

The Realm of God's Creation

Genesis 2:4-25

This past week we experienced the beginning of the fall season. Fall is one my favorite times of the year, mostly because of my experiences growing up. Fall brought about marching band, football, homecoming, school, and a whole host of other activities. Fall leads us up to winter, which as a skier I love immensely. The changing of the seasons truly opens up the wonder of God's creation for all of us.

One annual occurrence that stands out was as a Boy Scout, we would go fishing for trout at Roaring River State Park in southern Missouri. We would always go near the end of October, so the trees were in their full colors. The mornings were crisp and cool, and the body was warmed by a nice cup of coffee. We would fish all day, trying to convince these rainbow trout in the stream that the gift on the on the end of our fishing line would be a tasty treat. I never did catch a fish in all the times I was there, but it was always a fun experience. It was great hanging out with friends in the beautiful outdoors.

During these fishing trips we were opened up to the beauty of God's creation. We were exposed to the science of biology and botany on these trips, as there was a fish hatchery on the river we would go to and learn about raising fish. We would take a break from fishing and head out on a trail, examining trees and other plants. It is through my trips as a Scout that I find a great joy in learning of the natural world. I believe that scientists who study the world and who have a Christian worldview worship in their own fashion as they study creation.

Last year, one of my most spiritual experiences was centered on science and the seasons. I was visiting a Unitarian Universalist church with some friends as a part of a class project. We were to visit churches outside of our tradition and write about it for an assignment. What I did

not expect, was how I would be moved in the worship service. The reader of that day was doing a call to worship that mentioned science and the changing of the seasons. It put a spiritual spin on how the natural world functions. The reader stated that through the change of seasons and especially as we move into fall we experience the Maker's creation in this world. It was through these simple words that I realized how important science can be in our faith journey.

I grew up in a home where my father is an engineer where he uses science and scientific aspects in his job every day. I grew up with the idea that science was a part of everyday life and that our progress as a society has come through people who have devoted their lives to learning about God's creation. There was a time even when I was in high school that I wanted to be a chemistry major in college and I really enjoyed that science immensely. Fortunately, my father talked me out of that career path, mostly due to my math skills. I had a passion for science, but I didn't have the passion for math that would push me through that particular college major.

Now that I am older and have broader education, I recognize that not all people have this positive interaction between science and faith. In fact, there are many people who are religious that wish science would go away and there are many scientists that wish that religion would go away. The interaction between these two disciplines can be very hostile and unproductive.

When I did my undergraduate work at McPherson College, I did have several opportunities to study the interaction between science and faith. In fact, the college had a center for the study between these two disciplines. In the classroom I was taught by science professors that the interaction between the two disciplines can lead to a positive perspective on the natural world that people on both sides of the academic divide can appreciate.

I took one class in particular that really focused on the interaction between science and religion. I took a course on Evolution and all the components that are a part of that field of study.

I learned that really all evolution is in its basic definition is descent with change. You can apply evolution to many things that we can observe, such as the evolution of language or the evolution of computers. Yet some people today have issues with the idea of this science and religion working together.

In one book by the theologian John F. Haught I learned that there are several ways that people of faith and science can view the interaction between these two disciplines and philosophies. There are four major concepts that Haught brings to the table when discussing this interaction.

The first interaction between science and religion is the idea of conflict. The idea of conflict is that science and religion are fundamentally irreconcilable. This would be the argument of many folks in the scientific community stating that religion gets in the way of their scientific inquiry. This is also the argument that many people in religion view science, that science removes God from our lives. Those that completely believe in the biblical account of creation would have this view of the interaction between science and religion. There is no hope for reconciliation with this view.

The second view is that of contrast, the idea that the two disciplines are viewing and asking completely different questions of each other, so therefore there is no reconciliation between the two because there is no need for it. Science is asking one set of questions, while religion answers another. This is the view that I held for quite some time. I felt that neither science or religion could work together because they are asking completely different questions.

The third view of the interaction between religion and science is called contact. This is the idea that science and religion can have a dialogues between each other. For instance, the folks that hold this view would be saying that science answers the questions of how an event

occurs, while religion would answer the why. The two disciplines can agree on some things. A further and example of this would be that one could believe in evolution, yet believe that God is the source of creation. I can get behind this and I feel that this interaction permits positive dialogue between people, because I have a faith that desires people to be together and to communicate their ideas. People may not agree on everything, but at least they are sitting at the same table together.

The fourth view of the interaction between science and religion is called confirmation. This is the view that I hold and that is that both disciplines confirm the other. Science upholds the belief in a creator and that science can help us to understand theological concepts and vice-versa. This view is not held by many and I see that due to some people having an uneasiness in allowing science to confirm religion. This is not to say that all people who have issues with this interaction are bad or not thinking, because this is a different view to hold.

At Iliff where I go to school, the school itself was founded on this idea, that science could interact with religion and that religion could interact with science. It's the idea of keeping an open mind to the disciplines and seeing where the two disciplines can work together. I admit, I feel that at times some interactions are not healthy for either discipline. But the ultimate I goal I see with this view and why I am embrace it, is that people can have a dialogue and affirm each others beliefs. This view is about bringing people together which as a pastor I view to be the ultimate goal in a Christian setting.

But with these four views, where do we go from here? Where does the bible fit into all of this? Does the bible have a place in any of these views of science and religion? I believe the bible has much to say about creation, especially on who we credit the creation of the universe.

Our Genesis text today is an account of creation. It's one of two creation accounts held in the book of Genesis. The first account is the story in chapter 1, where we read that God created the heavens and the earth and saw that it was good. When people think of a biblical account of creation, this is the story that we default to. It is a good story and it shows the creative power of God. Yet having a second story of creation opens up the dialogue in the way creation took place.

The second account of creation both credit God with the founding of all that we know. The account shows how God laid out the creation of the world, bringing about earth, the streams, the Garden of Eden, and then ultimately humans. After creating man then God created the creatures of the earth he named them. Yet after all the creatures were given to man, he was still lonely, and thus woman was created so man would no longer be alone. The imagery of this account is just as rich as that in chapter 1, yet like I said it opens up the dialogue for discussion of creation.

By opening the discussion of creation, we then can start to look and see how God created the earth. I believe the idea of having more than one creation account shows that there are many explanations of the creation of the world. We can let science in and allow science to see how the world was created. This allows the disciplines of astronomy, cosmology, biology, geology and other natural sciences to begin discussing how God created the world.

By letting these scientific disciplines to probe into how the world was created does not diminish the fact that God created the world. In fact, this is where I believe that science can further explain the full glory of God's work, by showing us how intricate creation is and how well thought out God was in the creation of what we know. I know some people in this world would have trouble with this statement, but I believe that science shows us the glory of God. We can praise God for the creation of the world and for the creation of us as a people.

Yet with this dialogue between science and religion, there is one question that science cannot answer. Science is not set up to answer one very important question. That question is simply, why? It is written that God created us in his image. I believe that we were created so that we can experience the full range of life, experience the glory of God and experience the new life that we can all experience in Christ Jesus. From the beginning to the end of creation we have a place in this world. We are here with purpose, to live a life that is a gift from the ultimate creator. This is where religion takes a step over science and where religion can be the guide for all of us on this earth, the earth that was created by God.

Our readings from Jeremiah and Revelation emphasize the glory of God that we are to embrace on this earth. Jeremiah's text shows us in another part of the scriptures of how important it is that we focus on God. Jeremiah was writing at a time when people were creating false idols and developing beliefs that strayed from the faith given to them by God. These people had lost focus on who had really created the heavens and the earth. This is something that we can fall into. We can lose focus in our studies, we can lose the focus of God in our lives. Recognizing the creation of the heavens by God is indeed the focus that we need to have in our lives. We should not lose focus of who is really important in our lives as Christians, and that is the Great Maker of all, our God, the God who created life for all of us.

I believe the text from Revelation today shows us the glory of God at the end of our times. John the Revelator had a vision of God being worshipped in heaven by all that God created. There is fantastic imagery of this worship. There are radical images of creatures that worship God, creatures whose sole purpose for being is to be a part of this worship in heaven. But the imagery ends with a hymn. The hymn of this vision ends with the text that says "you are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and

by your will they existed and were created.” Here we have John the Revelator writing of this vision that even at the end of times God will be praised for creation.

There is even more in the bible of how God created the world. Throughout the bible from Genesis to Revelation God is praised for the creation of all. As a bible believing people we should take heart in that God is indeed the one who put us here on this earth.

We can take heart that our scientific endeavors to study God’s creation are not contrary to God at all. We can take heart that study of all that God has created can glorify God and show us that creation is indeed a wonderful thing given entrusted to us for care and study. We have nothing to fear from science as long as we credit God with the creation of all. I encourage us all that in no matter what we do, whether it be scientific or not, we can glorify God and remember all the good that God has done for us.

We are a people of God. We are a people that are on a journey of understanding God. We are a people that seek to live out our lives that are pleasing in the sight of God. We can always remember no matter what, we are all wonderfully made in the image of God. God is good indeed. Amen.