

January 6, 2008
Houghton Lake UMC

“In Praise of God, for Revealing Himself”

Genesis 1:1-10

Today I want to give God praise! I want to praise Him for revealing Himself to us. I want to thank Him for revealing to us that there is a God and that as God, He is not only creator but sustainer, provider, holy, pure, just, loving, forgiving, redemptive and totally dedicated to us. I want to praise God for not just getting creation started and then walking away, but for being a God who is intimately involved in every aspect of His creation right down to the atomic level. I want to thank God for revealing Himself in His creation—from “intelligent design”, to the Bible. I want to praise Him for giving us the knowledge that He exists, that He is the immovable mover, that He is concerned with our fallen state, and that God came down to earth as Jesus Christ and died for your sin and for my sin. I want to praise God for His supreme love and affection for you and me, that he would even bother to provide a way for us to join Him in Paradise. And, I want to praise Him that God wants to spend eternity with us in fellowship and communion.

We have just finished a walk through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The last chapter of the book of Revelation compels us to return to the book of Genesis to review again who God is, what He is doing, what His character is like, and God’s great plan to redeem us so that the last chapter of the Book of Revelation can come true. I want to review again who God is, what he did, what he wants from us, how he unfolded his salvation plan over the centuries, and how each person uplifted in the Bible is a part of that salvation plan and revelation.

God, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Law, the sacrificial system, the temple, the judges, the kings, the prophets --- what do they tell us about righteousness, holiness, walking with God in covenant, and how does this knowledge

prepare us for Heaven and eternal life? Why do we need to know the Old Testament as the foundation of the New Testament? I want to start again and ask the questions, “Who is God?”, and “What has God done?” What has God given that I need to receive? What has God promised that I need to claim for myself? What is a disciple? What is it that Jesus calling us to do when he says, “Follow me”? I want to get a deeper grasp on God’s holiness, because in the Bible God calls you and me to be holy also, just as He is holy.

So, the best way to start is to go back to the Book of Genesis and start all over again. Only this time we will be reviewing what we have already learned and going one more step deeper. This is the life of a Christian disciple: keeping our nose in the Book, constantly reading the Bible to glean just one more thing that I can apply to my life. Reading the Bible a second time, a third time, a 25th time will teach me that much more, and will also remind me of things I have already forgotten.

The Book of Revelation reveals Jesus’ declaration, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end.” (Rev. 22:13). I know that God was in the beginning because Moses begins the Bible with these very words, and throughout the creation that surrounds me I know that Something, Someone had to have created what we see. And, the more I learn about creation, life, and the universe around me, the more I stand in awe of who God is, what He has done, and what He has done for me.

When I turn to Genesis, Chapter One, what do I find? I discover that Moses has taught me many other things about God in this very first chapter. Let’s look and see what we find... Genesis...

1:1 “In the beginning God”... The first thing we learn is that God exists. God is real. God is. God is allowing Himself to be revealed, and Moses is now declaring to everyone that God does indeed exist. After all, Moses met him personally at the burning bush. The second thing we learn is that God is not described or even properly introduced. God is

merely revealed. Like a curtain that is suddenly opened up, there is God on stage, moving and doing unbelievable things. We then read...“In the beginning God created”...At the very start God is active, moving, creating, making matter out of nothing, doing His will in ways we cannot begin to comprehend. God is not passive in any way. This is true of God back at the beginning, and it is true of Him today. God is active.

In 1:2 we find these words...”and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” In the NIV we notice that the word Spirit is capitalized, meaning the Holy Spirit, and we have the first hint of a Godhead at work. One God, being manifested in Creator and Spirit working in complete harmony.

In 1:3 we find the words”and God said”... Here God spoke, and creation responded. God created everything visible and invisible at the power of His word. God created light and separated light from darkness. God then made a judgment. He judged that the light was good, and then God gave a name to what He had created. He called light “day” and darkness “night”. And then there was the first day. God divided time.

Here we also find God’s Almighty power, His omnipotence, His total control. It is revealed that God controls all that He creates. His will is being done in every way, shape and form. This will continue through all creation. Thus ends the first day (vs. 3-5). So, we learn that God commands and God is the immovable mover. The buck stop here. Everything starts and stops with God. Therefore, God is the beginning, the Alpha, the first... One.

In 1:6-8 we find a repetition of sorts with these words: “And God said”, “so God made” “and it was so.” Ending the second day (vs. 6-8).

In 1:10b We find these words: “...God saw that it was good...” And again God judges what is good. Evil does not exist yet. God declares all He has done to be good. God approves and is pleased with what He has done, and then continues with creation and again declares what He accomplishes to be good in verse 12...ending the third day (vs. 9-13).

In 1:18 we discover that God goes one step farther. “God set the sun and the moon in the sky to give light to the earth, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night, and then...God saw that it was good. Here we can make the observation that God not only created two lights -- the sun and the moon -- but that God declares both light and darkness to be “good”. Thus ending the fourth day (vs.14-19).

So...in 1:21 God continued to create the animals, fish and birds, and again...God saw that it was good. God declares his creatures and all of his creation good, and then God does something different...

In 1:22 we read ...”God blessed them”... God gives blessing and approval of all that He sees and then gives His creation a command...God said be fruitful...God gives the command to multiply, ending the fifth day (vs. 20-23). Here we discover that God not only has the power to create, to contemplate, to declare good and to bless, God has and uses the power to command His creation. Creation in return responds to God, being accountable to Him.

Now let’s look at **1:26** “Then God said...Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,...” This verse is very different. Here we discover God in the plural, talking to Himself. Here is evidence of the Godhead making a decision to create humans. But, more than that, God chooses to make humans in God’s likeness..in God’s image. This was God’s original plan, to create a being that reflected God. And I believe that reflection was not only with the capacity for eternal life, but the capacity to be holy, as God is holy. I say that because later on we will discover that God’s very essence is that He is holy.

Then God gave humans authority to rule over all the earthly creation. So, we learn something else about God...God delegated responsibility.

In 1:27... we read something about our own creation. God created humans both male and female in his image... God's image is found in both male and female. This not only tells us that God is perfectly reflected in both sexes, but in 1:28 God blessed them both equally, male and female. God blessed and approved of both sexes equally, giving them the same status -- not the man over the woman or vice versa. God did not have a hierarchy in mind, but rather a team that worked together in perfect harmony like the Godhead.

God then commanded them in 1:28 to multiply, to subdue the earth and rule over it. And, in 1:29 God provided vegetarian food for them to eat. And all was well. In 1:31 we find God again reflecting on all that He had created and, indeed, everything was now "very" good. God's final judgment of His creation work was finished and this ended the sixth day (vs. 24-31).

But God was not done! God created one more thing! He created... rest.

We will find that God in **2:1-3** created Sabbath rest, and then God blessed this special seventh day with a special distinction. God made it holy. This is the one characteristic of God that He will repeatedly reveal to us throughout the biblical record. God is holy. It will be on the lips of angels as well as those in the temple. Now, we like to remember that the seventh day is a day of rest... principally because we need a rest at the end of the week. But we forget that the day was to be more than rest. It was to be holy. It was to reflect God in a very special way. My friends, God did not create rest. God created holy rest.

So, in the end, as we review what we learn about God, we discover that Moses was very informative about many of God's attributes. He showed us God's existence and God's omnipotent, almighty power and control. He showed us God's will being perfectly done at the power of His word. He showed us God's ability to reflect on what He had done and to declare that it is good, and we also learn of God's authority to separate light from darkness and to bless what God approves. God also has the capacity to create a being to reflect His own image in both male and female genders, to command them to subdue the earth, and then God delegates responsibility—giving us the authority to dominate what He has created on earth. In this way God gave us the authority to be scientists, to experiment, to test, to question, to discover, and to choose, using freewill. We also discover God to be pleased with all that He has created and then creates "rest" -- but more than rest. God sets aside one day for holy rest. Thus ends the first creation account of the book of Genesis. From the

very start we have God very intimately involved in creation and life. God is very specific in what He does, and we are introduced to the words “created”, “good”, “blessed”, and “holy”. All of these words are vital in understanding God, His character and His salvation plan. We also need to remember that all of these attributes about God never change. All of these characteristics of God remain the same from beginning to the end, because God never changes.

Today I give God praise for all that He has done, all that He has revealed and all that He can teach us if we seek Him, trust Him, learn about Him, and keep reading His Word. The Bible is our source of knowledge -- knowledge about God, about our own hearts, about God’s salvation plan, and about a redemption of which we can be a part. So, as this new year begins I praise God for revealing Himself and for allowing us to know that He exists. He is our beginning, and He will be our ending as well.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, thank you for revealing all that we need to know about You so that we can learn to trust You, to depend upon You, and to look to You for answers, for guidance, for healing, for understanding, and for joy. Thank you for all that You have created. Help us to be people with whom you are pleased and also that you can bless. Amen.