Genesis 2 – 12 September 2015 Pastor Greg Yeager

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, 5when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— 7then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

This is the **Second** Creation Story. There are two creation stories in the bible, one right after the other. They do NOT agree in detail. The old scribes who put these ancient stories into book form decided that you, the reader, could choose for yourself. This allows the Holy Spirit to speak to us all freely through these stories, not bound by old opinions of which story is right or wrong.

8And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the **tree of life**\* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

\* “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the **tree of life** with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22. 1-2) The bible ends right where it started – just with a lot more people at the end.

Verses 9-14 talk about the rivers of Eden, and although they certainly are scripture, and as St Paul says, all scripture is God-breathed, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness…lets’ just say verses 9 – 14 are a bit less profitable than the rest here. You can check them out in your bible.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. 16And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

Some people think that Eden was paradise – lounging around all day doing nothing. But even in paradise, the Adam was given something to do, a responsibility, a job, a purpose. For many people, ‘paradise’ without a calling – that’s hell itself. Humans, right from the start, were created to **do stuff!** Without purpose, people suffer – and can be led to do horrible things. Terrorists, for example, are almost always consumed with ‘great purpose.’

Now, as we know, Adam and Eve DID in fact eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they did NOT die! Some people think that God must be a liar, or the bible is wrong. Or they think Adam and Eve died some kind of ‘spiritual death,’ whatever that means. I never understood it myself, until I became a parent. Then it all made sense. “Don’t touch that, or else!” We call God ‘Father,’ after all. Do we mean it? Do we believe it’s true? If so, then maybe our Father was rather taken by his brand new firstborn children!

18 Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a **helper** as his partner.’

So far in the bible, “God saw that it was good” has been written seven times. This is the first time anything in creation is called ‘not good.’ It’s not a snake or a tree, it’s a **situation** – Adam’s solitude. And God being God, sets out to fix it right away. “Helper” is a poor translation: sustainer, strengthener. NOT assistant or servant. God forbids me for instance, to call Pastor Carol ‘my lovely assistant,’ even though I’ve always wanted to do that. And it’s clear that even terms like ‘leader-follower’ ruin the original sense. Some unions are like that, some unions are egalitarian. In some families women are bread-winners, and men stay home with the children. And who’s to say which the more challenging role is? Anyone here want to try?

Jesus means freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. You get to choose in this world, just like Adam and Eve did. If you get married, you choose the roles that are right for you. The bible is clear as a bell on one thing and one thing only as regards to marriage: You shall not commit adultery. But who goes to work, who raises the kids, who washes the clothes, cleans the kitchen, you get to work that out together.

Oh, and let’s make something clear. I’m sure you’ve heard the old tired line, “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” Right. That’s great. What God SAID was, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” And yet, St Paul says he prefers it if people remain single! And everyone who uses that “Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve” argument will quote Jesus in St Matthew, where the Pharisees ask him about divorce, and he says, “the One who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Sounds good until the disciples, who are listening to Jesus argue with these angry righteous Pharisees, they say, “If such is the case with a man and his wife, it is better not to marry!” And then Jesus agrees with them, talking about those who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven!

Yikes! I love the kingdom! I serve the Kingdom of heaven as best I can! I love Jesus, and I want to carry my cross and follow the Lord. But I’m no eunuch for the kingdom. And if someone wants that life, it’s their life. But I won’t force anyone to go where I wouldn’t.

19So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
   the moon and the stars that you have established;   
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
   mortals that you care for them?   
Yet you have made them a little lower than the angels,  
   and crowned them with glory and honor.   
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
   you have put all things under their feet…” (Psalm 8)

Preachers have a tendency to preach about how awful people are, how corrupt, how stupid, greedy, sinful, and all around nasty folks can be. And the bible can go that way, too, but not always. We were made a little lower than the angels, wherever the angels are on the spectrum of creation, yet were formed from the dust of the earth. So we are at the same time both precious, and ordinary. Priceless, and worthless. Crown of creation and dust of the earth. So arrogance is sin, and so is self-loathing, because they both contradict our God-ordained place in the universe.

20The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 21So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23Then the man said,  
‘This at last is bone of my bones  
   and flesh of my flesh;  
this one shall be called Woman,  
   for out of Man this one was taken.’   
24Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

And there you go. Apparently the Garden of Eden diet, vegan as far as we can tell, made Adam and Eve look really good naked, and they weren’t ashamed at all. Shame – what is that? Is being ashamed sinful? No, shame is a good thing – it makes us avoid doing some things, and embrace doing others. If it works properly, we do the right thing, and everybody’s happy. If shame goes out of kilter, however, then bullies can shame their victims, people will lose their rights to avoid shame, people can begin to loathe themselves. Begin to find someone else to blame, to fear, to hate. That’s when shame is out of kilter, when it’s lost its proper function.