

A Sermon  
"WHO DID IT?"  
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January 8, 2006

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1:1-5 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. And God saw that the light was good: and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

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I am remembering when I was about twelve. I was in grade school at Wilson Grade School in Rapid City, SD. Our room was clear up on the top floor. I always tried to get as close to the window as I could so that I could escape. I didn't like school very well, so if I got to the window, I could actually get away sometimes. I probably got away far too much.

But one of the things that the teacher did that year was to read to us. One of the books that she read was Ernest Hemingway's THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA. Do you remember that book? I was so captivated by that story that I could hardly wait...and she always stopped at a most exciting moment. I think it was because she wanted us to come back the next day.

But you know, I could feel the spray of the salt water on my face when she read it. I could even sense the sores on the old man's hands as he tried to hold on to that fish for several days. I could sense the agony of the little boy who wanted to go so badly with the old man and his mom said, "But he doesn't catch fish anymore." I got into the story. And when I became a dad, I could hardly wait until my kids got old enough that I could read them that story. I enjoyed reading it as an adult just as much as when I was a little boy. I listened to the words.

Some years ago I picked up an author by the name of Jim Michener. You might know some of his works. One of them was called CHESAPEAKE. Do you remember that one? The first chapter of that book caught me just like I was twelve again. And when that Indian put his canoe out into the bay and began to paddle his way up the bay, and he began to describe the wonder and the beauty of what he was seeing, it was as though I was in the canoe. I've only seen the Chesapeake Bay from the air. I've never had a chance to fish in it. But the language was so powerful and so wonderful that it allowed me to see through the words into the beauty and the wonder that was in the heart and the mind of the author.

That's sometimes how I read the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. And I try not to get captured by any attempt to become literal. I don't want to hang on to it in such a way that I have to manage the words and box them in. I really want those words to be kind of like a telescope...which allows me to see through the text and see something very

powerful and very wonderful....something very mythical, in a sense...that draws me into a relationship with the Creator that is vastly different from my fundamentalist roots. I want those words to carry me into the very essence of Creation...into the very essence of the mind and the heart of God as He was building and making what is.

You may well know that the first and second chapters of Genesis are significantly different. They come from different strains...different ideologies altogether. In fact, as we studied this morning, there are really four different streams of thought that are carried in to that early part of Genesis...probably pretty sectarian...that is, they were designed around the way that a particular group of people wanted to see the world.

The first chapter really ends with those wonderful words...God saw all that God had made and it was beautiful and **wonderful** and He said it was good. Close to the end of the second chapter, the story said, "Of all of the trees of the Garden the human beings could freely eat, save one." And if you ate of that tree, the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, you would surely die. Now, that gives a far different context to the story of Creation. Neither less important...neither less wonderful, because if we see past the words...if we see past the literalization of it...into the mythic wonder, there's power and explanations that touch me in my soul.

It seems to me that we are living in an era of unparalleled impoverishment and depreciation of the human soul and the mark of that soul, Creativity. It seems to me that in a sense religion is coming down around our ears and we're trying to concretize everything about religion. We want to take the ancient stories and nail them down and prove them. The latest twist of that in a thinly disguised or masqueraded form is this whole idea of intelligent design. It seems to me that we as a society and as a country have argued this point of creationism versus evolution until we are all sick of it. Maybe we ought to just leave it alone for awhile and begin to discover what is behind the story rather **than** looking at the story itself. When I rationalize and literalize, it makes it impossible for me to engage in transformation. When I seek to literalize a myth or a truth, I strangle its power and render it useless. It just becomes a function of the past.

But the power of a story cannot be lost if we are willing to live into the story. You see, story must be powerful enough that it does more than just inform us. Story seeks to transform us. **Reinhold Niebuhr** once said, "Myth isn't history, it's truer than history." Why? Because it addresses those things that lie more deeply in our Being and it is more enduring than the facts. Joseph Campbell wrote that, "Myths are the masks of the Gods. They are transcendent metaphors for the mystery that reflect the timeless realities of the soul." **Huston Smith**...**Spiritual** realities cannot be described in everyday language. They can only be described in what is called religion's technical language which is metaphor, symbolism and myth."

Why do you think it was that Jesus spoke to His disciples in parable? Not because He wanted them to remember the particular story and make it fact or truth, but He wanted them to hear the power and the wonder UNDER the story that would be, indeed, transforming. You see, the mystery and the power of the story just IS...just like

Hemingway's story captivated my twelve year old heart and carried me to a world I'd never been to and caused me to feel the spray of an ocean mist in my face and excited me for literature in a way that nothing had ever done before.

If we demythologize the stories..if we take away their power to **transform** us, what is the value of religion? If we take away the anointing in a sense...the soul Being of the story, how does it continue to captivate us and call us into a deeper and richer understanding of our world? Myth and mystery..story and wonder...inform us and transform us, not just in heady ways, but in **heartful** ways and allow us to engage ourselves in the Divine Drama of Being.

When the story comes alive for me, even as the story of Creation comes alive when I read it, it draws me into it. You see story isn't just a collection of facts. The story of creation is our powerful being part of the creative energy of God.

Who did it? God did it. Where did God go? Nowhere. God is here...in us...around us...through us...a part of us and we of God. The most marvelous thing today is that you are God's story. And the way you live your life and your Being, you too, are a story that describes the transformation of Being and invites us all to become. The story of Creation for me lies at the heart of where you and I are today in our journey before God. Amen.