

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, September 4, 2011

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 12, 9:1-2, 39, 14, 15.

Lessons: Genesis 1:1-2:3, Hebrews 1:1-12, Mark 10:6-9.

Sermon Text: Genesis 1:1.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“Nobody can be considered truly wise who has not learned the answers to the basic questions of life. Who am I? A chemical accident? A creature up from the jungle wearing a dress or a three-piece suit – you know, from cavemen to space man in half a billion years? An insignificant combination of bone and blood and muscle and nerve, surrounded by the infinite immensity of outer space? By whose order do I live on this planet? Was it by accident, or by design? What is the purpose of my life? To survive as comfortably as I can? Mark Twain called life ‘a rather discreditable incident on one of the minor planets.’ Was he right?” (The Peoples Bible – Genesis, John C. Jeske, p. 9)

We could never answer these questions correctly if God had not answered them for us. Humans have spent billions of dollars seeking to know how all things came to be, and continue to spend millions of dollars each year trying to figure out answers to these kinds of questions. But God answers the question of

HOW DID ALL THINGS COME ABOUT?

- 1. God created the heavens and the earth.**
- 2. What exactly did he create?**
- 3. The comfort we enjoy because God created all these things.**

For the child of God the answer to these questions is a matter of faith. In our worship we confess “I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth.” So simply do we state that we believe that is how all things came about. For the Christian, that is a matter of faith. You believe it because God has said that is how things came about.

“In the beginning God....” The universe in which we live had a beginning. Before that starting point there was nothing. Nothing - no time - no matter - no energy. Except. Except the God who existed from all eternity and who created all things. God has no beginning, no end. Humans have birthdays and death dates, beginnings and endings. But God alone is eternal. Nobody and nothing else is eternal, with no beginning and no end.

There was not some kind of “big bang” or “explosion” which started things evolving. There was no bubble of gas, no cosmic dust which could have kindled the germ of life. The earliest forms of life did not originate in a blob of slime on some prehistoric pond. The elements, the materials from which our universe is made up, are not eternal. They came into existence only when God commanded it.

God created the heavens and the earth. The Hebrew verb translated created is a very special one. In the Bible that verb is used only of God’s activity, and always expresses the origin of something extraordinary, absolutely unique. Sometimes God creates by using existing material. When he created Adam, for example, he used the dust of the ground. But because the activity described in this first verse of the Bible took place at the beginning, when only God existed, it was a creation of something out of nothing.

Can I create an animal to put here, in my hand? Well, if I were very artistic, I could take a handful of clay and form it into the shape of some kind of an animal. But what I would make, would not be created in the same way that God created the heavens and the earth. God made the heavens and the earth out of nothing. And

he did it simply with his Word, by commanding it. Whatever I might shape and put into my hand has no life. It would be a lifeless lump of clay, no matter how beautiful it might appear. No human being can create something out of nothing. No human being can give life to something that starts out inanimate. Even rules of science that men have discovered acknowledge this fact.

God created all things out of nothing. But many humans have difficulty accepting that. Many people have difficulty accepting the idea of a God, a supreme being. Many people have difficulty acknowledging that a God could and would create all things, including mankind. Mankind has developed a theory it calls evolution. Evolution is a word suggesting change. Evolution has come to mean a slow, gradual change over a countless number of years, typically millions, or billions of years.

Evolution used to be called a theory. Today you don't always find the word theory in connection with evolution. Evolution is presented as a fact, although there is a great deal of disagreement upon this so-called fact. Did something take 100 million years to evolve or did it take 200 million years? Did the evolution of the world, according to what I am going to call the theory of evolution, start 5 billion years ago or 13 billion years ago? When I start thinking about this kind of numbers, numbers of years, my mind gets lost. If we were to pick 70 years as a typical lifetime, 70,000 years would be 1000 lifetimes. 70 million years would be 1 million lifetimes. 700 million years would be 100 million lifetimes and by now my mind is spinning. I just cannot imagine that much time in terms of the lifetime of a human. Yet evolutionists speak quite freely in terms ranging up to billions of years.

Evolutionists look at what we believe God has created, and have created guesses as to how it came about. Then they create machines, such as the \$9 Billion Large Hadron Collider in a 17 mile tunnel near Geneva Switzerland which they hope will "explain the origin of mass in the universe" – something like recreating the very first particles that ever existed in the universe. They create machines such as telescopes to float in space which they hope can look to the end of the universe. And through all this, I can't help but think that such humans really are only speculating, that is, guessing about what they might find.

Because we believe God created the heavens and the earth, we reject all man-made theories of evolution. Just as humans have devoted their lives to the theory of evolution, other humans have devoted their lives to the history of creation. They argue back and forth, using the same sets of facts to come to different, opposing conclusions. Let me give one example, a very significant example of looking at facts to prove two different ideas. On the road to Christ our Redeemer, you can see layers of rock. Were those layers of rock laid down slowly, grain of sand by grain of sand and compressed into rock with the weight of thousands of feet of water – seas – on top of them, over thousands, perhaps millions or more years to create hard, solid rock? That would be what an evolutionist thinks. Or were those layers of rock created quickly on the third day of creation and moved around later, such as in a great flood the likes of which mankind had never seen before and has never seen since, in which "*all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.*" Genesis 7:11.

When God said on the third day "*let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear*" we could think about the geological implications of this command. Rocks were uplifted as landmasses and continents were assembled as God carved out basins for the oceans and lakes. There was erosion and then redepositing of earth and rock. In addition, about 6 generations later, God destroyed all mankind with the great flood, the great flood of Noah's time. At that time too, the geology of the earth would have changed drastically. Instead of what evolutionists think of as glacial lakes draining and changing the geology of the earth, we could think of layers of rock created quickly, folded quickly, huge grand canyons created, all as a result of the great flood. Because we believe that God created the heavens and the earth, we accept the second idea as fact: layers of rock which are no longer flat, which may have fossils in them, were formed and moved by the great flood which covered the entire earth. God tells us in Psalm 104:7-9: "*But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.*"

In this brief sermon, I find it extremely difficult to compress facts and proof which has taken, in some cases, an entire semester of college or seminary classes to discuss.

But we accept creation as fact. God made all things. God created all things. Nothing exists that God did not create or make out of the basic elements that he had created. Look at what God created in the six 24 hour days of creation.

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Genesis 1:2. On the first day, ***“God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day.”*** Genesis 1:3-5.

On day 2 God created “the firmament”, or as the NIV states, “an expanse”. It divided the waters above and below.

On day 3 the waters on the earth which had been separated from the waters above on the second day are now separated further to produce dry land. Then we read of the creation of all vegetation.

On day 4 God created lights in the heavens: sun, moon, stars and all the heavenly bodies. He didn’t just throw them out there the way you and I would throw a handful of sand. They were placed there for signs and for seasons. On day 5 God created animals to fill the sky and the waters. On day 6 God created land animals and man. On Day 7 God stopped creating and rested.

What does this all mean for us? What comfort can we find in the creation history – I prefer to speak of “history” when talking about Bible narratives because the word “story” can be understood to be fiction, something that is not true. Of course, we can certainly speak of “Bible stories” realizing that we mean “Bible history lessons”.

Well, one lesson of comfort we can draw from this is found after the great flood, in Genesis 8:22: ***“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”***

Additional comfort is found in who did the creating. God the Father was not alone in creating the universe. We read that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. This is God the Holy Spirit. Moses uses this verb elsewhere to describe the action of a mother eagle hovering over the nest, providing for her young and protecting them. The life-giving Spirit of God was active at the creation, preserving what God had created, preparing the universe for what God had in mind.

The apostle John says concerning God the Son: ***“through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made”***. John 1:3. John continues in that chapter speaking of ***“the Word”***. It then becomes plain in verse 14 who ***“the Word”*** is. It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the triune God. The work of creation then is a work in which all members of the Trinity share. This Jesus Christ is our Redeemer from sin, too.

And so today we say: ***“Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away. Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.”*** Psalm 148.

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Psalms 139:14. Amen.