

Definition of Catalyst: an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action

One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him.

The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and get lost."

God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this?"

Let's say we have a human-making contest." To which the scientist replied, "Okay, great!"

But God added, "Now, we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam."

The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt.

God looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You go get your own dirt!"

Today we are going to talk about creation. For of all the holy days of the church year, Pentecost is a perfect day to speak of God making things. Here is a light hearted picture about that event.

Show picture

Our first lesson to understand is God gets great delight in creating new things. Be reminded of the words from today's psalm. Psalm 104:24-26

“O Lord how manifold are your works! In your wisdom you have made them all, the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things, Innumerable are there, living things both great and small. “

There is a great joy, a wonder, a child's delight in God when God creates. So why this talk about creation? It is one way to view the whole purpose of Pentecost. For you see scholars see two creations in the Bible.

Picture of Creation

We have creation one in Genesis. We know the story in Genesis one of God making the world in 6 days and resting on the 7th. Please recall the opening verses,

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

These verses point out that the earth was a formless void. This means that the earth was without creation. It just was kind of there. Secondly, the creation process begins when the wind from God arrives. It is the wind, that is the catalyst, the spark if you will for the creation process to begin.

By the way, if you didn't know it, this verse also answers the question what sport did they play in Genesis. Baseball of course. In the Big Inning.

Now you will notice a second catalyst besides the wind in the creation story. In Genesis 2 there is an interesting verse in 2:7

“then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breadth of life, and the man became a living being”

In this creation story, God breathed into man to make the first human. The breath of God gives us breath if you will. The breath of God is the catalyst for creating humans.

In Acts 2:1-2 we read the following:

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting”.

There is that wind again. There is the creative force of God in action. Once again God is using the wind of God as a catalyst for creation.

Now what is really cool is let's go to the Gospel lesson for today and look at what Jesus does in verses 20:21-22

“Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you”. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit”.

In the Septuagint, which is the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek we discover something quite fascinating. The word for breath in Genesis is the same word for breath in John. Both acts of God breathing life, creates life. Interestingly enough, in Ezekiel you may recall the story of the dry bones. The bones represent Israel and God is coming to bring them life. Take a look at this verse in Ezekiel 37:5

“Thus says the Lord God to these bones, I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live”

Guess what! It is the same word again for breath. By the way, lest you think I am a Biblical Genius, this is why I listen to Podcasts from Luther Seminary. So what is the point of Pentecost? It is God's second creation. Instead of creating the world, God is going to create a new way of life, a new way of being. It is the way of life known as a Christian. And here is the amazing thing. It is both an honor and also something quite scary. God wants to work with us as co-creators. God gives us the Spirit so that we can then give life to others. This is why he says in John, As I was sent, so now I send you.

When it comes to creation we have two choices really. We can create something new or we can recreate something. We can grant life by reclaiming the dry bones of the world. Thus it can be something quite simple as water.

Picture of Wells

We take water for granted. Did you know in Africa many of the wells are polluted. So people get sick by drinking bad water. Why do they do that? They have no other choice. But a well is more than just a well. A well in a community also means life in that water is necessary for a medical dispensary. Water also is necessary for the obvious of growing crops and food. So water is life for people in the world.

So we have something to think about this morning. Can we see ourselves as co-creators with God? Can we see ourselves as catalysts for change? Can we imagine that we might overcome our fears and doubt and trust that God can use us! Can we do something so simple as providing water to the thirsty?

What happens in Acts is quite fascinating. Peter who is hiding suddenly comes out and speaks publically for Jesus. Peter becomes one of those sent people. The community of believers is formed. God begins the movement of reshaping the world in God's image. A pastor friend of mine said Christianity dies when we make it a religion. We turn it into creeds and beliefs. We forget that the creeds and beliefs direct us into action. For we called to join the movement to reshape the world in the image of God. It is a movement that will take us all the way to eternity. It is what it means to be sent people, catalysts if you will. Amen.