

Rev. Dan Welch 1-7-18 Genesis 1:1-5

“Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). And all of a sudden, there it was! Brightness, shining, warmth, life. It came to be from out of nowhere—literally (!) by the power of God’s command. Light! Before God spoke, there was no light. It was cold, pitch-dark. But God’s Word changed all of that. Now a heavenly light burst forth into every part of creation.

God kept on creating in the same way. He called something into being and it came to be—land, water, sky, trees, birds, fish, animals. God spoke, and there it was. But then we all know what happened in this creation. “Did God really say . . . ?” (Gen 3:1-NIV). The devil spoke, as recorded in Genesis chapter 3, and with just a few words he tried to undo everything God did. He tried to destroy Adam and Eve and all the birds and trees and fish and land. But the devil is *not* God. God is able to call things that did not exist and bring them into creation. The devil cannot do that. As hard as he tries, the devil can’t just dissolve us away into nothingness. But he *was* able to mess up all of creation a bit. He was able to twist this perfect creation into something that looked a little more like him—a world twisted and distorted with disobedience, people filled with thoughts of only themselves, men and women whose lives will ultimately end in death.

In Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed, he says, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses” (Luther’s Small Catechism, p. 15). This is most certainly true. Our loving Father has done all these amazing things for us. But as

fallen creatures in this world, we could almost add a little something extra to that explanation about what the *devil* does. It would go like this: “I believe that the devil has tried to *destroy* me and all creatures; that he has given me my aches and pains, my cancer and my heart attack; he has given my eyes a lust for impure images, my ears a love for hearing gossip, and all my members he has infected with wicked actions. My reason has been plagued by madness, and my senses slowly fail as this body of mine sinks closer and closer to death.” Luther never wrote that creed. But as people who have been made by God, we also have to admit that we have been twisted by the devil into things God never intended.

What has happened to God’s creation is so sad. How sad that His beautiful creation, His perfect people have been twisted into what we are. And God aches over this world and what has happened. It grieves Him to see what has happened to His perfect creation. It hurts Him when we sin.

And so Jesus came to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan. Blessed by the Spirit and sent forth by the Father, Jesus was a new creation for us in this fallen world.

Do you remember how God first created everything? God created the heavens and the earth, the Spirit hovered over the waters, and the Word called everything into being. And today, this day, the Baptism of Our Lord, we remember that our God has not just left this world in decay. Our God hasn’t abandoned us to the clutches of the devil. Our God hasn’t left you to die in death. Jesus is remaking everything.

At a craft show once, there was an elderly gentleman who sat on a chair surrounded by dead branches. All around him were piles of dead, dried up, spindly branches, and right in front of him was a small bowl of water. And what this man did was amazing. He took these branches, soaked them in the water, pulled them out, and began to bend them, to reshape them, to twist and mold them into different shapes—into new creations. Out of these lifeless branches his hands formed baskets and chairs and even purses. As this artist shaped these objects, he spoke: “May this chair support people for good conversations, for times of reminiscing, for talking and sharing. May this basket carry God’s flowers of creation for enjoyment. May it carry baked goods to tired neighbors to feed bodies and nourish souls.” This man took dead branches and gave them new life. He reshaped things that looked like their use was long since gone and gave them new lives one could only imagine.

And today, the Baptism of Our Lord, we see how Jesus has reshaped **you**. Jesus wasn’t baptized for Himself. He didn’t need to be remade. Jesus didn’t need to be soaked in water to be a new creation. But our Lord knew you did. Jesus didn’t die on the cross for sins He did. Jesus didn’t need to suffer punishment for the wicked things He had done. But Jesus knew **you** did. He didn’t rise from the dead for His own sake. He rose from the dead so that you could also rise from the dead, right now and for all eternity.

So today, we celebrate not just Jesus’ Baptism, but we also celebrate that we have been united to Jesus through Baptism. (Just like we saw God do for little Adalynn a few moments ago). Today

we celebrate that through water, Jesus has gathered **us** dead branches around Him. He has placed you in the water of Baptism, pulled you out, and said, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Your body is now remade. Your body won’t just be filled with cancer; it will be filled with my body, which promises you an Easter resurrection. Your soul doesn’t have to lust anymore; now you can long for a life lived in me. Your ears are now new; they will be used to hear my Word and to crave hearing the Good News of salvation. And your senses, even though they will slow and fail as you get older and death draws nearer, they will tingle on the day of resurrection as all of my children are raised from the dust of death into eternal life.”

Through water and the Word God created all things, and now through water and the Word **you** have been remade. God hasn’t abandoned you. He hasn’t forgotten the pains you have. He has called you to be a new person in Him. And you are. You are new. You are forgiven. You are now alive, even though you were dead in sin. In Christ, you will live even though your body will die. The devil has tried so hard to destroy God’s creation, but he has failed. He has failed because God has not abandoned you. God has not left you. And He never will.