

The St. John's Pulpit

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YOU ARE INVITED TO THE PARTY

A Pastoral Homily Based Upon Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

Summer Series – “*STORIES TO HELP US GROW: For the Bible Tells Us So*”

Sunday, June 17, 2018

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You are invited to the party. When you arrive, everything has been prepared for you. All you must do is respect your Host, relate well to all the other guests and enjoy the celebrations of the party. I offer this image to you as an analogy of creation and your life in this beautiful world.

However, some guests preceded you to the party who did not respect the Host, did not relate well to all the other guests and caused more havoc than enjoyment. Some people participating in this party with you are habitually behaving badly. You are the party participants collaborating with the Host to redeem this party restoring it to the original vision.

At times, you can become discouraged and disheartened. It can seem as if apathy, ignorance, violence, racism, bigotry, greed, injustice, hatred, lies, manipulation, cynicism, fear, abuse, and the misuse of power are in control over active faithfulness, education, peace, understanding, inclusion, reconciliation, generosity, fairness, equality, justice, mercy, graciousness, love, truth, trust-building, commitment, perseverance, sacrifice and servant-leadership. You can feel as if you are exiles living in a foreign land; captives longing to be free.

Genesis 1 was originally written to Jewish exiles living in Babylonian captivity during the sixth century B.C. For them, life was dark and chaotic. It looked as though the Babylonian gods had defeated Yahweh, the God of Israel. The writer of Genesis 1 proclaims that no matter how chaotic or how dark life may seem, the faithfulness of YHWH transforms chaos into order and fills voids with light and life. The Bible begins by focusing your attention on YHWH as the God who creatively redeems the chaotic, formless, empty and dark places in your life.

In Genesis 1:2, this writer uses the Hebrew phrase, ‘tohu-bohu,’ meaning ‘formless void’ or ‘desolate nothingness.’ The rest of this story tells of YHWH creating form and filling voids. On the first three days, YHWH creates form separating light from darkness; dividing the vapors above from waters below; and creating land as a partition between the seas. After there is form, YHWH fills the void of space with sun, moon and stars; fills the voids of the sky and sea with birds and sea life; and fills the voids of the earth with vegetation and animals. Then, – when all party arrangements are complete – YHWH invites humanity into the party.

Every day, you co-create with YHWH to dispel desolation and fill formless voids.

- You assist parents in challenging situations, befriend the lonely and care for those suffering with disease.
- You offer compassion to the grieving, feed the hungry, welcome the refugee and shelter the homeless.
- You practice faithful stewardship investing your resources in God’s mission through the ministries of St. John’s.

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• You encourage children & youth who risk their social popularity by befriending students who are bullied. Beloved, as you become discouraged or disheartened, consider this Story that Helps You Grow.

The Bible begins by telling you how YHWH moves wherever tohu-bohu exists. One Sunday morning long ago, YHWH moved in what seemed to be the formless darkness and void of Jesus’ death. Those in positions of power thought they had extinguished the life of Jesus. They misinterpreted scriptures to defend the way they treated him. Truthfully, Jesus threatened their systemic injustice. When people live according to a pretentious reality, we should expect them to interpret scripture in ungodly ways. Yet, beloved, then and now, a new form of hope fills the void and new life emerges like a resurrected Lord turning a funeral into a party. Light shines in the darkness and darkness cannot overcome it. Still today, celebrations occur unceasingly as chaos is dispelled and voids are filled by the love of YHWH. And, you are invited to the party.