

Genesis 1:1-2, 1:26-2:3; Psalm 8
Alleluia from A to Z
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This morning, I want to begin by sharing with you a few statistics that might make your head spin, facts about our natural world that have captivated history's greatest minds, natural phenomena in which one's only response is "wow."

Did you know that if our Milky Way galaxy were shrunk to the size of the continent of North America – Canada and the United States – can you guess how much space would our individual solar system take up? It would fit inside a coffee cup.

Now consider this: 36 years ago, in 1977, NASA sent up Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 on a probe and they have been traveling 36 years and still haven't reached the edge of our coffee cup. They still aren't there. Today, when engineers beam a command to Voyager at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it takes more than 13 hours to arrive at Voyager. And still, Voyager hasn't reached the edge of our solar system. Yet this vast neighborhood of our sun, in our coffee cup, fits with several hundred billion other stars in our Milky Way galaxy, and our Milky Way is one of perhaps 100 billion other galaxies in the universe. Today, we're sitting on a tiny fleck of dust rotating around a minor star at the edge of the Milky Way galaxy.

Perhaps some of you saw this viral video a while back that gives us a sense of how tiny earth is compared to some of the other stars in the skies.

[\[Video\]](#)

Now, by a show of hands, how many of you out there have ever told your children, or maybe you were told by your parents, "You are not the center of the universe"?

Even stars like these supergiants and hypergiants are a bit misleading. You all know that light travels at the staggering pace of 186,000 miles per *second*; that's just shy of 6 trillion miles per year. Now that's really fast, but the universe is really big. So on a clear spring night when you look up into the stars, you are actually seeing light that has taken years, even centuries to get here. When you look up at those stars, you might say that you are looking into the past; some of those stars don't even exist anymore.

In fact, some think that we might eventually be able to invent a Telescope strong enough to see back to the big bang itself—that moment the Scriptures narrate as: In the beginning God. A word of disclosure here, I'm kicking way beyond my punt coverage; my degree doesn't allow me to speak authoritatively on this stuff, but it is really cool.

Facts like this are not only mind numbing in their complexity, they virtually bring us to our knees in worship and adoration. Even though none of us is the center of the universe,

it does give us cause to ask the question: how do I understand my place in this giant spinning, expanding thing called the Cosmos? And what's our purpose here?

The single most important factor that brings order to the cosmos and our place within them is not a scientific concept, but a theological relationship. "I believe in God the Father, almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ his Son, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost." This relationship of love and service make up what we call the Trinity, or God's Triune identity: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This three-in-one identity, this relationship of love and service is, I believe, what can help us better understand how and why this created universe holds together and where we fit in it.

So this morning, we're going to begin *in the beginning*. If you are able, please stand with me out of reverence and respect for the reading of God's Word. We will begin with a reading from Genesis, followed by a prayer from the Psalms.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters... Then God said, "Let us make man[h] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Let us pray:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him,

and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

“In the beginning God.” You don’t need to go much further than that to see how the beginning and the end are joined. God created it all. Verse 3 of Psalm 8: *“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars....”* All living things depend on God for life. Take a big breath; blow it out. See, he gave you another one. Every heartbeat is a gift from him.

The greatest defense of God’s presence and activity in the world is the world itself, with all of its infinitesimal intricacy. And yet how could such a grand cosmic event at the same time be so personal?

Did you notice that in the story of creation, it appears as though God is not alone in God’s creative process? Apparently, it was a team effort. Verse 23 says, **Then God said “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”**

Even the very formation of the cosmos reveals the brilliance of God, and it would appear that even before God snapped his finger and caused the big bang, there is a relationship of love that is woven into its fabric. Apparently, God really did create by committee, sort of.

There are some truths that are only plainly visible through the eyes of love. Author Tim Keller says that the essence of God’s creation is love, and without another there is no love.

In his little book *Dogmatics in Outline*, the great Swiss Theologian Karl Barth says this:

“The thing we begin with, is God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And from that standpoint the great Christian problem is put forward, whether it can really be the case that God wishes to be not only for Himself, but that outside Him there is the world, that we exist alongside and outside Him? The riddle of creation is that God, who does not need us, created heaven and earth and myself, out of sheer fatherly kindness and compassion, apart from any merit or worthiness of mine; for all of which I am bound to thank and praise Him.”

There was no rational or functional reason why God said “let us make them male and female,” there was no need for God to separate the land from the seas and the earth from the skies, there was no real pressing need to create the creeping things that creep and the crawling things that crawl. The only answer we can come up with is love. And as any husband or wife or child of a parent will tell you, real love brings order and intelligibility to one’s world.

This is the second way we see God's Fatherly love in the fabric of creation: there is order to God's work. God takes formless, void, chaotic space and begins to separate it, giving it form and order. **And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were above and below. And it was so. God separated the water from dry land, day from the night, the days, the seasons and the years. And it was so.** As we look at the personality of God, what we call the first member of the Trinity, the Father, it's really clear God had a method for his craftsmanship, and it's was not just random chance. As an aside, I think this also proves that God is a Presbyterian, because everything was done decently and in order.

One of Christian's favorite books to read is *Goodnight Moon*, and if you've read it, you know that the story is a boy systematically working his way through his room, noticing each item and saying "Goodnight" to each one.

At the end of each day, God looked at the things he had done, and said this makes sense. The form and structure to God's world has order and intelligibility.

But many of today's modern scientists, especially the new atheist group, people like Richard Dawkins, contend that anyone who believes in a creating God is certifiable. But recently I read a book called *Where the Problem Really Lies*, by the Notre Dame philosopher Alvin Plantinga, who is the greatest thinker on the subject of faith and science today. He says: it's only the relation between God, nature, and humans, that makes it reasonable for us to go into the world and assume that our logic and perceptions are reliable. In other words, having had the same God who created that "out there" create this "in here" (head) is what makes it reasonable to believe that the scientific theories our minds come up with are true and actually do describe reality. But he says if, as the atheist scientists say, we are simply the random products of unguided Darwinian evolution, it is unreasonable for us to believe that our cognitive faculties are reliable, because they're just part of that same chaotic, random, irrational process. Therefore it's unreasonable to believe any theories our cognitive faculties may lead us to, and that includes the theory of evolution.

So here's the punch line. How's this for irony? The only way we can rationally believe that we are products of evolution is if we also believe that this evolutionary process was in some way guided by God.

We exist, the beauty of what surrounds us in the natural, created world exists because in the beginning God.

Not only did God create everything, but he created everything good (pardon the usage, you English majors out there). As the Psalmist considers the many facets of creation, and as the Genesis account moves through each successive day, there is something calming, almost soothing about the way God does his work.

And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good, it was good, it was good. Then on the sixth day after creating male and female, he said it was very good.

Even in the grand complexity of the cosmos, in Genesis 1, God offers a picture that is subtle and soothing. There’s a simplicity in what God is doing as God forms and separates and orders and breathes, everything fits together and God says **it is very good.**

Finally this morning, as we set out on this 5-week study on what it means for us to believe God is triune, we believe that God is not only the one who creates with beauty and perfection, but there is worship and doxology in God’s creation.

Author of the Message Translation of the Bible and Presbyterian Pastor Eugene Peterson notes that according to Genesis 1, Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day, which meant that the first full day of their existence was the next day, the Sabbath Day, the day for rest and for worship. Adam and Eve kicked off the human race by getting a day off. We begin with Sabbath, with rest, with a day in which God and humans simply soak up creation revealed in its brilliance and variety. God’s creation, God’s identity, begins and ends in worship, in singing, in doxology, in enjoyment, and he does it in relationship. And as we will see in the weeks to come, that relationship with the Son and the Spirit gives depth and meaning to our lives. But first, we begin with worship.

I want to close with a quote from CS Lewis’ Narnia Tales. It’s the story of Narnia’s creation. It begins as the children Digory and Polly find themselves in a dark and formless world, frightened by the void around them, they did what they knew to do: they sang a hymn.

In the darkness, something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Something seemed to come from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it. The horse seemed to like it too; he gave the sort of whinny a horse would give if, after years of being a cab-horse, it found itself back in the old field where it had played as a foal, and saw someone whom it remembered and loved coming across the field to bring it a lump of sugar.

Gawd! Said the Cabby. Ain’t it lovely?

Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by the other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale cold tingling silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn’t

come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; the next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leapt out – single stars, constellations and planets brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

“Glory Be!” said the Cabby. “I’d ha’ been a better man all my life if I’d known there were things like this.”

The voice on earth was now louder and more triumphant; but the voices in the sky, after singing loudly with it for a time began to get fainter. And now something else was happening. Far away, and down near the horizon, the sky began to turn grey. A light wind, very fresh, began to stir. The sky, in that one place, grew slowly and steadily paler. You could see shapes of hills standing up dark against it. All the time the voice went on singing.

The eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose.

In the beginning God, and God’s song is alleluia from A to Z.