

“Out of the Chaos” – Genesis 1:1-5 – January 10, 2021

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It was an irrational belief that many of us had. Thinking that the change of one day on a human-designed measure of time, would make a difference. 2020 was drawing to a close. We looked to a new year with anticipation and hope, and maybe with a touch of magical thinking, believing that 2021 had to be different. And yet a mere 10 days in, nothing has changed. The pandemic numbers are steadily increasing, and while we now have vaccines available, it will some time before we can all reap the benefits of those. Additionally, on January 6, a day when we celebrate the Epiphany, and a day when the legislative branch of our republic was set to confirm the new executive branch, a mob stormed in and overtook the US Capitol.

Someone on the internet made an interesting observation. If you say out loud the numerical name of our new year, 2021, you'll notice something both fascinating and disturbing – say it slowly and with a slight pause – twenty-twenty----one; twenty-twenty (won). Apparently, last year is still trying to have the final word.

All kidding aside, we rationally know that the changing of a calendar does not make a difference in the overall passage of time. What does change are our actions and our reactions. And I think with a new year dawning, and after nine months of crisis fatigue, we were ready for a bit of good news. After all, Christmas still happened. Not in the way we would have hoped, but it did happen. And with a vaccine coming our way, things were looking good. And then this week happened.

Like many of you, I am still trying to put my head around what occurred at the Capitol. I have a lot of questions for which I have no answers. But this is what I do know. When people are afraid, they will do irrational things. When people have a lust for power, they will do anything to keep from losing it. When people follow and worship humans instead of God, God's truth and will are lost, and anything can happen. When people hate other people simply because they are different in some way, oppression and violence will occur. When people try use God's name to further their own agendas, the ugly truth will eventually be exposed.

Our world is very broken. Those of us who live comfortable lives cannot continue to go along believing that everything is okay or ignoring the issues because they do not affect us directly. We have a responsibility, inherit in our calling as children of God, to reach out in love to all people. We are all joined together as created beings. We share one Creator. Our differences are not meant to divide. Our differences are meant to be celebrated.

The work we have to do going forward is not easy. It is risky, and it's not guaranteed. The changes toward which we work may never materialize in our lifetimes. But the work is important, nonetheless.

The image we have from the passage from Genesis is of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters of the deep. This is an important image. It shows us that God is no stranger to bringing order out of chaos. Creating good things out of that which is formless and rough. Certainly, the word chaos is not too strong a word to describe some of things our world is currently experiencing.

The good news is that God did not just create once, a very long time ago, and send this earth and its inhabitants out on our merry way. God has continued to create all throughout history and will do so into the future. We know God as Creator, and we know that the things that God creates are good. God's plan of redemption was not just for humans, but for all creation, and God's work will continue into all is restored to goodness.

Part of our own redemption includes growing into the likeness of Christ. In his baptism at the Jordan River Jesus joined in solidarity with all humanity. He knows our struggles, and he understands our humanness. Just as the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at the time of his baptism, we too are baptized into the Spirit and claimed by God as part of God's family. Our baptism identifies us as belonging to God. As we journey through life, growing in our faith, the Spirit's work of redemption continues within us. Because of this, we can share God's grace with others. We can love others with God's love, and by the Spirit our eyes are opened to seeing the world as God does. When we look, really look at what is happening in this world, the truth of God is revealed to us. We see the hurt, anguish, and pain of those who have been marginalized and diminished through unfair human practices.

As we move into this new year, a year already filled with chaos, let us move forward knowing that the God we serve is Creator and always desires to bring good out of chaos. When we are faced with turmoil in our lives and in our world, let us claim our identity in Christ and confront it with an attitude of evoking positive change. Let us join in God's work of bringing redemption to all.