

Hillcrest Congregational Church, UCC

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Genesis: The New Important Story

John 21: 1-19, Genesis 1-2:4, and "A New Creation Story",

from *Creation Spirituality* by Matthew Fox (pgs 1-4)

Why was Peter sad Jesus asked him three times if he loved him?

Because Peter realized that Jesus KNEW that Peter had denied him three times. Peter realized that although Jesus could not have heard, Jesus knew Peter did what Peter swore he would never do. In fact Peter swore he would go to his death with Jesus before he would deny him. In our scripture video we saw Jesus give Peter another chance.

Jesus told the fishermen/disciples to put their nets in the water again even though they had been unsuccessful. The full nets of fish represent the abundant life that Jesus came to offer. Not abundant life, smushed together like it is one word, but abundant life. I came that you might have life and that it might be abundant.

Think about these two words separately and then put them together. You see, Jesus did not mean it as a freedom from responsibility. He did not free us from the stewardship God charged us with as human beings on earth, as co-creators with God.

Some people believe we are killing our planet. Some people believe that the planet is simply going through its regular ups and downs, a cycle of

warming and cooling. Some people believe it doesn't matter what we do to the planet- the second coming, the rapture, the Armageddon is coming- and they think they know which side of the final battle they will be on. So when they are told they are destroying the earth they say- "bring it on!"

Some people believe that we cannot "kill" the planet. Mother earth is mightier, has been here much longer than human kind, and can evolve. If this is true, as we live in contradiction to the environment around us, we become parasites. Mother earth will respond. Like our own healthy immune systems fight against disease, She will evolve us right out of here!

So the true measure of our race- the human race will not be what we build, but the destruction we leave. Not how we grow but how we live and care for each other and everything around us. What ever you believe about Global Warming or Climate change, there is one thing we cannot deny. The Creator gave us a job to do. How are we doing as stewards of all the life around us? Trees, plants, birds, animals, air, water, other human beings.

The business world has started looking at the bottom line in a different way- not just profit, but three bottom lines. Profit, people and planet. What do our three bottom lines look like? Profit, people and planet?

There are many things each of us can do every day to make a difference. Using less water, reusing and recycling, changing our light

bulbs, turning off lights and appliances, planting trees, and even simply giving thanks every day for the beautiful universe God created.

Like Jesus gave Peter, God gives us another chance again, and again and again. Each day we can make the choice to be the good stewards God has asked us to be.

A New Creation Story,
from *Creation Spirituality* by Matthew Fox (pgs 1-4) (adapted)

In the beginning was the gift. And the gift was with God and the gift was God. And the gift came and set its tent among us, first in the form of a fireball that burned unabated for 750,000 years and cooked in its immensely hot oven hadrons and leptons. These gifts found a modicum of stability, enough to give birth to the first atomic creatures, hydrogen and helium.

A billion years of stewing and stirring and the gifts of hydrogen and helium birthed galaxies—spinning, whirling, alive galaxies created trillions of stars, lights in the heavens and cosmic furnaces that made more gifts through violent explosions of vast supernovas burning abright with the glow of more than a billion stars.

Gifts upon gifts, birthing gifts, gifts exploding, gifts imploding, gifts of light, gifts of darkness. Cosmic gifts and subatomic gifts. All drifting and swirling, being born and dying, in some vast secret of a plan. Which was also a gift.

One of these supernova gifts exploded in a special manner sending a unique gift to the universe, which later-coming creatures would one day call earth, their home. Its biosphere was also a gift, wrapping it with beauty and dignity and just the right protection from sun's radiation and from the cosmic cold. And eternal night.

This gifted planet was a jewel in its most exquisite setting, in this case, the exact distance of 100 million miles from its mother star, the sun.

New gifts arose, never seen in such forms in the universe- rocks, oceans, continents, multicellular creatures that moved by their own inner power. Life was born!

Gifts that had taken the form of fireball and helium, galaxies and stars, rocks and water, now took the form of Life.

Life- a new gift of the universe, a new gift in the universe.

Flowers of multiple color and scent, trees standing upright.

Forests arose offering places for all manner of creeping crawling things.

Of things that fly and sing. Of things that swim and slither. Of things that run on four legs.

And, eventually, of things that stand a walk on two. With thumbs that move to make still more creativity- more gift making- possible.

The human became a gift, but also a menace. For its powers of creativity were unique in their potential for destruction or healing.

How would humans use these gifts? Which direction would they choose?

The earth waited for an answer to these questions.

And is still waiting.

Trembling.

Teachers were sent, divine incarnations birthed from the soil.

Isis and Hesiod, Buddha and Lao Tzu, Moses and Isaiah, Sara and Esther, Jesus and Paul, Mary and Hildegard, Chief Seattle and Buffalo Woman.

To teach the humans ways of compassion.

And still the earth waited to see if humanity was a gift or curse.

Trembling.

Have you ever given a gift and then regretted it afterwards? Earth wonders and waits.

For the gift has been made flesh and dwells everywhere among us and we tend to know it not. And tend to treat it not as a gift but as an object.

To be used, abused, trampled underfoot- even crucified.

But to those who do receive it as a gift all is promised.

All shall be called children of the gift, sons and daughters of grace.

For all generations.