

December 25, 2017 Christmas Day  
Pastor Erin Bouman, Irving Park Lutheran Church  
Genesis 1:1-4; John 1:1-14

## Creation and Christmas

“In the beginning,” Genesis one says. “In the beginning...” The very first words of the very first book of the Bible. In the beginning God created—with a word. God created by speaking. In the beginning there was nothingness, chaos, darkness—and then God said. Then God spoke. And there was light. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.

Has the preacher forgotten what day it is today? Why we are here, today? It is Christmas Day, not a day to talk about creation, the Big Bang. You may be tired, for many it’s a late night and then an early morning, but even if you are tired, you did hear correctly, the first reading today was from Genesis 1. You may have wondered why, in a Christmas service of Lessons & Carols. Perhaps our first reader this morning wondered, too.

You may have wondered, until you heard the ultimate reading in today’s list of lessons, the reading from John, which begins, “In the beginning.” The Christmas Day gospel reading from John begins just as Genesis begins. Like Genesis one, John one says that when there was nothing else, there was something. When there was nothing else, there was the Word. And it was God. And it brought things into being. When there was nothingness and darkness, the Word, which is God, brought light into the darkness. In a word, with the Word, God brought light and life; caused all things to come into being; creation.

Did it take a day? Seven days? A week seems a pretty short time to make the world, though I know, especially after last week, seven days can be long enough to undo a world.

Did creation take a day, seven days? How long does a day last to the one who makes them? To that being—and sometimes to us—a day can last a very long time, almost an eternity.

How long, and how long ago, was that first day? We don’t know, but we should know that these are the wrong questions to ask of the Bible. They are not bad questions, they’re just posed in the wrong place, at the wrong time, they miss the point. They’re like asking a painting to do a math problem. Genesis and John 1 are poems, not geological imprints. Genesis and John don’t declare themselves answers, they are testaments, testimonies; they give witness, make affirmations.

All of which is to say that what they say is not something you can prove. Creation, like Christmas, is not something you can prove. Nor can they be disproved. They are of a different category.

We are too, they say. We are of a different category. Here is the part where it hits home. It’s all rather theoretical and philosophical to talk about the time before time and the beginning of life, it’s all rather distant, but the Bible makes it personal, because it says that how life began says something about us. It says that we are more than scientific processes—though we are those things, too: Biblical accounts have an incredible appreciation for the raw biology of reproduction, birth, illness, and death; that is all there in scripture, in elaborate and sometimes unnerving detail, along with the intricacy of generational connections, and the wondrous variety of the created order. The Bible in no ways denies physicality; Christian faith, incarnational faith, is so very clear about this, and also that there is something else to say about this, to say about us. The Bible, these poetic accounts, our creedal confessions, don’t so much describe what happened, but what’s behind it, behind us, and before us, before everything.

They say: before anything else, and behind everything else, there is God, who has always existed, who is not created, but who is infinitely, timelessly creative.

Today, Christmas Day, we celebrate that God chooses to be known to what is created. God chooses to appear among us, not in proof, but in grace and truth. God chooses to appear to people who have been walking in darkness, and want to follow light; to people who would have life, and have it abundantly; to people who might let their light so shine before others, that they glorify God.

“We have beheld his glory,” in the Word, the true Word, which enlightens everyone, coming into the world, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father, by whom all things are made, made known, born, today.