

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Gen. 1:9 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. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Gen. 1:20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

Gen. 1:24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth..."

It might seem a little off-track for us to be hearing these words from Genesis today, but actually they make lots of sense. It has been common throughout the history of the world for groups of people, when it comes to their New Year celebrations, to read once again the stories of how their world began. It was crucially important that they would read these important stories, maybe so that they could remember who they were, or who they were supposed to be. We have done a little of that today. But I left some parts of our story out. Why would I do that? Well, to save time. You will thank me for that. But think about what was covered here from Genesis: did I have us read about the creation of the sky? Did I have us deal with the creation of the great light, the lesser light, and the stars? No. What did we emphasize? Except for the very beginning and the first day of Creation, we have dealt with living things. We are living things.

Something really hit me over the last week or so. It was a week ago on Saturday that Jill and I drove down to Manchester UMC where we were married, to the church where my mother-in-law has been a member for 45 years. We were there for the Carney family gathering, Jill's brothers and her mother and all the generations of kids. It was great. But it was also a shock. We had not seen most of the people there since the gathering last year on that same Saturday before Christmas. I suspect we will not see most of them again until 50 weeks from now. They are busy, we are busy, we live some miles apart. And as a great song told some of us when we were in high school, ***Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin', into the future...***

It was shocking to not have our niece with us Christmas Eve because she was in Virginia visiting her boyfriend in the Marine Corps. I thought wait a minute, what is that little girl doing down there, and far from home? Well, that little girl is now 19, and she can do what she chooses. So where is this thing going today? It is going here.

When we take time to read our sacred stories of the beginning of it all, if we give them the time they deserve, we might just learn. Let's go back to the pieces of Genesis 1 we have heard this morning: what do they all have in common? They have in common that mostly they are talking about the creation of living things, both plants and animals. But there is more to it than that. It says something very important about the plants. It doesn't just tell us about the varieties of plants and trees and fruit. It makes sure that it tells us that all these things are created with SEEDS, according to their kind. Why seeds? So that they can reproduce. Seeds will grow more. Why is that needed? Because these plants are temporary. That literally means that they are IN TIME, and if that is so, they will end.

What about the animals, sea creatures, land animals, and finally the humans? It says the greatest thing: first it says that God blesses them, and that has to be good. But then there is a command, a first command: bear fruit and be many. The first command God gives the sea creatures, the land animals, and the people, is to procreate. Have babies! And we have. But just

like with the plants and their seeds, why do we need to have babies? Because we also are temporary, we are IN TIME, which means we come to an end in this world.

My brother-in-law shared a sad story with us on Christmas Eve as we were talking about kids growing up and the passage of time. His father died about 5 years ago. When he was in the hospital, my brother-in-law asked him if he had some fatherly advice, since there was not much time left. His dad didn't say much. But he did say **"It all went so fast."** I have heard others say that same thing.

Is that all that our life is, a quick blur, which goes by too fast? It shouldn't be. It should be so much more. If we paid attention to our sacred stories, we would be reminded that we are temporary, and that every day is in fact a gift. In fact if we were better at reading our sacred stories we would notice the other special thing that God created in the beginning of Genesis. At the end of each day, it says ***"And there was evening, there was morning, the first day."*** Then the second, third, etc. Right along with the things being created is the gift of time itself, **the flow of existence and life**, which keeps moving. We are in it, so we don't seem to notice. But we need to become aware of where we are and who we are, and that WE ARE.

Philosophers have been telling us for centuries that one of the reasons human life is so special is because we know that it is temporary. If we just automatically lived for ever, maybe we would take the whole thing for granted. And think about this: what about the people who are cranky and miserable? What about those who don't love being alive? To just keep them running forever might be more like punishment! Maybe the fact that we are temporary in this world is a gift to motivate us to not take things for granted, and certainly to not take each other for granted. We are temporary. OK. So what do we do with that knowledge? We learn better how to live. We thank God for each day, every single day, instead of assuming they are endless. We take time to keep our connections with one another, because we know the clock is running. We make time for each other. That is how we do it right.

I looked it up, and I was not surprised. What is the biggest, most serious alcohol drinking night of the year for Americans, Americans who live too fast and often very recklessly? What is their night to get drunk? New Years Eve. Why would that be the case? Maybe because that day reminds them that the clock has been running, and some more has slipped away. And they don't want to face it. So why not drink to numb it all? That must be what they think. I cannot believe that it should be called celebrating. There is nothing joyous about that. That is desperation.

So we are temporary, and always have been. But I can't help but smile at another of our sacred stories, one read for us by Chloe at both Christmas Eve services. She was playing the part of Linus in Charlie Brown Christmas. And she read the words: **10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not:** How great is that? When the angels arrive on that holy night, what is the first thing they tell the world? **Fear not...** Yes, we are temporary, along with the other living things. But God is not. And we have been promised that this Creator will one day make all things new, including all of us Temps! So that is the greatest news. But let's tack this on. Fear not, yes, absolutely fear not! But also we need to learn, we need to learn how to live. We need to remember who and what we are. We need to remember that we are temporary, which means that we have two choices in how we live our lives. We can either be people of anger and despair and quiet desperation because we are temporary; OR we can learn to live each moment, and love each moment, and love each other, and take advantage of our time, and not be afraid. I suggest Option 2 for us today.

As a new year begins, let's show others how to live. Regardless of people's ages, it is never too late. Let's show them that we are people who do not fear the future, because we know that God will be there. Let's show them how to live and to love and to take nothing, and no one for granted. AMEN.