening to me, my loved one, to those people in the world, or to the world apart from human beings?" The responsibility for the world's suffering can be passed around and shared by most everyone, including us.

But if we listen to John's words, that God did not just once create the world...God did not just set cosmic creation in motion and retreat to a place some call heaven... God began creating and continues to create everything from the tiniest particle here on earth to whole galaxies light years away. The work of God's creating is hands on work.

This has led Leslie Weatherhead in his, "Salute to a Sufferer" to write: "This world is not a finished piece of work. God is still at work on it and in it. It is not yet 'the best of all possible worlds, but it is the world of best possibilities.'"

As those new possibilities become real God weaves them into the fabric of the cosmos still being created. So imagine with me, if you will, God creating a huge tapestry, the whole cosmos. It has been going on for billions of years. The geologist Gheyselincx has graphically pointed out that "if the history of the world from the beginning to the present were pressed into a film to run for 24 hours, people would not appear until the last five seconds of the film."

It is not how special we might think we are that is important. What is important is that God so loved the world, including us, to send his only begotten Son into the world. What is also amazing about the creation is that our loving God wants everything and everybody to participate in the creating. That is the "being fruitful and multiplying" part.

But while God weaves beauty and harmony into the tapestry our contributions are not always what God has in mind. As a matter of fact, if we were God, we would have long ago lost our patience over some of the terrible human offerings of life and death and we would have torn the whole thing apart and started over again. Or we would lose our patience and trust in God. We'd say something like, "You started this whole thing off well, but you let things get a little messy, God. Let's just say this world is not worth finishing. Just let us, who really believe in you, not perish in the end and have everlasting life. We don't really care what you do with the world after we leave."

But this is still the world of best possibilities because the cross has been embedded in the palm of God's creative hand from the very beginning. In love God has shared the suffering of the world and now, in this new time God has chosen to share those sufferings through the love shown to us in the person of Jesus, the Christ.

God doesn't decide to fix the tapestry of life with a show of sheer power ripping out our threads of suffering and sin and sometimes people. Jesus takes our sins and forgives them. Jesus takes our suffering and somehow transforms it into something good. Our lives once again become a thing of beauty, a new creation.

God weaves us along with our suffering and sorrows through the warp threads of the ongoing creation. In the song of creation we can hear Jesus saying to those who plotted his death, "you meant evil for me, but God will now use it for good." As God's act of creating continues Jesus is with us loving us along with the whole creation. Every thread

of life, every life, will be transformed and become part of the most beautiful thing ever imagined. When God finally finishes the creation, it will take an eternity to take it all in. For God so loves the world that all those who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.

As we walk with Jesus on the journey of Lent this year, may our eyes of faith be opened to see the creation, the world as God sees it. May we live in such a way that shows that we do believe that “God so loves the world”. Amen.