

## **Genesis 2:4-20**

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

Reading from *Yearnings* by Rabbi Irwin Kula

### **“Creating A World Half Finished”**

**Rev. Rebecca McFee**

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Have you ever wanted one of your children's toys? They get it for Christmas, but really, you wanted it? A couple of years ago, we got our sons these helicopters, and they loved them, but really we were waiting for them to go on to the next toy, and my father and I stayed and just played with the helicopters. Sometime we want out kids' toys. But my favorite was a computer game, it was one of the first games we got for our kids, it was really healthy and educational, not like what they play now. It was called Zoo Tycoon. I don't know if you know it, but you get to design your own zoo on a computer, and it kind of works like this. You start with a few animals that you can select from, and you put them in their habitat, but then, before you can go any further, you have to research what that animal wants. So you're going to find out what kind of food they like, and what they don't like. And so if you put the wrong thing in their habitat, the animals go crazy and they don't like it. And so when my kids were little, this was the game of choice. And I loved playing this game, because I loved the thought that you can just create. And if it got

bad or something happened and your little people who come into your zoo aren't happy, you just start all over again. So this is what I did some when I was raising my kids and wasn't working full time. But you know, I don't know if this is a boy thing or what it is, but after a while they got tired of just creating a great zoo. So they started playing the What If game. The What If game kind of went like this. What if we took a pink flamingo and we put it in the lion's den? Let's see what will happen? And what if we were to take a gorilla, and let it go out in the zoo and terrorize all the people who come to the zoo? And so this doesn't make Mother happy. But you know, one of my therapist friends who was in my life at the time, I'd kind of report to her what was going on, and she would give me her analysis. And the analysis was that I just wanted the zoo to be really nice, because after I put the boys to bed, I'd go back to the computer and I would start repairing everything in the zoo. And so all the fences would be mended, and I would make sure that there's an extra bench for the guest who was unhappy, and this is what happened, and I would just recreate. And by the next morning, every person that was in my virtual zoo was happy again. They didn't know what had happened to them to day before.

I'm testimony to the fact that I understand why video games are so popular. We can fix problems very easily, and if you can't fix the problem easily, you just click the button and start the game all over again. Well, we know life isn't that easy. It's not a virtual world, it's a real world. And our problems are harder and more difficult to solve. But I think that what we learn quickly from the first book of our Scripture is that we have been called and we have been created to be creatures of creativity. In the book *Yearnings*, and I use it because some of you are studying it here with one of our ministers, Ray Miller, it's written by a rabbi, Rabbi Irwin Kula, and he says this: "The world was left unfinished so that humans could have a part in creation." It is that some of us have had that notion of a hierarchy that God creates everything and then we are more or less the pawns or the people who just kind of work that out. But there's also a view in theology that in this passage we have God who calls us into creation, that we will be the stewards of what will happen in our generation and the next generation to come.

This last month we have been taking a look at stewardship, and next week it will be Stewardship Sunday, and sometimes we emphasize that as financial, but from our Scripture, the word "steward" is about our gifts of creativity, to give life to our creation. To continue it, to embody the sense that we ask the good questions of what will I give to the next generation? So Genesis has two creation stories. The first creation story is in the first chapter, where God is about words, and God is so powerful that the words are spoken and out of nothing comes creation. I wish I possessed some of this as a parent, that you could just speak, and poof! it happens. But I don't have that. I have, however, been embodied with the power of God's spirit, as have all of us. In the second chapter of Genesis, where the creation story there is not of words but is of breath, and so the breath of God comes. Two Hebrew words, one meaning just the breath that keeps us alive, but the second Hebrew word for breath is the breath that creates, that gives embodiment and meaning to life. And so there we pick up the sense that we are part of the creation that we have, and we are the stewards of it. We are the symbolic descendents of Adam and Eve.

I'm a fan of the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi, who has spent his research and his career looking at creativity. You may be familiar with his works from the seventies and eighties, his book called *Flow*, and he also has a book called *Creativity*. I want to tell you a little about some of the things that he has done. In one study in particular, he was interested in what he said he didn't focus on the small-c creativity, and he considers small-c creativity nothing small at all, it's when we create art and create a house design and create woodworking items, and music. These he calls small-c creativity, not because it's small, but because his research was in, How do we create things that change the world? Change technology or science, the economy, changes technology in ways that have profoundly changed history? So what he did was, he took a look at 91 people in our world today who have really changed some major aspect of their field. 14 of those people were Nobel prize winners. And when he took a look at them and studied them and interviewed them, the thing that he found was that the myth was that these people did not work in isolation. They were creatures of community. When he interviewed them he found that these people were surrounded by other people who were equally as creative as they were, and that in fact they "gravitated to centers where their interests were satisfied more easily, where they could meet like-minded people, and where their work could be appreciated."

This idea of creativity that we have where we say "you guys over here are creative, I'm sorry, you guys aren't" is a myth. The idea that an artist or musician is creative, but the rest of us aren't, is a myth. Because in the sense of our creation itself, we are all called into creativity, a creativity that is in our DNA, that looks to finding solutions to the big problems. You know, when we hit the impasse and you hear or know of a person, or it's yourself, that's struggling through a hard relationship, or a difficult marriage, or you're not sure how to proceed with your children, and you have to kind of insert a new way of looking at things, to pass that impasse, to find a creative solution. And so I think for people of faith, all the more, our story starts with this awareness that we are with God, and venturing into areas where we can change things, where we can make things matter in our community. But we have to move it into directions that put us thinking differently.

A couple months ago, I took a video from the United Methodist Communications office and used it in Crosswalk, and it's similar to the video of the veterans. It's of churches doing wonderful things. But this video just wouldn't let go of me, because it is the creativity of a number of pieces that went together for the need the two groups to work, and I want to show you that video, because it is what we're talking about. (Now we hear the sound track of the video, about the HOPE prison ministry and how it helps children who need education in Zimbabwe.)

I'm not sure how we get from restorative justice theories in the correctional system to matching them up with sponsorship children in Africa. I was so intrigued by it that I went ahead and called the woman, Kimberly, in the video, and talked with her this week and said, "How did it happen? How do you put these things together? I mean, there had to have been a great story behind this video." And her story was, 18 people from a United Methodist church in Pittsburgh, in the Pittsburgh area, went to Zimbabwe, and spent some time there and came back and they wanted to make some real meaningful changes to what was happening in this village. And at the same time, some people who were

connected in the same community were working on the issues at this correctional facility and trying to figure out a way to make life meaningful for these inmates who would be leaving soon. How to keep them out of prison? And the two groups came together and just started talking. It was in a church gathering just like our fellowship hall that they started saying, "What if we put this together with this?" And this is what they came up with. HOPE was the name of it. It inspired me to believe that we come to church for many reasons. Sometimes we come just because we ourselves need to be supported, or we need to support someone else, but it's also because we come here because this is the place where we exchange the ideas of what the need in the world is, and what we can give to make things happen, and to think outside of the box of maybe how we have done it. Sometimes that is the way to do it. Other times we need to just go with it and see where our creativity can land us. It is true that the world can fill us with all the things that need to be fixed. We can fix our political system and our global economy, we can be challenged by all these things that can overwhelm us. Sometimes it's there right in the first story of creation, the second story of creation, that we are the creators of big changes, of great things that happen when we gather together, when we are the community that understands itself as the co-creators of God.

I end with this thought. It's already printed in your bulletin. In the front of your bulletin, as we honor today as well veterans, there was this quote and it says this. "I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask, 'Mother, what was war?' " Mother, what was war? We can dream that, but we can also make things happen. We aren't idealistic. It is through the pathways of creativity that we use all we have to make this world a different place, to change the things around us. Some of you have heard David Dalke and me talk about the college students the Wesley Foundation who started a program called Spread the Love which is making sandwiches with the Fort Collins Food Co-op downtown. I just want to tell you briefly that if you haven't heard this, we got all the things ready. We met with the city, we met with homeless people and with the shelters and the college students and we had a plan, and some of you may have heard. So we got there the first month to do this, and nobody came. That's a problem. Nobody comes to what you're offering. And so the last month, we have been working with college students to say, you know what? We just have to work harder. We've got to figure out what we didn't quite do right. And all we had to do was really tweak this and that. Our timing was off, the day. And so this last Sunday we did a similar thing, but we had changed some stuff, and we had people who were hungry, who needed sandwiches. I think it is more about that second month, where we don't get things always right, where things aren't just laying down perfect for us, where God works with us, where God's presence is saying to us, we are the creators. We are the ministers of the world, go forth. Do your work in the world, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.