

You Are My Beloved, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E1060108
Genesis 1:1-5 and Mark 1:4-11
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“And God stepped out on space, And he looked around and said: ‘I’m lonely--I’ll make me a world.’ And far as the eye of God could see Darkness covered everything, Blacker than a hundred midnights Down in a cypress swamp. Then God smiled, And the light broke, And the darkness rolled up on one side, And the light stood shining on the other, And God said: ‘That’s good!’”

So begins James Weldon Johnson's sermon, “The Creation” in *God's Trombones*¹

“Then God walked around, And God looked around On all that he had made. He looked at his sun, And he looked at his moon, And he looked at his little stars; He looked on his world With all its living things, And God said: ‘I’m lonely still.’ Then God sat down– On the side of a hill where he could think; By a deep, wide river he sat down; With his head in his hands, God thought and thought, Till he thought: I’ll make me a man! Up from the bed of the river God scooped the clay; And by the bank of the river He kneeled him down; And there the great God Almighty Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky, Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night, Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand; This Great God, Like a mammy bending over her baby, Kneeled down in the dust Toiling over a lump of clay Till he shaped it in his own image; Then into it he blew the breath of life, And man became a living soul. Amen. Amen.

Johnson beautifully pictures the love and care with which God created this earth and you and me. It is in that spirit that God calls you, “My Beloved.”

When you realize that you are God’s beloved, what does that do to you? How does that change your life? How do you act? What do you say to others when you know you are God’s beloved?

The process of creation, according to Scripture, is the process separation: form from formlessness; order from chaos; light from darkness; creation from creator. The Hebrew indicates that creation was not out of *nothing*, it was out of *chaos*.

Let us look at the nature of the chaos. Genesis 1:1 says the earth was a “formless void,” or “formless and empty.” These are really two neat words in Hebrew: “*Tohu wabohu*” They are “made up” words. They mean undifferentiated chaos– ill-defined stuff, “Mishmash.” It is, as Biblical scholar Rick Lowry states it, “Cosmic soup,”² a dark, watery chaos.

Water can have different effects. The ocean on a calm sunny day is very comforting to us. But, if you are out on the ocean in a small boat during a storm, it can be chaos. You can be thrown under water. You don’t know which way is up. The water tastes terrible. That’s chaos! A formless and empty mishmash.

Pre-dating Darwin by twenty-five hundred years, the author of the first Genesis creation story implies that life began in the water. It doesn’t make much difference whether we argue for big bang theories, or intelligent design theories, or evolutionary theories, the truth is, *God* is behind creation, no matter how we theorize it.

Out of the water, God makes things new. Amniotic fluid, mostly water, surrounds the

¹James Weldon Johnson *God's Trombones* © 1927 by the Viking Press, Penguin Poets Edition, © 1969, page 17 ff

²From a lecture delivered in Indianapolis, IN in March, 1991

embryonic life in the womb. Seeds cannot spring to life without water. The human body is ninety-five percent water. Water is the beginning of life.

The Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus' baptism. Jesus' ministry began in the waters of baptism. He was a new creation.³ Mark says that when Jesus came up out of the water, he heard a voice saying, "You are my son, the Beloved."⁴

When we are baptized, and when we own or confirm that baptism ourselves, we join our lives to Christ, and we too, become God's children. God says to us, "You are my child, the beloved; with you I am well pleased." Remember, God saw all that God created and called it good.⁵

God can, through the waters of baptism, re-create you. Out of the chaos of our lives, God can bring order. God doesn't like undifferentiated chaos. Creation means separation and distinguishing. The chaos of our weekly schedules can be ordered when we begin separating and distinguishing. When we clean out our closets and organize our sock drawers, we feel better. When we begin to prioritize our activities, we begin to hear God's voice saying "Good!"

What are the activities we do that fulfill God's purposes? What are the activities that continue Jesus' ministry of healing and caring? When we throw the destructive and meaningless activities to one side, we have left the bright shining acts of kindness and love on the other. The chaos of violence, terrorism and war can be ordered when we understand the separations caused by religious chauvinism and cultural arrogance and basic world outlooks. The chaos is ordered and the world begins to look good.

When we can begin to see all people as beloved children of God's, then we begin to treat them more kindly. The murky chaos becomes ordered and we don't have to be fearful any more.

At the beginning of this new year, I invite you to leave your *tohu wabohu* and re-commit yourself to a life of following Jesus Christ. You are God's beloved.

³Mark 1:4 ff

⁴Mark 1:11

⁵Gen 1:31