

Genesis 1:1–5
Wed. of Invocabit (Lent I)
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
March 1, 2023

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

From the earliest days of human philosophy until the mid-20th century, most people assumed a static universe, a universe that does not change. It wasn't until the 1960s that the idea of a “Big Bang” to explain the origins of the universe became widely accepted. That the universe itself could have an origin was extremely controversial, a borderline religious idea in the scientific community. Yet as Christians, we know from God's Word that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The universe had a beginning, and modern science is only starting to catch up to what Christians have always known to be true.

Just in the past few weeks, there's been controversy among cosmologists after the James Webb Space Telescope discovered mature galaxies in the early universe. There's talk about a “fast-track to maturity” for these galaxies. One participant in the study called these galaxies “universe breakers.” They're simply too developed to fit into current models of the universe's origins. Maybe this is another scientific discovery pointing yet again to a God who created all things in an instant, by the word of His power, and then organized the universe according to His wisdom? Regardless of what comes of these scientific discoveries, though, until a person

humbles himself before God's Word, he will never fully understand creation or the God who created everything.

When God the Father created all things, the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. Nothing was then as we know it to be today. The order of the universe had not come about yet. There was simply the raw material, like the wood to build a house, or the stone that will be carved into a statue. Creation was a blob of potentiality, just waiting for the Lord in His wisdom to make something of it. The universe, the totality of all things that existed, was like the deepest ocean, a mysterious and unfathomable abyss. Darkness reigned over the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, hovered over the face of the waters. The word for "hovering" here is the same word used for a mother hen brooding over her eggs, keeping them warm so that they might grow and develop, eventually hatching into baby chicks. So, too, did the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, brood over that which was created until all things received their proper order. Later, we see that the same Holy Spirit gives the breath of life to sustain all living things, even as the Holy Spirit creates and sustains our spiritual life. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no life, physical or spiritual.

Another indication of life is water. Where there is no water, there is no life. As creation emerges out of water and through water (2 Pet 3:5), so would man be born out of the water of the womb, both physically and spiritually. As Jesus says in John 3: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." The waters of creation point us ahead to the sin-destroying and life-giving water of Holy Baptism. As God judged the world in Noah's day by covering all things with the water of the Flood, washing away all uncleanness, so does the Lord wash our sins away. He drowns the Old Adam so that a new man

might daily emerge to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. The waters that destroy sin are also the source of eternal life. From the beginning, the Spirit operates in and through water.

And God said, “Let there be light.” Here, Moses introduces us to God the Son, who we also know as the Word of God. The Gospel of John starts like this: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” The Word of God is an uncreated Word, an eternal Word by whom all things were spoken into existence (Heb 1:2). He is the wisdom of God, brought forth when there were no depths, begotten from the Father in eternity, before the beginning of the earth (Prov 8:24). By Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col 1:16–17). And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and Truth. Jesus Christ is that Word of God by whom all things were created, the one who Himself entered His creation to redeem it from sin, death, and the power of the Devil.

And God said, “Let there be light.” The beginning of John’s Gospel says of Jesus, the Second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, that “in Him was life, and that life was the light of men.” Just as there is no life apart from water, so, too, is there no life on earth apart from light. Light gives the energy, the power needed for existence. Today we know that without light, plants could not produce the oxygen we need to survive. Without light, our skin would not produce the vitamin D we need for healthy bodies and minds. So on a purely biological level, light is necessary for life. There’s a reason we long for more daylight.

Light is also, of course, that by which we see. Without light, we would grope around in the darkness like the Egyptians who suffered from the ninth plague of darkness for three days, a darkness so deep it was felt (Ex 10), like when you go into a deep cave and turn off your light. Such darkness is disorienting for those made to live in the light. That's why darkness is one of the curses for disobedience. In Deuteronomy 28:29, God says to the people of Israel: "you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways." At the crucifixion, there was darkness over the land for three hours as the Son of God was forsaken by His Father (Matt 27:45). Darkness reigned as the judgment for our sins was carried out. And then for three days and three nights, the Son of God laid buried in the heart of the earth, just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the dark belly of the fish, submerged in the waters of chaos (Matt 12:40).

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome (John 8:12; 1:5). As light scatters the darkness, so does the Son of Man rise from the darkness of death. On the third day our Lord rose from the dead, never to die again. He lives and reigns to all eternity as the true Light by which we walk. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). And He, the Word of God, gives us His word as a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Pet 1:19; Ps 119:105), to illuminate our lives and the path we are on towards eternity where night will be no more, for the LORD God Himself will be our light, and we will reign with Him forever and ever (Rev 22:5).

That's not to say that night and darkness are bad. God saw that the light was good and God separated the light from the darkness. Darkness is simply the absence of light, the status quo before God created light. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there

was evening and there was morning, the first day. In this world, we need darkness and nighttime to order our lives and to rest. Here, on day 1, the pattern for the other days of creation is established. Evening and morning, daytime and nighttime, all working in perfect balance and harmony from the beginning of creation. It is at nighttime that the Lord gives to His beloved sleep (Ps 127:2). And we know that we can lie down and sleep in peace, because it is the Lord who makes us lie in safety (Ps 4:8). The night is given to us for rest from our labors as we look forward to the eternal rest we have in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The universe is not static, nor did it come into being by chance. No, our Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created all things out of nothing. God created the universe to support life, including your life. He sends light and life to all on the Earth, and in Holy Baptism He recreates you, washes you clean, and enlightens you with the Light of Christ. The first day of creation sets us up for the other days, which we'll cover during this season of Lent, as you will see how our God orders the universe for your good and continues upholding all things for your sake. He who created all things at the beginning, and redeemed His fallen creation in time, will finally make all things new, that you might live forever with Him in the new heavens and the new earth. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Magnificat.