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Series: RBC CAMP 2022

Title: *God Creates and RE-Creates*

Text: Psalm 104, Genesis 1-3

Preacher: Mark Adams

I want to direct your attention to the quilt hanging to my left. Our own Willie and Tina Price have loaned it to us to display and I am so thankful because it is a wonderful way for us to remember that today is a celebration of Juneteenth. If I remember correctly this is the second year this has been a national holiday, but it's the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery in the United States---which happened on June 19, 1865---when Major General Gordon Granger's Union soldiers sailed into Galveston, Texas with news the war had ended and that all slaves in the U.S. were free---an announcement finally reaching the last slaves in the U.S. two years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. By the way, in spite of the fact that it took Texas so long to acknowledge the Emancipation Proclamation---I think they were the first state to make Juneteenth a state holiday in 1980.

The Museum of the Bible has a special celebration exhibit of Juneteenth and I'm sure it would be worth the Metro Ride to see and help you rejoice in this very important holiday.

This quilt is a replica---the original hangs in the Smithsonian Museum of American History. It's a fitting reminder of this national holiday because the individual who made it---Harriet Powers, was born into slavery in 1837. After the Civil War she was freed and she and her husband, Armstead, were able to buy land and have a farm. I believe Harriet Armistead raised nine children there.

Now, Harriet's original quilt was first seen by the public at the Clark County Cotton Fair in 1886. And at the time an "expert" on quilts named Jennie Smith offered to buy it---but Henrietta told her it was not for sale for any price. However, four years later the Powers family were having hard times and Armstead suggested she contact Mrs. Smith---to see if she was still interested in purchasing the quilt for ten dollars. Mrs. Smith said she would love to buy the quilt but could only afford \$5---the equivalent of about \$175 dollars today---but even though it was worth much, much, more---under the encouragement of her financially strapped husband Henrietta agreed. Before handing the quilt over---Harriet explained the symbolism of each panel.

Mrs. Smith later said, *"I have spent my whole life in the South and am perfectly familiar with 30 patterns of quilts---but I had never seen an original design, and never a living creature portrayed in patchwork. The scenes on the quilt were Biblical."* And they are---which is why it is called a "Bible Quilt."

If you come up close enough, after the service, to read the explanations---you can see each panel tells a different story from the Scripture---the creation, the fall, Cain's murder of Abel, Jacob's vision of the stairway to Heaven, Jesus' baptism where the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. But my favorite is the one in the lower left-hand corner where she illustrates Jesus' crucifixion. You'll note that Jesus and the man crucified on his right have sort of a glowing light coming from their heads, indicating that this man on the right is the thief who repented of his sin and asked Jesus to remember him. In my mind the quilt is like a Gospel Tract that you could use to tell the story of God's great love and I don't doubt that Harriet used it that way many times.

I am so grateful to Willie and Tina for allowing us to display this replica because not only is it appropriate for today's national celebration of Juneteenth---it's also a great kick-off for this year's RBC Camp. You see, our children will be studying many of the Bible stories that are illustrated on Harriet's quilt---including the Creation, Jesus' death and resurrection, and even the Holy Spirit. You see, in my text this morning I want us to read some of the Scripture that is tomorrow's Bible story. And I'm referring to Psalm 104. It's a psalm of David---and in it he shares his perspective the creation of this world and the universe that surrounds it. We don't have time to read it all---so follow along on the screens as I read selected parts. If able, let's all stand in respect for God's Word as it is read.

Selections from Psalm 104

5 – *[God], You set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.*

6 - *You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.*

7 - *But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of Your thunder they took to flight;*

8 - *they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place You assigned for them.*

9 - *You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the Earth.*

10 - *He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains.*

11 - *They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.*

12 - *The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches.*

13 - *He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of His work.*

14 - *He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth:*

15 - *wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.*

19 - *He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.*

33 - *I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.*

Now as a way of summing up David’s creation account, read with me Genesis 1:1 where it says, ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”***

These last ten words that we read together---and the story behind them as told by King David-----understand---this is important stuff. I’m glad to know this is the FIRST Bible story our campers will hear---because---without the story of God creating the world the rest of Bible stories they will hear would be like the last acts of a play without the first act, or Top Gun 2 without Top Gun 1. All of Scripture---everything our kids will study this week is built on this foundational truth---that God created the universe and everything in it---including the planet we live on. It all began with God.

I want to hang our study of this fact on three points. The first is one I’ve already mentioned.

1.) **God CREATED.**

Note that in both creation accounts---the one in Genesis and here in Psalm 104---the focus is on the CREATOR. Let me put it this way---before we were here---before the universe existed there was only GOD.

Back in 1996 astronomers focused the lens of the Hubble Space Telescope on a small and utterly black patch of space right next to the Big Dipper. They left the shutter open for ten days.

This one exposure revealed 3,000 formerly unseen galaxies out beyond our own Milky Way galaxy. Each of these 3,000 new galaxies contained hundreds of billions of stars, planets, moons, comets, and asteroids. Astronomers have continued to do this with the Hubble---and in the process have discovered that there are over ONE HUNDRED BILLION galaxies out there in the universe!

But the Bible tells us it wasn’t always that way. In a beginning that had not beginning there was ONLY God! At some point in the distant past, God CREATED it all---the stars---the planets---animals---people. GOD created everything! In fact, if you would take a pencil and circle the word, “God” each time it is used in the first two chapters of Genesis and then count your circles---you would come to a tally of 46. My point is in both this first creation account---and in David’s psalm, GOD is the primary subject. As we just read: ***“In the beginning GOD created!”***

Like all seminarians I took a semester of Hebrew. That was 42 years ago---and the only verse I remember are these five words in English---which are only three in Hebrew: ***“Bereshit bara Elohim.”*** --- ***“In the beginning GOD created.”*** But I remember something else. That middle word, ***“bara”*** is the Hebrew word for ***“create”*** and it is a word that is ONLY used in reference to God. Only GOD ***“BARAS.”*** You see, ***“Bara”*** means to bring into existence that which was not in existence before. It is to create something from nothing.

Here in Genesis, Moses was teaching the Hebrews who had only heard Egyptian nonsense about multiple gods---and later in Psalm 104 David was rejoicing in---the fact that God is not PART of nature. He CREATED it---ALL of it from nothing.

I have to stop at this point and ask you a question. *“Do you believe those first five words of the Bible? Do you believe that **‘In the beginning—GOD CREATED.’**”* Can I get a show of hands? Great! Well, I have to point out that if you raised your hand---if you believe those five words---if you believe the first sentence of the Bible---if you accept David’s psalm as fact---you should not balk at anything else the Bible says. I mean, if a Being could create all this out of nothing, then a worldwide flood where only Noah and his family survived---a man being swallowed by a fish and living three days in its stomach---the Red Sea parting---the blind being given sight---the dead being raised back to life---Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000---His walking on water---His resurrection from the dead---if you believe the miracle of the first sentence of this story all the other miracles we read about in God’s Word are no big deal! And that’s what the Bible tells us! God created it all. He created the universe—and everything in it—from nothing.

Of course, that brings to mind the THEORY of evolution---and I’m no scientist but one reason I personally don’t believe this theory is the fact that it cannot scientifically explain how you get something from nothing. Someone had to start it all. Something can’t evolve from nothing.

In fact, let’s stop and talk science a bit. Science is defined as, *“systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation.”* Based on this definition, the theory evolution is not really science. It is just a guess. I mean, in fact, in spite of what you might hear—true scientific *“observation and experimentation”* does not support this controversial theory. For example, the fossil record doesn’t match up with what evolution says happened. Instead of a slow evolutionary development of life---all the bones that have been dug up show an almost instantaneous “explosion” of life---just as the Bible teaches.

Here’s some more “science stuff.” Science tells us that the universe is made up of five essential ingredients—space, matter, energy, time, and intelligence. Well, all five of these are found in the first verse of the Bible:

- **“In the BEGINNING”** --- time.
- **“In the beginning GOD”** --- intelligence.
- **“In the beginning God CREATED”** --- energy.
- **“In the beginning God created the HEAVENS** --- this is space---that emptiness that Captain Kirk has to fly through to get to stars, planets.
- **“In the beginning God created the heavens AND THE EARTH”** --- matter.

Right here in the very opening statement of the Bible we have these five essential properties of which the universe consists, summarized, succinctly, in a ten-word sentence---a sentence written thousands of years before scientists made this discovery.

Here’s just one more bit of scientific knowledge. Astrophysicists have found that there are over 60 criteria that are necessary for life to exist here on earth. I won’t list all 60---just a sampling---but the point is life could not exist or form if any ONE of the following were true:

- Earth’s rotation being faster or slower
- If we were 2% closer to the sun.
- If the Earth was smaller or bigger
- If the Earth’s crust was thinner or thicker
- If the Oxygen/nitrogen ratio was greater or less
- If Starbucks went out of business (just kidding)

I could go on, but this creates a dilemma. To believe that all this just came together by itself---to believe all these factors just lined up accidentally---this requires faith in the impossible. Here’s a word picture to help you see what I’m saying: If someone told you, they could pick a winning lottery number out of the air—and then did it—you’d be impressed---and rightly so because, the odds of doing that are 1 in 10 to the 7th power, which is why every once in a while---one player in

ten million lottery players wins the lottery. The other nine million, nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and nine fools are referred to as “LOSERS.”

Now suppose this one in ten million winner did it TWICE in a row. That’s one chance in a hundred thousand billion. If they did this, you would go from being impressed—to being SUSPICIOUS. You’d rightly assume something is up---this guy is cheating. He must have some sort of inside knowledge.

Well, the odds of evolution being true are like someone randomly winning not one—not two—but thousands of lotteries in a row. It is statistically possible—but a better word to use would be to say it is statistically ABSURD. The probability of a single cell forming on its own by evolution through limitless time, particles, and events---has been calculated by a Swiss mathematician named Charles Eugene Guy. He found that the odds are one chance in 10 to the 160th power. This is a number too big to calculate. Statisticians point out that anything beyond 1 to the 50th power is beyond reason, essentially impossible—ABSURD.

Plus where did that first ONE cell come from?

My point is for evolution to happen would require a miracle. Even Charles Darwin said, *“To suppose that the human eye could have been formed by natural selection seems, I freely confess, ABSURD in the highest degree.”*

So GOD created this universe. Say it with me again, ***“In the beginning God created.”*** Good! All that God created---some of which is illustrated on Henrietta’s quilt---is amazing!

But while the creation of the heavens and the earth and the other one hundred plus billion galaxies out there is an impressive masterpiece---it is not the MOST impressive masterpiece in God’s creation. Don’t get the “big head” but you and I are! We are the pinnacle of God’s creation.

Randy Frazee writes, *“Mount Everest---the Grand Canyon---the stark beauty of the Sahara---the cascading elegance of Victoria falls---combine these and thousands of other jewels of His creative powers and you’re not even close to identifying the CORE passion of God. Those are just the DISPLAY cases to highlight His REAL work of art.”*

And Frazee is right. God’s REAL work of art—the BEST part of His “quilt” is MANKIND—people like us. In fact, science shows that the world was MADE for---specifically DESIGNED for---PEOPLE like us---but there’s more to it than that. God made US—PEOPLE—MANKIND to enjoy and love. We are designed to walk through life in relationship with our Creator! If you don’t know Him and feel like something is missing in your life, that’s it. God is missing! We are made in His image—made to relate to Him in a way no other part of His creation can.

A little girl once asked her mom, *“Where did people come from?”* and the mom said, *“God made man. Then He made woman and they had children.”* Then the little girl went in the living room and asked her dad the same question, *“Where did people come from?”* He said, *“Well, many years ago there were monkeys and humans evolved from those monkeys.”* She went back to her mom and said, *“I’m confused you said God created---dad said we evolved from monkeys? Who’s right?”* The mom said, *“It is very simple I explained my side of the family. He explained his.”*

All kidding aside---the idea that people like you and me evolved from monkeys is a joke. I mean, the creation account shows---and science does too---that humanity is a separate creation from the animal world. As Paul puts it in 1st Corinthians 15:39, ***“All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another.”***

Back in 2013 *TIME* magazine’s cover story was: *“How We Became Humans.”* The article reported that that chimps and humans share 98.77% of their DNA. You and I are 98.77% chimpanzee, did you know that?

And of course, there are some things we have in common with chimps. We have two arms, two legs, five fingers and five toes. Personally, I can see our shared DNA in my big ears and love of bananas. All kidding aside, the article in *TIME* said something very cool about all this:

“That 1.33% difference is so different that human achievements of agriculture, language, art, music, technology, and philosophy---make it ridiculous so see human beings as chimpanzees in business suits.”

Even *TIME* admits that we are VERY different from chimps. We didn’t evolve from monkeys. By the way, you and I also share 30% of our genes with daffodils. That means I am almost one third daffodil---which is why I am so good at using flowery speech in my sermons!

My point is mankind is DIFFERENT from all created things. Only we are made in the image of God---and we were that from the beginning. Our PURPOSE has always been to relate to Him—to work with Him. And God’s plan is for us to live forever with Him in a paradise called Heaven.

Isn’t that an exciting thought!? I mean, do those first five words of the Bible take on new significance for you today? They should—because they say you and I didn’t just happen. GOD CREATED PEOPLE like you and me! He CHOSE to bring you and me into the world for His pleasure and to this day He yearns to be WITH you---to walk beside you and experience all of life with you. He wants to help you through the deepest valleys—the tough times of life. And He also wants to celebrate with you the highest mountains—the great joys of life---God rejoices with us as we celebrate JUNETEENTH. He rejoices when any of His highest creation is freed from slavery or injustice.

Now of course, this meaningful relationship with God that He designed us to enjoy—where we share the good and the bad with Him—it requires RECIPROCITY. In order for the relationship between God and mankind to be real, it had to be a relationship which each side freely CHOSE to enter. So, man had to be free to choose NOT to enter into the relationship---free to choose to break it. And that leads us to my second point.

2.) Man SINNED.

You see, the 3rd chapter of Genesis tells us the sad truth that the first people, Adam and Eve, used their God-given free will to break their relationship with God by disobeying His one law.

It’s hinted at in the first panel of Henrietta’s quilt where you see that big snake with legs.

Theologians call this “*the FALL*” but I agree with Brian Harbour who says that a better phrase would be, “*the COLLAPSE of mankind*”---because with the exception of creation, the entrance of SIN is the most far-reaching event in the history of the universe. It was a COLLAPSE indeed.

Let’s review how it happened. First God made Adam. Then He made Eve as His helpmate—his equal partner in life. Now—we don’t know why God made man FIRST. Some female Bible Scholars say that God made man and then thought, “*I can do better!*” but of course that’s not true! NO---God made Eve to compliment Adam—and vice versa.

God gave the first two humans a beautiful garden to live in—the Garden of Eden. It had everything they needed to literally live happily ever after. There was only one rule---they could not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That’s it. They could eat anything else in the garden---go wherever they wanted. God would relate to them---literally walk with them through this paradise on earth. Can you imagine how wonderful that must have been!?

Now for some time—we don’t know how long—but for some time, Adam and Eve OBEYED this one rule. They lived in perfect harmony with God and could have done this forever. But then that horrible day came when they ate of the forbidden fruit and this is where the story introduces the antagonist—the evil one—Satan---our adversary, who is also pictured in a couple panels of Henrietta’s quilt. The Bible tells us Satan came to kill and destroy and we see that stuff starting in Genesis 3.

Let’s review the TACTICS Satan used on that horrible day.

- **First, he QUESTIONED God's Word.**

In Genesis 3:1 Satan said to Eve, *"Did God REALLY say, 'you must not eat from ANY tree of the garden?'"* And of course, Satan was not seeking information with this question. He knew they could eat of all trees but one. No, Satan was making an accusation---he was claiming that God was unkind in withholding this fruit from mankind. He was questioning the fairness of God's one rule.

- **Next, he DENIED God's Word.**

In verse 4 he said to Eve, *"You will not surely die!" "Don't believe it Eve! You won't die if you eat that fruit. It's just a trick God is trying to pull on you. You can do what you want and nothing will happen to you!"*

- **Finally, Satan REVERSED God's Word.**

Look at Genesis 3:5. He said, *"God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* In other words, Satan says, *"You won't die if you eat that. In fact, you'll begin to really LIVE!"*

By the way, Satan still uses these same tactics! He still tempts us to doubt the truth of the teachings of God's Word. He still tells us there is no harm in ignoring God's loving laws. He still tells us real life is found by those who disobey God. Well, Eve eats and gives to Adam and he eats---they BOTH disobey God. They both break the relationship. And from that moment on the world has never been the same.

Think of it. In that horrible moment GUILT appeared for the first time. Adam and Eve knew they had done something wrong, and they felt something they had never felt before---regret and shame! Then another horrible thing happened. They felt FEAR. God came to walk with them, and they HID from their all-loving Creator. Their relationship was shattered indeed.

Now when we read this part of Bible we all like to say, *"If I had been in their shoes, I wouldn't have eaten of the fruit! What a couple idiots! How could they do something so stupid!"* But privately we all know better. We know all the times we KNEW not to sin---but we did anyway. And this shows that the decision to disobey God didn't STAY with Adam and Eve. It has passed down in our DNA from generation to generation---from them---all the way down to us---and the children who will attend camp this week!

The Bible says that after Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, they had children. Their first child was a son named CAIN---it's in the 2nd panel of Henrietta's quilt---and we see the first evidence of this "DNA shift" in his behavior. Remember? Cain murdered his brother ABEL which is seen in the 4th panel of Henrietta's quilt. From that point on things go from bad to worse.

And that leads to my third point.

3.) God PROMISED a RE-CREATION.

You would think that the fall or the COLLAPSE of mankind God would finally give up on us---but He didn't. You see, regardless of our sin, God still wanted to be with us---and---as our kids will learn this week---throughout the Bible we see God working out His plan to fix things---to repair the damage sin caused to His greatest masterpiece---people like you and me---to RE-create us. And we a glimmer of His plan way back in the third chapter of Genesis.

I don't know if you've ever seen the apocalyptic film, *The Road*. It's a depressing story of life on earth after a nuclear holocaust---focusing on two sad survivors: a father and his son who wander around trying to find food and water. The movie is dark---it feels like it's filmed in black and white---but that changes for just a few seconds when this dad and his son find a backyard bomb shelter that someone had built. The door is hidden under debris and once they move all that stuff and find the door, they open it. As they descend for just a second or two automatic lights flicker on---you see color---then they go off because the batteries were almost dead. But that one or two second glimpse of light in that two-hour dark movie---it makes your heart leap---it gives you hope that the darkness would end.

And that's the kind of glimpse we find in Genesis 3:15---which you could say comes after the darkness of the fall---only this glimpse didn't end. The Bible is full of glimpses---prophecies of Jesus' coming. Most theologians call this first glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel as, "*the first Gospel*"---because it's the first Messianic prophecy---the first time God the Father talks about His Son, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, Who would come to save us from the darkness of our sin. God says to Satan, "***I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head and you will strike His heel.***" This phrase, "*the offspring of a woman*" is a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus. He would come from a woman---without the seed of a man. God Himself would be His Father! And the "***striking His heel***" phrase is a reference to the cross. As our campers will learn this Thursday, on that old rugged cross, Satan would bruise the Messiah---but on Easter Sunday, Jesus would crush Satan, and deal a death blow to his cause.

And then fifty days later---God sent the Holy Spirit to empower us so that we can join Him in His work---telling others about Jesus---sharing with them the fact that by grace, through faith in Jesus---we can be forgiven and our relationship with God---the one all people long for---can be restored. As Christians we are God's NEW creation.

LET US PRAY