

Allen Pruitt

In chapel for the Kindergarten,
this is the way I tell the story.
 “Everybody close your eyes.
 Alright, now close ‘em real tight.
 And now, take your hands and cover over your eyes.
 It’s pretty dark isn’t it?
Well in the beginning,
 it was dark.
 It was darker than you can even believe.
 It was just God,
 alone,
 in the dark.
 Just God and the darkness.
 Just God and nothing.
And then God said,
 ‘Let there be light.’
 Now open your eyes!
 And there was light
 and it was bright,
 just because God said so.”

And that’s more or less what I believe.
 That’s what I believe about how the world came into being.
 You can have a lot of interesting conversations
 about the physical mechanics of the whole thing,
 but at the base of everything is that belief:
 God made everything with a Word.

All this stuff that we see around us;
everything we’ve got
 - pretty much either God made it
 or we did.

I'll let smarter folks than me figure out the how,
the science of it.
I'm just worried about the why:
because God said so.

We barely have the words for what we mean
when we say that God created the world.
We can barely talk about the why
of all the stuff we see around us everyday.
There's very little we can say about what was going on
before God said, "let there be light."

The Bible gives it a try,
"Now the earth was formless and empty,
darkness was over the surface of the deep,
and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."
It was formless and empty,
but it was covered in water?
Sounds a little contradictory.

But only if you don't like poetry.
For the poet
you can see how water,
something that ancient people's would have been very nervous about,
you can see how water and emptiness come together
and what they're really trying to say
...is chaos.

Now everything was dark
and God was hovering over the chaos.

And God turned chaos into creation,
with just a word.

Chaos is a word I think about a lot.

The world seems very chaotic.

There's your phone always grabbing your attention;

there's the TV full of all kinds of distractions;

the internet where one could spend all one's time

correcting the fallacies of other people's comments.

You can even get a watch

that will buzz you every time you get a message

(in case your phone wasn't distracting enough).

And that's not to even mention the actual tragedy,

the actual problems,

the real dilemmas we face

when our values are challenged

and our spirits are stirred.

It's no wonder that we,

as a people,

seem a nervous wreck about half the time.

It feels like chaos.

How do you order chaos?

How do you create in the middle of a mess,

when it seems like you've got nothing to work with?

Well, the good news is that we don't have to.

We don't have to create with nothing.

And that's good,

because the truth is that we can't.

We can't work with nothing.

But God can.

God did.

And God does.

The story is that God took all the chaos
and all the nothing
and he just spoke the word,
and there it all was.

It was God,
God's generosity,
took nothing,
and made everything.

The story is that he told some people,
"This is your garden,
care for it.
It ain't nothing.
I gave you something,
now see what you can do with it."

And we've been working on that ever since.

But it never feels like enough.
That's our real problem,
feeling like it ain't enough.

Those first two in the garden
- God said, "I give you everything.
It's all yours.
Except that one tree over there."
And they said,
"It's not enough."

And pretty much,
if you boil it down,
"It's not enough"
has been our problem ever since.

There's a thousand stories from Genesis to Revelation,
where we wind up saying,
"It's not enough."

God makes a promise,
and the people can only say,
"It's not enough."

Over the last few weeks we've heard about the Israelites in the desert.

We're hungry

- HERE'S MANNA FROM HEAVEN

- It's not enough.

So the quail fall from the sky.

We need to be able to see God

- HERE'S A PILLAR OF CLOUD BY DAY

AND A PILLAR OF FIRE BY NIGHT

- It's not enough.

Moses went up the hill for a long while,
and he comes back

and the pillar of fire was not enough.

They threw their earrings into the fire
and made a golden calf.

They couldn't touch the fire and the cloud.

So they made a god they could touch
and handle
and control.

“It’s not enough.”

I wonder what would be enough.

I wonder how we could take what God has given us,
what God has given to all of us,
the whole creation

- which is a whole lot more than the nothing
that God had to work with

- I wonder how we could take all that
and help turn chaos into creation.

It starts with remembering that it’s not nothing,
that we’ve got something to work with.

It starts with believing that we have enough.

All of us,
together,
we have enough.

Enough resources to solve our problems,
enough integrity to work on them together,
enough grit to do the hard work of

“Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.”

All together,
we have enough.

And I think what that looks like
...is generosity.

God knew that there was enough,
and so God created,
generously,
with nothing.

Generosity is believing that there is enough.
If we are generous,
we will learn that there is enough.
When we are generous about our disagreements,
we learn that there is enough common ground
upon which we can stand.
When we are generous about forgiveness,
we learn that there is enough of God's love to go around.
When we are generous with our church,
we learn that there is enough room for everyone.
When we are generous with our resources,
we learn that chasing after the fruit of that one more tree,
is the thing that's been getting in our way all along.
When we are generous with our faith,
we learn that picking up a cross
means putting down all that stuff
we've been trying to get rid of all along.

There was a poor old woman who went to the temple.
There were also some rich folks.
They all did the same thing;
they all made their offering.
She dropped in two little coins.
They poured in their folding money.

Jesus said,
"this poor widow has put in more than all of them combined,
because it's not about how much you put in;
it's about how much you hold back."

You can't carry a cross
if you're carrying much of anything else.
Pretty much everything gets swept up into that prayer we pray,
"thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven."

We live generously when we hold nothing back.
It's a risk,
risky as taking up a cross;
I'm not going to lie.

We live in a world that says there isn't enough.
So living like there is enough,
will sometimes leave us vulnerable.

But it turns out
that being vulnerable
is what leads us back to God.

Be vulnerable enough
to try living without every tree in the garden.
Be vulnerable enough
not to turn your gold into god.
Be vulnerable enough
to follow Jesus into places you never thought you'd go.
Be vulnerable;
be generous.
And see if chaos
doesn't turn into creation,
like it has since the beginning.