

On this Father's Day, let us look at our heavenly Father. When I read our appointed passages for the day, I was strongly reminded that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is Lord of all. He created us. Remember when Job questioned God about what was happening with him?

Job 38:1-11 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?" In other words, God is the potter and we are the sculpture. He is the artist and we are the painting. The sculpture wouldn't say, I need no potter. No new pots would appear. The picture wouldn't say, I need no artist for then no new art would appear.

We have the story from today's Gospel (Mark 4:35ff) of Jesus in the boat with the disciples in a storm. We studied this text last Sunday in Sunday school. They wake Jesus, *"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"* He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, *"Peace! Be still!"* Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, *"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"* They were terrified and asked each other, *"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

Psalm 124 reminds us of even the fishermen who were disciples were afraid say: 4 The waters would have engulfed us; a torrent would have overwhelmed us. 5 Yes, the raging waters of their fury would have overwhelmed our very lives. The Jewish people of Jesus' day and earlier looked at stormy waters as chaos.

John Ylvisaker, one of our Lutheran song writers, who wrote *Borning Cry*, paints a picture of sin entering the Creation in his song, *Reverse Creation* which is a reverse of Genesis 1:

In the End, man destroyed the heaven that was called earth. The earth had been beautiful until the spirit of man had moved over it and destroyed all things. And man said, 'Let there be darkness. And there was darkness. And man liked the darkness, so he called the darkness 'security.' And he divided himself into races and religions and classes of society. And there was evening and no morning on the 7th day before the end.

And man said, 'Let there be a strong government to control us in our darkness. Let there be armies to control our bodies so that we may learn to kill one another neatly

and efficiently in our darkness. Let us hunt down those who speak the truth at home and abroad because we want our darkness. And there was no evening and no morning on the 6th day before the end.

And man said, 'Let there be rockets and bombs to kill faster and easier.' And there were gas chambers and laser rays to be more thorough. And it was the 5th day before the end.

And man said, 'Let there be drugs and other forms of escape for there is this constant annoyance, 'reality' that is disturbing our comfort. And it was the 4th day before the end.

And man said, 'Let there be division among the nations so that we may know who is our common enemy. 3rd day before the end.

Finally, man said, 'Let us create God in our own image lest some other god compete with us. Let us say, 'God thinks as we think and hates as we hate and kills as we kill. And it was the 2nd day before the end.

On the last day, there was a great noise on the face of the earth. Fire consumed the beautiful globe and there was silence. The blackened earth now rested to worship the one true God. And God saw all the man had done and in the silence over the smoldering remains, He wept. (pause)

This is in stark contrast to the original creation of the earth when our heavenly Father made a good creation and that includes people. And then sin enters the picture. But in the midst of sin, our heavenly Father sends a Savior, to save us from our sin and the eternal consequences of it. We haven't destroyed the earth and each other yet, but we are working on it with lying being the new Olympic sport in politics, in the media, and in schools.

Now compare *Reverse Creation* to what was said by African missionaries, Heidi and Rolland Baker. They have a ministry to thousands of orphans in Mozambique and have begun over a thousand churches in Africa. In a letter, Rolland Baker wrote these words: The sparkling edges of the Indian Ocean are rippling gently on the rocky sand before me at low tide here in Pemba. The brilliant noon sun is accenting ribbons of green, turquoise and blue tropical water with intense flashes of reflected light that add dazzle to the shimmering surface. The restful sound of surf is mingling with the rustling of shade trees that form a rich green

canopy over our yard and simple, funky house. From my table on our roof under some African thatch, I look out over grass and flowers at this wide vista of clear, warm, ever-moving water that is Mozambique's coast -- one of the world's last untouched environmental treasures.

I am looking at the glory of the Creator, Who does all things well. His workmanship is superb, in nature and in us. He knows how to glorify Himself, and to protect His honor and reputation in this world. His will is spectacular, joyous and beyond improvement. His Kingdom is the home of righteousness and perfection. His purposes will be accomplished in the earth. He is thrilled with the progress of His Church, and where she is going. The dust, chaff and residual sin of this world do not bring Him down. He is not discouraged and at a loss. He is not just hoping for better things from us, but He is powerfully at work in us, and He will succeed!

Our enemy, Satan, will use every possible device to convince us otherwise. We will give him less attention and Jesus our Savior more. We will not concentrate on weaknesses in ourselves and dark forces of danger on all sides, but on His face. We are sustained by beholding His beauty. We are confident in His Cross. We are satisfied by what He has done. His Gospel is all-sufficient. We will immerse ourselves forever in the river that flows from His throne. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!

We choose His perspective. From another perspective, Heidi and I, along with our whole ministry, have been assaulted relentlessly these four months since our last newsletter. We are exhausted, overextended and overrun by needs, crises, corruption, disappointment and the desperate cry for relief that rises up constantly from the poor of the world. And we cannot

keep up with the demand for spiritual relief that calls for our attention from all over the world.

But His mercies and compassions never fail; they are new every morning. We are never discouraged, for "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" just as St. Paul said. (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

Here in Africa among the poorest of the poor we are seeing revival fueled and sustained by the power of God, in spite of all our weaknesses. Onlookers react in all different ways, and there is always so much to criticize, but at the core of this movement is a white-hot, total abandonment to Jesus and His Kingdom. We will not be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Him. We are advancing. Our weapons are a firm faith, gentleness, peace, patience and a love that cannot be resisted. In Him we cannot lose!

Who is this Lord of hosts, our heavenly Father, Who calls His people to move outward from themselves to others and Who goes with them as they do? He is the mighty Creator of the universe. He made you and me and all that is. (Ps.100:1-3) *Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of his hand.* No matter what happens in the world, God is in control. He asks us to trust Him to get to know Him better and discover how much He loves us and how much we can love Him in return. AMEN