

SERMON
 First Lutheran Church
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Genesis 2: 4b-25
 September 13, 2015
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It all starts right here. This book, the **Bible**, is all about **God and God's self-giving love**. The Bible has sometimes been called "**God's love letter to the world.**" Today's text is the second creation story which is recorded in the first two chapters of Genesis. The **first creation story** recounts God **speaking** to bring everything into existence. In our lesson for today, we see God the **great potter/artist at work** with God's own hands, **touching the creation**, touching the **people**. We witness our amazing God, whether in **seven days** or in **seven million years**:

1. **Gifting** human beings with **life** – you, me and all people.
2. **Gifting** human beings with this **awe-inspiring world**.
3. **Gifting** human beings with **relationship** – you, me and all people.
 - God first gifts us with a **relationship with God self**. God dreamt us into existence. **From the start God longed to give God self away to someone. You are that someone.** You wouldn't be here if not for God wanting you to be here.
 - God gifts us with a **relationship with the earth**. God gets on God's hands and knees and molds and shapes us from the dust of the ground. Then God blows God's own breath into our brand new bodies and we come alive. We are **kin to the earth and to God**.
 - Finally, God gifts us with a **relationship with other humans**. **Adam**, Hebrew for "**humanity**," needed to be in relationship with other humans. We are not meant to be alone. We are meant to be in **community** with others.
4. Last, but not least, God gifts us with **responsibility**. God literally **invites God's new friends to partner** with God in caring for the whole creation, the Garden. There is **no greater honor/privilege**.

So, you see, everything starts right there in the beginning of Genesis. **God's love letter** to us **begins with God giving us every good gift**. **Once** we have been **created, named and gifted**, finally, **God asks something in return**.

1. Love and trust God to care for us. **Faith**.
2. Love and care for neighbor and earth. **God's Work. Our Hands**.

God the great Giver creates us to be givers too. **God the great Lover** creates us to be lovers too. We aren't alone. God is for us and with us. The neighbor isn't alone. God is for and with them. We are not alone. **God gifts us with each other. God created us to find life, love, community and joy in relationship** with God, earth, people and even with the critters. **Have you tasted God's life, love, community and joy?**

How crazy is it to imagine that God, with all the **vastness of the universe**, with all the **centuries that have passed**, with all the **millions of people** throughout the history of humanity – **that God would care about little, old you and me**. Everything starts with God desiring **you** to come into God's creation. This creation story says that **you** are precious and beloved to God. In the total scheme of things, so great and so amazing, **you** count in God's book. **No matter how big our troubles, no matter how small our faith, God cares** about me, you and every person in this world.

When our first child, **Leah**, was born in St. Paul. What an amazing miracle of life she was. Then she started having seizures. She was transferred to **St. Paul Ramsey Hospital** so that **Dr. Robert Kriel**, one of the most noted neurologists in the mid-west could take care of her. We stood outside the neonatal intensive care unit gazing in at our tiny treasure. Down the hall came a group of doctors. In they went and began examining our little girl. After a long time, they came out and all but one headed off down the hall. Dr. Kriel walked up and introduced himself. He went on to say that they were doing all kinds of tests. **"It could be a blood clot, a stroke, or a heart problem. She could die or it could be nothing at all."** Before leaving us, he said, **"I've got your daughter in my prayers."** Here we had this famous physician, so skilled in his work. That was very good. But best of all for this **brand new mom and dad**, was that he was **also a person of faith who was letting God move through him to care for our Leah**.

It wasn't the pastor, but the doctor who reminded us that we needed to **entrust ourselves and our sick little girl into God's loving care**. Leah may have died and she still would have been safe in God's loving care. So would we be. **So also you and yours** – family, home, work, possessions, health, self – **all safe in God's loving care**. Sunday school kids, confirmation kids, and this whole faith family – we are called to entrust all of these safely into the love and care of the One who created and gave us life.

When Jennifer and I struggled in our marriage, when bills far exceeded income, when we had the joy of bringing two more children into this world – each time, we were called to trust our lives safely into God’s keeping. **God invites you to entrust your whole life into God’s love and keeping.**

Today is the beginning of a journey.

1. This **ancient biblical account** marks the beginning of God’s faithful journey with humanity.
2. This **worship service** marks the beginning of a new year of our own faith journey together. In worship and study, we are embarking on a trip through God’s love story for you and for me.
3. This is the **first day of the rest of your life**. God created you. God loves you. God has promised, in Christ, never to let you go. **So, what are you going to do with that?**

God, the greatest Giver, the greatest Lover, still seeks to be in a life-giving relationship with you and with your family every day. God is constantly present, seeking to bring about the best good in your life and in mine. So, what are you going to do about that? Do you feel like loving God back? Do you feel like partnering with God in the care of this precious world and in the care of the humans around you who are also God’s handiwork?

Here’s the challenge for each of us in the year ahead:

1. Commit to faithfully walking with God and God’s people.
2. Make worship a priority for your week.
3. Make growth in your faith a priority for your week.
4. Open your heart and mind for what God might have to say to you.
5. Don’t do these things as a “have to,” but as a “want to.”

Your journey? Walking with God? God is ready:

1. The great Giver of our lives,
2. The great Giver of everyone that we love,
3. The great Giver of all that we value,
4. The great Lover who longs for our love in return, **waits**.

Your life starts right here. You can’t out give God. You can’t out love God. God bless us as we journey together in the days and years ahead.

Busy? God knows about your life better than anyone. God is out in that world with you. **Need some fuel for your journey?** **Right here** – worship, prayer, Living Word, Holy Baptism, Lord’s Supper, and the Body of Christ - **God’s gifts for you**. **You were created for this day**. **God loves you**. Amen.