



Ephesians 1:3-14; Ps 147; John 1:1-18

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What do you like about life, humanity, the world? What do you find life-giving, refreshing, awe-inspiring? What do you make of the human ability to wonder, to create, to appreciate beauty, to remain in awe of the power of nature?

The human heart's capacity for love, compassion, and connection stands at the center of what makes life meaningful. When we see these qualities at work, we appreciate and find pride and hope in the human family. It's through those qualities that we are capable of forging deep relationships and express genuine care for one another and the rest of creation.

Life itself offers countless moments that are life-giving and refreshing. From acts of kindness to the simple joys of being alive, humanity is filled with opportunities to experience renewal and inspiration. The world presents us with awe-inspiring experiences, reminding us of the beauty inherent in creation and the shared journey of existence.

Could it be that those abilities of the heart reveal a spark of the divine? The Image of God in us, in creation? Could it be

the Word of God shining light on the world and speaking life into a new creation?

An ancient creation story opens the Bible with now familiar words: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”¹ A more recent and equally well-known creation story claims: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”²

Both reveal God’s desire to sustain life, to express love, to make new things³ out of chaos, destruction, perceived hopelessness and disorientation.

GPS, or Global Positioning System, has become a standard feature in many modern cars, eliminating the need for paper maps. GPS is very useful when going to unfamiliar locations, finding alternative routes in heavy traffic or avoiding blocked roads due to construction or the occasional car accident. I also find it useful when returning home from a trip to a new place: I simply hit the “home” button and let the system guide me.

In today’s gospel (John 1), God also wanted to come home to the world God made and so much loved, to what was God’s own place. John tells us that God came to pitch a very unintrusive tent among us (v.14), just like some homeless people do, desiring to occupy a space to call home. The

¹ Genesis 1:1. Other creation stories may be found in Genesis 2:4-25; Proverbs 8:22-31; Job 38-41. Several psalms celebrate creation: Psalm 8; 19; 33:6-9; 104.

² John 1:1. Other New Testament passages reframe creation through Christ: Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2-3.

³³ Isaiah 43:19

Creator chose to be among us in God's own creation, visible and available, God-with-us. From the beginning, God enjoyed taking strolls in the garden in conversation with us.

After the fall, God came seeking to restore our relationship through the prophets. But we treated God as a nobody, like a stranger, like one who doesn't belong. We chased God away. We even killed some of God's servants.⁴

When God returned in the person of Jesus, and kept showing up, we considered God an intrusion, a bother, a nuisance, an enemy of the state, of our well organized, comfortable and protected life. We executed Jesus in the hope of getting rid of God once and for all. Christ came home, and home rejected Christ. Imagine the grief.

Even today, we still act as if we own and run the place instead of making space for God by showing kindness and compassion to our neighbors (Matthew 25:31-45 comes to mind). When we commit acts of abject cruelty, when we overlook human suffering, when we undermine life, when we mock kindness, deride compassion and negate human dignity, we try our best at putting the Light out.

There is hope for all who dedicate their life to God, for all who open their life to God's light: God plays a long game. God's salvific plan, like God's justice and mercy, is not limited to one generation and to this life only. God will

⁴ 2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Nehemiah 9:26; Jeremiah 7:25-26; Matthew 21:33-39; Acts 7:52; Hebrews 11:36-38

triumph at the end. John tells us, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

Rejection does not prevent Christ from making a home in this world, such that God’s glory is revealed. Many do in fact receive him by welcoming the stranger, by extending a helping hand, by standing up for justice.

When evil surrounds us and darkness envelop us it’s easy to feel desperation and hopelessness, to retrieve and be quiet. We cannot give in to helplessness nor resort to a convenient spirituality that delegates to God the heavy lifting. We don’t want to despair, but we don’t want to passively and mindlessly sit around and watch how evil and chaos destroys and causes more unneeded suffering. Our faithful acts of love show where our hope resides: we trust God’s promises and count on divine intervention and redemption.

The glory of God is visible throughout the earth⁵ in the stunning beauty of creation that inspires us to awe, in the stubbornness of life to continue to regenerate even when there are neglect and abuse, in the welcoming and gentle hearts of people of all races, tongues and colors in spite of arrogance, violence and rejection.

Let us continue to do our part to pursue justice and proclaim the truth. Amen.

⁵ Isaiah 6:3