

Our Creative God
 September 10, 2023
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 Genesis 1 and Psalm 139

As you have all noticed this morning, Everything is a bit different today!

- That was certainly a different scripture reading experience
- We confessed our sins in a different way
- The music is a bit different
- I'm not standing in the pulpit....
- Everything we do in worship is still happening today... nothing is missing, but at the same time- everything is just a bit askew.... It's like we all have put on glasses that make church look and feel a little bit different

Our hope today is for the entire congregation to experience Messy Church. Messy Church happens at Lewinsville on the third Sunday of each month, and it is for **ALL** ages to gather together to learn about God through games, crafts and activities, music, and storytelling from the Bible. Everyone is welcome to attend Messy Church, and know that it is considered Church: it is it's own worship experience.

According to the Messy Church website- "In a nutshell, Messy Church is an opportunity for intergenerational worship, learning, and fellowship. The purpose is to explore God's love in a welcoming, accessible way through fun, faith, and food.", which I hope you are experiencing today! And Yes, there will be food served after church.

I know some of you are like me and have asked the question, why does it have to be called Messy? I understand the resistance to the word Messy. I'm the sort of person who likes everything to be clean and organized, and in fact my definition of a good time is cleaning and organizing! I never like anything of mine to be described as "Messy;" I want everything to be ordered, in its right place, and preferably with a label on it so it's easy to find and, easy to be put back in its correct place. I also do not like when my life feels messy. I like to plan ahead so that I can keep things as organized as possible and I don't like to be caught off guard by interruptions or schedule changes. (I'm not type A at all 😊)

But when we turn to our scripture readings today I learn a lot about God and what it means that our God is a creative God. And I think our scripture readings encourage us to not turn away from the Messy or Chaotic but in fact allow God and our fellow community into the Mess so that we can be amazed at the creativity of God.

Our first scripture reading today is the first story in the bible, the very beginning and at the very beginning of the bible we are told that everything was formless and void. In other words it was complete chaos, there was no order at all. And so God's spirit hovered over the dark chaotic waters of nothingness and began to put things into order.

Things we can learn about God from this

- God does not turn away from Chaos, but rather God is able to create from the Chaos or the Mess
- There is no mess/chaos that God cannot create from
- God's spirit works in the midst of the mess/Chaos to bring order and creation into being
- God's Creativity brings order to the chaos **so that** Goodness and life can fill the void
- God's creativity brings order and goodness but God works with creation. This creation story takes time and God does not do everything in one fell swoop

Out of chaos, God creates a cosmos. Out of disorder, God brings forth order. This is the divine artistry, the alchemy of transformation, where God takes brokenness and shapes it into beauty, turning darkness into light.

When we turn to Psalm 139 we get a completely different perspective on God's Creativity

Genesis 1 shows us that God is Cosmic, above all things, and creator of all things.

Psalm 139 gives us a personal intimate view of God's Creativity. The author of the Psalm is reflecting on God's Presence in the totality of their life. The writer states:

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.*

This is one of my favorite passages of scripture; there have been times these words have brought me comfort in the midst of stressful situations. I found comfort that if I didn't understand what was going on that I could rely on the fact that God was not thrown off by this. But if you really think about it, being known in this sort of way by the creator of the universe can be intimidating. For example, as I mentioned earlier, I like order and cleanliness, and this need only gets exasperated if I'm about to host someone at my home. When someone comes to my home, I want them to see me and my home as organized, clean, and "put together".

- This becomes even more intense when my parents are coming to visit.
- Honestly, I become completely neurotic before my in laws visit :)
- Crawford often looks for reasons to be out of the house when I begin to prepare for guests.

So... if I think about it, if I'm about to Host the creator of the world into my life it's actually a bit intimidating that God so intimately knows me that I cannot hide all of the messes and chaos that are a part of my life.

To God, I cannot keep up the appearance that I always have it "together" rather God intimately knows and understands that I'm often a chaotic mess (**in my head, and my soul, in my heart**) and that I'm desperately in need of God's creative energy in my life, that I'm in fact in need of God's creative spirit who can work within the chaotic mess that is Layne, and that God is able to put things in order and fill my life with God's goodness and life.

The Psalmist says:

If I ascend to heaven, you are there - When life is good, and when I feel that I'm doing my best God is right there with me...

if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there - But when life becomes chaotic, or desperate, when I'm not making the best decisions, or when the messiness that is human life on earth gets to me, when I'm angry or hurt, when anxiety gets the best of me, God is also there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea - If I try to run away and hide.... If I try to mask to the world that I'm okay and hide my true self from everyone ... that doesn't work with God because God knows who I am and what is going on... I cannot hide from God.
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast

(The Story of the First Communion at Okra Abbey)

- Okra Abbey was a new worshipping community Crawford and I started in New Orleans
- It was a church in a community garden, in a high need neighborhood
- Our weekly worship service was centered around a shared meal every Wednesday Afternoon, which we called Grace and Greens
- There were a bunch of characters that were a part of this beloved community
- About six months in we felt it was the right time to share communion together during a Grace and Greens meal
- I was so excited because I got to be the one to preside over communion
- Got all prepared, got my liturgy ready
- I was prayerfully hoping this would be a meaningful time for this new fledgling worshipping community
- It was time
 - Lawn mower across the street
 - people couldn't hear me... kept interrupting or talking to their neighbor
 - A baby starting crying
 - A member who had anxiety started stomping around the table and refused to sit down
 - I gave instructions to pass the plate and cup, no one understood, I had to keep reexplaining
 - someone spilt the grape juice on the table
 - Eventually everyone had been served communion, but I was disappointed because it had not met my expectations of perfection
 - To my complete shock.... So many people expressed to me how meaningful that communion experience was for them.
 - Folks said
 - They felt fully present
 - They felt fully welcomed
 - They felt that was probably what the first communion was really like
 - They loved how authentic it was
 - And the next time we shared communion it wasn't perfect but it wasn't as chaotic; the group began to figure out how to do this sacred experience together...

God creates out of chaos, out of the Mess, we do not have to pretend with God that we are not messy, rather our call is to offer our Mess, our chaos, and be amazed at the Creation that God will call forth from it.

Let us pray:

Gracious God,

We come before you today with hearts full of gratitude for your divine artistry. You, who shaped the cosmos out of chaos, continue to work in our lives, bringing order out of disorder and beauty out of brokenness.

Thank you for the creative force that transforms our world, for the light that dispels our darkness, and for the purpose that emerges from confusion. We are humbled by your constant presence in our lives, weaving a tapestry of meaning from the threads of our existence.

May we be inspired by your example of creation, O Lord, to embrace the chaos in our lives, knowing that in your hands, it is the raw material of something beautiful and purposeful. Grant us the wisdom to trust in your creative power and to find hope even in the midst of life's storms.

We offer this prayer in deep gratitude and faith, trusting in your unwavering love. Amen.