

## “God the Creator”

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**New Testament Lesson: John 1:1-5**

**Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 42:5-9**

Jewish philosopher Martin Buber tells of an unruly rabbi, Rabbi Sussya, who raised a ruckus in the synagogue whenever the words “And God said” or “And God spoke” were uttered by his spiritual teacher while reading scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Sussya would become so agitated that he had to be ushered out to stand in the corridor, hammering his fists on the wall and crying out in ecstasy, “And God spoke! And God spoke!” Even though he never heard the end of his master’s sermon, it was said that Sussya understood more than any other disciple.

What is this power that so amazed and moved Rabbi Sussya, this power within God’s word to create and change, to transform individuals, families and communities, to transform our whole society and even the world? What is this power in the word of God?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things came into being through him....” That is of course from the Gospel According to John. God’s word is a word of creation. No wonder Rabbi Sussya freaked out when he heard “And God spoke” or “And God spoke.” Sussya knew like no other that God was up to something! Listen to what Isaiah says in the Old Testament about what God has done:

“Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it ....”

God ***creates the universe, he spreads out the earth, and gives us our very breath and spirit.*** I tell you, if I heard God was out there creating again – knowing what I know now about all that God has created! – I would be freaked out, too! And so should us all, be freaked out.

Because the truth is, God is still creating. And we either participate in his act of creation, or we ignore it at our own peril. Those who ignore what God is up to run the risk of losing their grip on the universe God created, getting the earth pulled out from under them, having their breath taken away from them – and not in a good way – and their spirit depleted, blinking out like a light. No one can afford to ignore what God is up to. And yet we do it all the time. We overlook what God is doing right in front of us, and that’s when things get out of control.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Barrie Shepherd, Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church.

A doctor, an architect, and a computer scientist were arguing about whose profession was the oldest.<sup>2</sup> In the course of their arguments, they got all the way back to the Garden of Eden. The doctor said, “The medical profession is clearly the oldest, because Eve was made from Adam’s rib, an incredible surgical feat!” The architect disagreed, saying, “But if you look at the Garden itself, in the beginning there was chaos, and out of that, the Garden and the world were created. So God must have been an architect.” The computer scientist listened to all of this and said, “Yes, but where do you think the chaos came from?” Yeah, we all know about that – the chaos computers can cause. And we all ought to know about what God is up to these days. Because that’s our job as followers of Christ – to point out what God is up to.

In Isaiah, God says, “I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness....I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.” These words anticipated the birth and ministry of Jesus. And for his followers, they tell us what we are supposed to be up to in this world. It’s our job description: to open eyes that are blind, to point out what God is up to in this world.

Not everyone sees the world through the eyes of Jesus Christ. We as individuals don’t even see it that way all the time. That’s why God put us here together – to help each other see the truth of God’s active nature in this world.

Another job we have as Christians is to bring prisoners out of dungeons. There are a lot of different kinds of dungeons out there. A dungeon is anyplace we get stuck in. And there are a lot of different kinds of prisoners out there – in here, too. We are all prisoners of something – addictions, expectations about life and the resentments they cause, our own inadequacies and the secrets we harbor. And yet nothing in life that imprisons and constrains us can stand up to the light of day – or more precisely, the light of Christ. When we help each other see the world from the perspective of our faith, prison walls vanish, the blind do see again! But that takes us focusing on God and not on ourselves.

Eugene Peterson, in his book “Subversive Spirituality,” says, When “others are telling you to do more, I want to tell you to do less. The world does not need more of you; it needs more of God. Your friends do not need more of you; they need more of God. And you don’t need more of you; you need more of God.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, anything and everything that we do in life is more about God than about us. By keeping that in mind, -that it’s about God and not us- the possibilities of what God is up to in this world are incredible.

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<sup>2</sup> From Catholic Jokes

<sup>3</sup> as cited in Christianity Today, April 27, 1998.

God says in Isaiah “See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.” God’s incredible power to create through God’s word to us.

More than 700 years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah foretold of God’s plan to do a new thing – to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” That’s Jesus’ job description. It’s from Luke 4, verse 18, where Jesus is reading from Isaiah, He’s in the Temple, and he rolls up the scroll, gives it back to the attendant, sits down and says, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” God is up to something in this world today, through Jesus Christ, the word made flesh.

In the weeks ahead we will be following in the footsteps of Jesus, all the way to Easter. The Narrative Lectionary has given us a pathway to follow. And along the way, I encourage you to look for the new thing that God is doing through your faith.

Begin looking now for where God is active in your life. At the stoplight, take a moment to admire God’s creation. When you look into the eyes of a child, consider that God is in that child – all the potential and creativity of God. When you have the impulse to do the right thing, know that that is God guiding you. Or when you feel tempted to do something wrong, it’s God who lets you know that the temptation is wrong.

It is God who picks up the pieces when things fall apart, and it is God who sends us just the right opportunity at just the right time. All this is from God, whether we know it or not. In knowing it and pointing to it and shining light upon it, there is much power – the power of God to create a new thing. It’s the same power that made Rabbi Sussya freak out just thinking of the enormity of it all.

Now on the other hand, not knowing about God, overlooking what God is up to in our lives, well, there’s no power in that. That just leaves us feeling vulnerable, overlooked, rejected, and insufficient.

The good news for those who believe in the power of God’s word made flesh in Jesus Christ is that we have someone to show us the way. Christ has been given to us as “a light to the nations.” We as individuals and as families, as communities and as society in general, we have what we need to see our way forward. All we have to do is look, just look at what God is up to all around us, and share that with one another! Let your faith point the way forward in this New Year, and beyond. Amen.

## PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, as we begin a new year, help us to discern what it is that moves us. Open our eyes to see the needs of our community, open our ears to hear your call, and open our hearts to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

Grant us the courage to use the gifts and talents you have blessed us with to do the work you have called us to.

Build this community of faith, strengthening our bonds with one another and with you.

Help us to support and encourage one another in our ministry.

Lord, may all that we do praise you and be to your glory, even as we lift up our voices to you in the prayer that you taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;**

**Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.**

**And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,**

**For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.**