



**BEYOND INTELLIGENT  
DESIGN:  
INTELLIGENT FAITH**

**Sunday, May 25, 2008**

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*"God saw all that he had made,  
and it was very good.*

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**Genesis 1: 1-2: 3**

**Beyond Intelligent Design: Intelligent Faith**

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas."

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, a cyclone struck the cost of Myanmar and swirling winds in excess of 120 miles per hour blew for more than 10 hours. Homes were flattened and trees were uprooted and power lines were downed and the storm surge flooded Irrawaddy delta. The Red Cross has estimated that as many as 128,000 people have died and more than a million and a half people were left homeless.

On May 12<sup>th</sup> the earth shook and walls buckled and buildings collapsed as an earthquake measuring 7.8 in magnitude struck the Sichuan province in southwest China in the middle of the afternoon when schools were filled with children and office towers were filled with employees. 60,000 people have died and nearly 14.5 million people have been evacuated.

"And God saw that it was good. And there was

evening and there was morning, the third day.”

The roots of modern atheism come from the inability to reconcile these two contradictory things: a belief in a good and loving God who has the power to bring all of creation into being just by speaking the word and the daily headlines that bring constant news of innocent people suffering and dying all around the world. Either God is not good or God is not omnipotent. In either case, they argue, God is not God.

But as people of faith, we find the truth of the Creation Story confirmed in the human response to tragedy. Whenever we hear about human suffering, our first reaction is outrage. Something deep inside of us cries out in anguish: this shouldn't be! These lives are precious and sacred. They are people created in the image of God. This is a tragedy. This is not the way life is meant to be.

Our first response to suffering is always outrage, and our second response is to help in whatever way we can. People of faith always take action in response to human suffering.

The world has refused to remain silent and passive as The Myanmar Government tried to shut out international aid. People of faith from all different religions, countries and political persuasions put enough pressure on the Myanmar government that they had to open

their borders to receive the help that was offered so willingly. Our own congregation gave more than \$1400 in emergency relief to the Myanmar Council of Churches through our United Church of Christ Global Ministries.

In his column for the Boston Globe, James Carol wrote, “Resignation and stoicism in the face of suffering are the allies of suffering. When the moral order is overturned by chaotic nature, it is restored, first, by visceral human protest against disorder, and second, by moving immediately to help.”

In a godless world, apathy and indifference are the responses we expect from people whose lives are not personally affected by the sufferings of others. But as people of faith, our Creation Story reminds us that all of our lives are connected, we are all created by God and all of us bear the image of God implanted in our souls. “If one member suffers, all suffer together...if one member is honored, all rejoice together (1 Corinthians 12:26).”

Today we are beginning our tour of the Hebrew Scriptures. If you are following along in Marcus Borg’s book, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, we will be spending the next couple of weeks on Chapter Four, “Reading the Creation Stories Again.”

Many of us in mainline churches stopped paying

much attention to the creation stories after the Scopes “Monkey” Trial of 1925. Frankly, we were embarrassed by the traditionalists from the Bible Belt who wanted to prevent teaching the theory of evolution in public schools for fear that it would undermine the authority of scripture. Our progressive theology has always valued the insights of modern science. After Darwin published his groundbreaking work “On The Origin of the Species” in 1859, the Biblical Creation Story seemed to have little light to shine on our understanding of the world and so we stopped telling our story. And that was a terrible mistake.

Our Creation Story doesn’t have anything to teach us about how the world was created or how long ago it happened. But it does have a great deal to teach us about the nature of God and God’s relationship with creation. If we forget our Creation Story, then our ability to live faithfully in the world will be lost.

Our story reminds us that God is the creator of everything. That means everything is sacred. Everything bears the imprint of God. The distinction that we like to make between sacred and secular is a false distinction. The stuff of God’s creation isn’t limited to the stuff of church. The activity of God isn’t limited to the things that take place inside the church. Liturgy, song, scripture and sacrament aren’t the only sacred things. Everything that exists is God’s

creation. Every street, every house, every factory, every office is God's domain. Every city, every government, every household; every job, every classroom, every relationship; every machine, every weapon, every tool...everything tangible and intangible belongs to God. If it exists, it is God's.

Nothing is ours. We aren't the owners of anything; we are just the stewards to whom God has entrusted the gifts of creation for a little while. And we are accountable to God for what we do with everything that belongs to God.

When we forget our Creation Story, then we exploit the things of God for our own benefit. We convince ourselves that we can do whatever we want with the resources we have at our disposal. We can take the top of a mountain off to extract the coal without worrying about the run off that pollutes the streams and the dust that pollutes the air. We need energy to power our economy and mountain top mining is the most economical way of extracting it. Ecology, conservation, renewable resources, green technologies, global warming, carbon footprints and sustainability are words that we scoff at whenever we forget our Creation Story.

The sixth day of our Creation Story reminds us that all people are created in the image of God: male and female, black and white, gay and straight, American and Iraqi. No one is left out

of our Creation Story. Ours is not a tribal God who grants special blessings to members of our particular clan. Every human being bears the imprint of God.

We don't worship the God who creates middle class, English speaking Euro-American Protestants. We worship the God who creates Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Pantheists, Spiritualists, Agnostics and Atheists. No matter what name people use for God, no matter if they don't even recognize God, our Creation Story reminds us that every human being is created by God and bears the image of God imprinted on their soul.

When we forget our Creation Story, then we quickly lose our reverence for the sanctity of life. When Pastor John Hagee, the leader of an 18,000 member mega church in San Antonio Texas proclaimed that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment on the City of New Orleans for hosting a gay pride parade, he forgot our Creation Story and invented one that justified his own prejudice.

When we forget our Creation Story, then we can justify rounding up all Americans of Japanese descent and confining them to prison camps for national security purposes. We can talk without remorse about "collateral damage" when we bomb buildings filled with innocent civilians to take out enemy "targets." We can stand beside

the graves of young soldiers and glorify our triumphs in battle instead of grieving the tragic loss of God's own beloved sons and daughters whose lives were destroyed by the horrors of war.

The developments of modern science have not made our creation stories obsolete. On the contrary, today more than ever before, we need to be reminded every day that, "The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. (Psalm 24:1)" Amen.