

## **Co-Creating With God**

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Genesis 1:1-3,26-27

Here is a simple earthen clay pot that was probably crafted around 1,500 BC and unearthed in what now is Turkey sometime in the 1950s. It was used in someone's home probably to store spices.

I can't hardly say that with a straight face. This is actually a clay pot that I made back in elementary school. I wasn't yet a seasoned potter (I never became one) so I was experimenting and the pot didn't turn out the way that I intended. I didn't smooth the clay properly along the top edges or I tried to make it too thin, or perhaps I didn't use enough water. I also made the base altogether too thick. But whatever I did or didn't do properly it broke along the top edge.

I kept the pot all these years because I thought it sort of looked like an old pot that was unearthed from some ancient civilization. I thought that was pretty cool.

When I started out to create this pot though, I had some kind of vision for what it would become, some kind of purpose for it. I began with an intention. It was so long ago, I can only guess that the teacher gave the class a demonstration and then let the class go to develop our own creations.

Whether I was copying someone else's creation or came up with the plan all by myself, I had a sense of the shape I wanted it to be. I knew that I wanted the inside hollow, so that you could to put stuff in there. So, I got a lump of clay, sat down at a potter's wheel and began to give it shape.

### **READ GENESIS 1:1-3,26-27**

God, the Creator, creates creation. The Spirit of God was there at the beginning and part of that creation.

My clay pot reminds me that I am also a creator who creates creation. As a human being, I can think of something, take some kind of action to and then have some result at the end of the process that is now in existence that was not there before.

I, just like you, am a creator who creates creations.

These “things” that we create are sometimes physical objects, like this pot, or even this church building. Before this structure was ever built, a creator, like Paul, had an idea, and they sat down and drew some plans, and after many revisions, people got together all the materials: concrete, wood, metal and other supplies, and they built something that had never been here before. This building is unique and wonderful. After it was built, many people saw it, and continue to see it, and say “It is good!”

### **What are some of the things that you have created?**

We also sometimes create intangible things — those things that we cannot see with our eyes, but are no less creations. They still have uniqueness and “life” to them that is distinct and recognizable.

### **What are some examples of intangible creations?**

Businesses, laws, families, and stories, etc.

Stories are intangible creations.

The story tellers, creators of the Genesis stories created something new when they told these stories.

Their theological imagination pushed the edges of typical religious thought at the time.

Genesis formed a powerful context for their understanding of who God was, what creation was, and who they were in the midst of it all.

These stories had a formative role for Israel and, they also have had life through thousands of years of history to us as Christians today.

These stories actually created a community of faith and when the people strayed from God, the stories effectively kept them returning time and again to remember who they were, who God was and how they were related to God.

Think about it. Where would we be without these Genesis stories and others that comprise our Bible? Would we even have a community of faith?

We have heard the stories for so long that we need to take just a moment to recognize what Genesis is not before exploring what it is.

First of all Genesis was not written as a textbook that details a scientific explanation for what happened as the world began. It does not assume that we can sort

out all of the mysteries of the world by studying it in isolation. This was a foreign idea at the time that Genesis was written.

If we were to talk with anyone from the early days of the Genesis stories about seven literal days of creation, they would scratch their heads and be utterly confused. They would say that we have completely missed the point.

It is also not like other origin stories, like those of Greece, where the gods created the stuff of earth including people, who hold relatively insignificant value compared with the power and control commanded by the creators on Mt. Olympus.

If we are reading these stories with integrity, we cannot overlay our own Western way of thinking onto the stories and expect to understand the context or the author's intent.

Instead, if we look at the stories of Genesis on their own merit and, as best as we can ascertain, the original context, we find that several foundations emerge.

First, these stories tell us that creation has a purpose and holds

meaning, and this meaning is found in the heart of the Creator.

Secondly, since God, as Creator, sees value in what was created (It is good! the story says) it must therefore also be valued by those to whom it was entrusted — that would be us.

Part of the framework that Genesis sets up is that God gave people responsibility to care for creation, but did not coerce, control or wield power over people. Instead, God provided freedom that is governed by free will and faithfulness inside the respectful purposes of God.

God has not cut off humanity to do whatever we want and neither has God given humanity a small boxed frame in which to move. Rather, there is an expansive trust and synergy between the divine and what is being created.

So, we understand who God is through what was created — and created things are understood through their relationship with God. As far as Genesis proclaims it, neither can be understood separate from the other.

Genesis also asserts in no uncertain terms that the original state of humanity is goodness.

After creating, God said that it was good and with the creation of people, God said they were “very good!”

In Jewish and early Christian theological interpretation there is the idea that people were created in the image of God and therefore have within them a divine spark.

What is this divine spark?

The divine spark is a mystical ontological understanding of what it means to be human. On one level it is the essence of life that God placed within us that links us with our creator. The fact that we contain this spark also means we hold deep within us some essence of God along with our individual uniqueness.

This divine spark, while encompassing our whole life, sits underneath the things that we do, underneath who we think that we are. It runs deeper than our jobs, our likes and dislikes, our preferences, and even our experiences that we think of shaping us. It goes beyond our hurts and pains which send us into different directions in life.

Underneath all of that is the essence of who we were created to

be as human beings. This divine spark is the most basic ground substance of our human identity on top of which is everything else.

The Holy Spirit communes with our divine spark to lead us and guide us into moral living, into righteousness, into living as Jesus lived, and along with God, creating.

Since God is love, having the divine spark means that we reflect God by the way of love. What does it mean to be human? It means we are made to love. We are made to express the divine spark of love with our whole lives.

When we love, our lives are full and rich.

Having the divine spark also means that at our very core we are good. When we are compelled to do something good we are expressing our divine spark.

Now this has to do with our intention for doing good as well. We are expressing the divine spark when we do good without any other reason driving us, like guilt, shame, the need to look good in front of others, etc.

In the middle of a conflicted situation, you consider taking the

high road because it is the right thing to do. At that moment, you are being led by your divine spark.

Yes, being created in the image of God, holding within us the divine spark, means that our very nature is as co-creators with God of this world.

In all of God's wisdom, God chose to share power with humanity, to share creative responsibility with us, in a sort of dance of co-creation.

In fact, our first mandate from God — caring for and nurturing the world around us, is a creative act. When we choose to care for animals and trees and everything else, at our very core we are creating a way to be alive and responsible within creation.

You could say that the act of choosing is a creative act because when we choose it involves our creative intention and sets in motion a whole new direction for our lives and what happens in the world. Choosing whatever we choose alters the course of history.

Sometimes we look to God as the Creator, the one who makes all things happen and we relegate ourselves to being passive

observers and to simply wait to hear from God. Doing this is actually rejecting our divine spark.

There certainly is a point to waiting. In fact, that is why I wanted to dedicate time to “pray, listen, and watch” for what God is doing here in Birmingham. However, this is an active and creative waiting, not a passive waiting.

Passive waiting is not a creative act, but active waiting is very creative.

Active waiting entails truly listening, and praying, and watching. Active waiting has us look for how things fit together. It has us watching for themes that run through people's concerns, language, needs, etc.

Active listening requires that we have space in our lives to be available to give attention to the things of God and the world around us. It requires that we have an openness and be available to risk seeing something that might change our perspective and alter our course.

Active waiting is holding gently to what we think we know that we might be surprised by something new.

I probably don't have to tell you that doing this is difficult. It takes work! And this is our creative responsibility in the world.

Having the divine spark means that we are made good, that we are made to love, that we are made to choose, and that we are made to create — to co-create with God.

So be people of love!

Be people of goodness!

Embrace that divine spark within you and be a co-creator with God! For that is who you are!