

March 14, 2021, the Fourth Sunday in Lent (Year B)
Reboot

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — ⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God

Several years ago I received an invitation to Oxford. Well it was a seminar held when the real students were off planning to take over the world again. The subject was Science and Religion, is there common ground. After a week of discussion and pub visits the general consensus was that they overlapped. Some weren't happy with the compromise taking positions like, religion and science have nothing to say to one another because their rules of evidence don't match. Some felt the Bible is the standard and when science contradicts it science is wrong. Others felt that fairy tales are nice for children but in the real world only religion's effect on behavior is worth thinking about. Admittedly science has challenged my faith on many occasions and I hope it has challenged yours. We cannot figure out a way to separate the creator from the creation. It isn't even healthy to try. Our fundamental question must be, "what kind of God would create this kind of universe?" Science reads creation to tell us how God does things and we read the Bible to see what God is doing.

For the most part God operates by using very simple ideas and repeating them with slight variation. Einstein's $E=MC^2$ is an insight into the substance God made. God

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said let there be light, E. The table the book and this building are made from atoms of trapped light. In a similar way you and I are made from small changes in DNA. Our behavior spins out of simple rewards and punishments that our ancestors endured on the way to becoming our ancestors. Those who did not endure did not prosper, and left no trace. God's had, however, was always in that process. When humans sufficiently developed to begin to wrestle with God's nature, like Jacob wrestling with God, we came under new pressures.

Even now we are in a battle with the elements of our past that chose for selfish aggressive behavior designed to get ahead no matter what it cost anyone else. Of the supposed seven deadly sins greed is the one the Bible talks about most and I don't know about you but it seems like the one us preachers talk about least. When the simple basic formulas start to veer in a less ideal direction I firmly believe that God meddles in the universe.

The problem for us is that meddling can look a lot like business as usual. Why aren't we seeing miracles every day? We are looking in the wrong place. Like a tree that is bent as it grows creation bends as it unfolds. God's subtle pressure gets overlooked because we are after big results. We don't want the tree to grow in a certain pattern we want it plucked up and set down elsewhere like Dorothy's house in Oz. Speaking of Oz, the Bible presents us with images that were familiar to the first readers and very foreign to most of us. Why are there so many sheep when the only sheep we encounter is that Fair Isle sweater in the cedar-chest? It makes me wonder what Jesus might have pointed to if among us in this current age.

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Just suppose God programmed the universe using light as the hardware and spirit as the software. When things get far from original purposes the code needs tweaked. We have that weird example of what happened when God unplugged creation and plugged it back in again – you know the flood, Noah, the external hard drive known as the ark. That obviously didn't work.

So God slipped something of a computer virus into our world. It was carried by a thumb drive we call Jesus. The subroutine was known, but to make it effective we have to let it work along with our basic program. That program, call it human nature, was useful when our only purpose was survival but we are being groomed for deeper things. We are a part of creation that can look back on the creator. "My Fair Lady," was a retelling of the story of an artist who fell in love with his masterpiece, and she came to life. If any of my art came to life it would upbraid me for lack of eye hand coordination and practice. God's love for creation means we are part of an ongoing unfolding. That bit of computer code God slipped in to fix us is at work. As anyone of faith can tell you the initial experience is only the beginning. God and the believer are in a long term relationship. The small miracles, everyday corrections in our programming make us better suited for how the universe is supposed to unfold.

God may yet try to unplug us and reboot, but with our cooperation we might just prevent the need for that to happen. So many have wanted to bring on the end of the world what might we save by trying to fix it as we go with the corrective programming of the Holy Spirit?

Closing Prayer: Everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being, you have made us for yourself, so that our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Give us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, no weakness keep us from doing it; that in your light we may see light

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clearly, and in your service find perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.