

“A Newly Created Day”

Mark 1:4-11 and Genesis 1:1-5

January 8, 2012

Happy New Year! Can you believe it—we are already 8 days into the year 2012! Can you think back, and remember a time in our lives, if you’re old enough(!), when “the 2000s” seemed way out there in the future—out in the “space age” of some kind...like the cartoon family, the Jetsons? Well...now the simple-2000s are fading in the-rearview-mirror-of-time as we are speeding toward the 2000-teens! And in some ways we are beyond-the “space age,” as NASA activity has quieted, and the “new age” of *fiscal austerity* and *economic-uncertainty*, and *political bitterness* about it all, seems to rule the day. Maybe someday we will “rocket” beyond this “age,” too.

But, one day follows another, adding to it, adding to the passage of days, and of weeks, and of years, and of decades—all adding up to...a Lifetime. And it all happens one day upon another, upon another. And Friends, as people of faith who trust in a grand and glorious and living God, we *do* believe: each day truly is a newly created day, created *by* God and *for* God’s ingenious purposes! There are no casual or accidental days of God’s Creating. Nor any this-day-doesn’t-count-so-much days. For the words of the Psalmist never get old or tiresome, and never ever wear out:

“For this IS the day which the Lord has made;
Let us (all) rejoice and be glad in it!”

I believe there is no newer or fresher, new-life or new-birth experience—than the experience of first thing early in the morning. Now, let me confess that I am an incurable “morning person” (and maybe annoying and obnoxious one, too). I just love to get up early, before daylight if possible, to welcome the sun’s rising. I run early in the morning. I am highly energized and focused then. I do my very best work then. Add in a few cups of dark roast coffee, black—and I am unstoppable. Of course, then it’s “all downhill from there” as the day goes on, and morning fades (and so do I). Maybe that’s why my wife Brenda and I are such a perfect match, after 36 years and counting—because we are exactly the opposite in our morning-ways. And maybe that’s why she sends me off on out-of-state interim pastor assignments!

But whatever time in the day is Prime Time for each one of us—each day truly is a newly created day! I believe this to be absolutely true for each and every one of us personally. I believe it to be true for every single church congregation, especially when going through the pivotal interim time of a pastoral transition. And, for that matter, I believe that cosmically every single day in human history is a newly created day, a never-lived-before and never-repeated day. For God is newly creating life and life events and life opportunities every single day. And while this last topic (of every day in all of human history) may stretch us beyond the scope of today’s sermon, it does show us the broader, “big picture” context into which our personal days and our church days fit.

For example, think about the very brief story from Mark today, about the baptism of Jesus. On this day which the liturgical calendar calls Baptism of the Lord Day: we find Jesus coming to John for Baptism—which then led to nothing less than the Heavens dramatically opening, and the Spirit of God coming upon him as if like a dove, and with a voice pronouncing Jesus as a “beloved Son of God”...and declaring God’s pleasure.

Here, Baptism launched the *calling to creation-changing ministry and purpose* for Jesus. I know, it seems pretty quick, on the liturgical calendar, so soon after “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly.” But faith does not let us rest or relax in sweetness, cuteness or sentimentality. Days come and go quickly—and life comes and goes quickly. And God wants us to be as fully prepared for each newly created day as possible. Jesus is our “sunrise,” our strong coffee (if you will), our hearty breakfast, our morning devotions, and our new birth every single day...*everything* we need. That—is what He was born and baptized to bring into our Lives and our World.

And the other example, which we heard read earlier, is that of the opening verses of the Bible, and of all Creation. From these earliest verses in Genesis, and accounts of Creation—what a stark beginning. They remind, and they assert and declare for us that: God is infinite, before anything or anyone else in all Creation, and, in fact, God *is* Creation’s Source. And all that has come into being has emanated from the design, the skill, the genius of the Creator God. And still does...with every newly created day!

This morning I would like us to think about the newly created day, and days, now stretching before each of us: 1-personally in our own lives; 2-as this congregation and church family in an interim year, searching for and preparing for a new pastor; and 3-glimpsing at what it means that, as every new day is created and welcomed, we also are moving beyond all the past created-days...not leaving them behind, but rather gathering and building upon them.

First, take a fresh, new breath: What next chapter or chapters of living does God have ready for you to take on? What areas in life are just waiting for you to grow into, to learn, to improve upon, to become more able and ready for more of Christ—and for the new faith-adventure Christ has for you and for me, with each newly created day? What preparation is before us? Or, what is it we have been preparing for, and *now* is the time to activate, to carry out God’s mission, to serve, to love? In our personal lives? How totally exciting!

Second, be thankful and glad about *this* church: What it is and has been, its heritage, its service to Christ for so many years—and at the same time, be restless and be driven...to envision what is next, and be a part of the next steps, and a contributor to the direction in which God is pointing this congregation in 2012...and beyond!

That means, for sure to appreciate and be glad for who you are today, as this church. Also, it means to honestly ask questions and assess things, as they are currently: the church budget, this building, ministry-programming, staffing. And as you do, do not let *any* negativity or “Woe is us” attitudes to weigh you down. That—is totally unhelpful, and is not “newly-created-day-thinking.” Yes, be honest in identifying today’s realities in church and community, and also do good hard work in problem-solving, being innovative and creative, and even be willing to venture even into ways-we-have-never-done-things-before. And then live as a Church with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love!

Third, do greet and welcome the newly created day! Which also means saying “goodbye” to the day that was a new day yesterday, but is not *today’s new day*. That does not mean: denying the “day” that is passed, or regretting it, or grieving for it, or disliking it. Nor does it mean trying to hold on to it or relive

it. Yes, do celebrate past days, be thankful for them, and learn from them, and build upon them. That— is God’s Plan, as God himself continually generates newly created days—non-stop!

I hope you all had glorious and satisfying Christmas and New Year’s holiday experiences. I sure did. Mine were absolutely filled with highlights. The only non-highlight was the uncharacteristically warm and snow-less Minnesota I found! I will go back in February and try again for real winter! But my absolute highlight-of-highlights was experiencing my grand-daughter Maya, together with her great-grandfather (my father-in-law) Lew, affectionately known as Pappy. And they are quite different from each other.

- Maya is almost 3 years of age—Pappy just turned 90.
- Maya runs and jumps and talks...non-stop. Lew is slower, more deliberate, doesn’t jump any more, and is wise and measured with his words.
- Maya is a life-long (3 years) New Yorker...living all her days in Brooklyn, sometimes venturing into Manhattan, already a seasoned subway-rider, never making eye-contact with other riders! While, Pappy is from rural Griffin, Georgia...and has never ridden a subway...and has no plans to, and no regrets about that.
- Lew is an old-school, white-haired and white-skinned, male old-South Southerner...who has been known to let slip a few racial names and expressions in his lifetime...some when out with “the boys,” and some at the dining room table, to the horror of his wife and daughters. While Maya, is clearly bi-racial...whose father, Anson, is from Trinidad...and whose mother, Martha, grew up in...Minnesota. Maya, whose hair is black, and when not braided or pony-tailed can be allowed to form a very impressive Afro. And Maya’s skin color is exactly that of President Obama.

But Lew/Pappy just loves his great-granddaughter! They play together. Laugh and tease together. Lew, the retired engineer takes pride in taking his grand-son-in-law from Trinidad (an engineering student) on a tour of his workshop “out back.” And, Lew proudly praises his great-granddaughter Maya’s mechanical skills at being able to trouble-shoot, and find the switch to turn on an electronic car (all by herself)...the very same car that his own 55-years old daughter Brenda...was not able to figure out. My

absolutely most favorite picture, is: Lew, sitting in his favorite chair, with Maya on his lap, in the family home in South Carolina, both with huge smiles...a picture spanning generations...and spanning history!

Friends we live in a newly created day...today and tomorrow...continually...and eternally. Created by our glorious God. For the Kingdom of God we can see coming...with every newly created day. Amen.