

Living a Miracle

Stewardship 4

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Genesis 1: 24-31 & Matthew 13: 44,45

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‘Then God said, ‘Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them. God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" And so it was. Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way.’ (New Living Bible)

We have all heard the story of creation in the book of Genesis. In our modern world with articles about the Big Bang Theory and others, the Genesis story is not one that many people take very seriously. In essence, what the story simply affirms is that there is a Creator – an Infinite Presence – behind and responsible for all that is. And whether or not you choose to believe this, one thing is sure – life itself, creation, is no small matter. It is enormous in all its ramifications.

To begin with, no one understands it. Scientists have no idea how life began. Currently there are a number of theories about the origin of life. There is the Spontaneous Generation theory; The Primordial Soup Theory; The Clay Theory; The Extraterrestrial Amino Acid theory – just to name a few. But in spite of all the theories, no one knows how life began. No one has been able to replicate life in a Petri Dish under Sterile Lab conditions.

But if we don’t know how it began we are beginning to understand the enormous complexities that allow life to exist. Ten years ago an international group of scientists sequenced and mapped out the chemical base pairs which make up the DNA and RNA of the human genome – about 25,000 in each one of us. They are the code sequence that determines who you are and why you are unique. It is called the Human Genome Project and it is still on going – quite amazing.

Our sun is 94 million miles away from earth. We now know that few million miles closer and we would all be toast. A few million miles farther away and we would all be ice cubes. There is a perfect balance in everything about our earth that allows life to exist. There is just the right mixture of nitrogen and oxygen in the atmosphere we breathe and a very thin ozone layer that keeps us from being irradiated. There is a remarkably thin layer of earth – just enough to allow plants to grow, and just enough atmosphere to recycle fresh water. The truth is that the odds for all the conditions necessary to sustain life anywhere in the universe are infinitesimally remote. And yet it did happen and we are here.

Let me take it one step further. Do you recall the day of your conception – not your birth, your conception? Not likely, but that was an amazing day for you. Do you realize that on that day you were in a race with 90,000 other little spermy guys all trying to get to an egg. And you won. You were in a race with ninety thousand others and you came in first place! Don’t ever think of yourself as a loser because you’re not. You are a winner big time. What you won that day was the amazing gift of life. Any of the other 90,000 who lost would have given anything to gain what you won.

If you can see, and hear, and touch, and feel, and smell, and love you should be amazingly grateful. Life is a totally amazing gift. Just being alive is deeply precious, and one that is time limited. We have only so many days, so many hours, to enjoy it. Truly we are living a miracle that we all tend to take for granted. We shrug it off and hardly ever think about it. Instead we get caught up in the circumstances, schedules, and complications of our lives, and they rob us of loving the miracle of life.

Do you know Eric Clapton, the amazing guitarist and song writer? He wrote a heart wrenching song about the death of his four year-old son. The little boy fell from a 53rd story apartment window. Clapton took nine months off and when he returned his music had changed. The tragedy made his music softer, more powerful, and more reflective. You likely know the song he wrote about his son's death:

Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?
Would it be the same if I saw you in heaven?
I must be strong and carry on,
'Cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.

Would you hold my hand if I saw you in heaven?
Would you help me stand if I saw you in heaven?
I'll find my way through night and day,
'Cause I know I just can't stay here in heaven.
Time can bring you down, time can bend your knees.
Time can break your heart, have you begging please, begging please.
Beyond the door there's peace I'm sure,
And I know there'll be no more tears in heaven.

It took an enormous tragedy for Eric Clapton to begin to appreciate how precious is God's gift of life. It has led him to become a deeply Christian man. Do you remember what Jesus said, "I came that you might have Life in all its fullness!" That is what Christian faith is about – Life in all its fullness.

Jesus said it is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man finds it, he hides it again, and in joy goes and sells all that he had and buys the field. Again he said it is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. What Jesus is telling us is that Life in the Kingdom of God is not about circumstances, schedules, and complications. It is about joy and hope and love.

The daily newspaper we read this past February and March when we were down south in the US, carries the comic strip Peanuts. They are all reruns but still I love them. In one, Lucy asks Linus, "What are people on earth for anyway?" Linus replies, "Every person is placed on earth to make someone else happy." Self-centered Lucy thinks about it for a minute and then yells, "Then someone is not doing his job!"

Can we enjoy life and live with love or, like Lucy, just be miserable without it — that is the big question. Is it beyond our control, or is loving life something we can choose? I want to suggest a couple of things we can do to enjoy life more. First, when you are feeling the pain and pressure of life, try to look up at the big picture. Try not to get caught up in circumstances, schedules, and complications. They always tend to drag us down. I know all we have to deal with mundane matters and I am not advocating escapism. Lots of things we do have to do. The grass has to be cut. The bills have to be paid. But what I am saying is, in the midst of it, always look up and try to see the bigger picture.

Take this Church for example, and all that it has meant to you, and to so many others, over so many years. It has given life and love, comfort and inspiration to many thousands. We are currently in the middle of a Stewardship campaign called "Good to Grow." We are asking for your support. Now we had one little disruption last week – in the grand scheme of things a very little one. Trust me, we have survived far bigger problems in the past. Those of you who have been here for a while know what I am talking about. Yet I heard some people threatening to leave. Look up! This Church is so wonderful. It does so much. It is truly a gift of God to us. Let's love our Church and support it. When it has problems, get behind it! This is our Church by the grace of God – a Church that has blessed you and will bless you.

My second suggestion to remember when circumstances, schedules, and complications threaten to overwhelm you, is live for today. The Romans used to say, "Carpe

Diem.” In English it means “seize the day,” don’t let it go, don’t let it escape you. Joy comes in living, and we can only live one day at a time. So never wish even a single day away. Love today, and live today, and peace and joy will find you. It is rather like a butterfly. If you chase it, it eludes you. If you sit quietly, it will come and light upon your shoulder.

Let me close with a story. A man and his wife pulled into a gas station – not likely in Brockville because this was a full serve gas station. An attendant came out and pumped the gas. His wife sat beside him in the passenger seat. As the tank was being filled, the young gas station attendant washed the windshield. When he finished, the husband snapped, “That windshield is still dirty. Wash it again.” The young lad looked startled but said, “Yes, sir!” and he scrubbed and squeegeed the windshield a second time, looking closely for any bugs or dirt he might have missed. When he finished, the man in the car, in an angry tone yelled, “It’s still dirty!” As the astonished attendant was looking for any place he might have missed, the man’s wife (as wives so often do) gently reached over, removed his glasses, carefully wiped them, and put them back on his face. The man was surprised to see a spotless windshield.

When we let in the love of Christ, it is like viewing the world with joy through new and wonderfully clean glasses. When we live the miracle of God’s gift of life, we see everything in a different way. We start seeing possibilities we may never have seen before. Old feelings of bitterness get washed away and in their place we find new hope and new joy. And this includes walking through some of life’s deepest sadness. You see, our joy in life is grounded in the eternal strength of a Loving Creator, who transcends every sadness – even death itself. This is why the Bible says, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Amen