

Ash Wednesday - February 18, 2015

Text: Genesis 2

Theme: "Life Given By God"

Genesis 2:5-9

*When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

**And so begins life. You can argue that a bolt of lightning hit a mud puddle and created life if you like. That's fine. I can't prove you wrong and you have "so called" science on your side. But, only 5 centuries ago, great men of science believed that four humors, or liquids, composed the human body and that balance between those four humors; blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, was essential for the physical and mental health of a human being. So the chief means of helping a sick person was blood-letting to get the offending humor back in balance. My point is that, science is sometimes right and sometimes wrong, but science is never my God. God is my God and he says he created the earth and all that is in it and he created human life by breathing into a pile of the dirt that he had created.**

**Life means something different to the person who believes that it is all by chance, like a lightning bolt hitting a mud puddle. I might be able to have some effect on my life with good and appropriate choices but all in all, I am at the mercy of the lightning bolt. Such a person thinks of**

**life as being very fragile. One wrong move could topple the whole thing. Every decision must be analyzed, considered from every angle and worried over. Every situation in which I am not in control, which realistically is most situations, is terrifying.**

**But, if you are ready to give up on the lightening and mud puddle theory, and if you want to believe that life was created the way God told us it was created, by God breathing the breath of life into a mound of dirt, his gift to us, then your outlook changes. All life becomes valuable no matter what choices anyone makes and no person is inherently better or worse than another. The ballet that we dance around decisions both good and bad becomes just one scene in a very long production that is life and in the end, both good choices and bad choices bring about God pleasing results because God promises to work good through ALL of our choices.**

**God gives the gift of life and works miracles through it every day through the ups and the downs, he weaves his blessings in because every life has absolute value and finally the only difference is whether we choose to receive his gifts or not. Some will receive them all, greedily gobbling his Word and Sacrament every week and growing stronger each time. Some will receive his gifts occasionally, just enough to stay alive. Some will refuse his gifts and reject him and their faith will die and they will condemn themselves to Hell.**

**This Lenten season we will be celebrating the greedy pigs that we are, gobbling up his Word! We are taking time to celebrate the life God gives us. All of us little balls of dirt have had the breath of God breathed into our bodies. At that moment, we were given whatever number of minutes he chooses to give us to live on this earth before proceeding on to Heaven or Hell. We preoccupy ourselves with worry, regret, judgment and self-loathing but the only question before us is really just what will we do with our time. Will we spend our time glorifying God and rejoicing before him in the gift of life that he has given us? Or will we choose any of the thousands of paths that Satan offers us?**

**It is not complicated once you lay aside your pride. You are a ball of dirt into which God chose to breathe life. Many have pridefully tried to take credit for that life. Some strain their arms patting themselves on the backs for all their accomplishments. Some try to concoct some other way than God lays out for us so that they don't have to owe everything to God. The psalmist suggests this path.**

**"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."**

**God created our lives and he will sustain our lives both now and through eternity. We have no fear and no worry because our physical life is immortal. This time on earth is but one stop along the way filled with blessings and discipline as we grow in our understanding of our God and our love for him who will be with us for eternity. He upholds us with a willing spirit and will never take his Holy Spirit from us.**

**So as we move through Lent this year, we are going to spend time every week considering this amazing gift of life that we have been given. We will look at the challenges, but focus more on the gifts. Above all, we will remember how sacred this life is and that, like all things of God, this life is much greater than what we can see.**