

Rev. Jerry Deck
Genesis 1:26 – 31

August 17, 2014

Roots
The Beginning

Last week I talked about the fact that our oldest daughter, Shaughnessy, was headed off to Kindergarten this past week and how that was a bit difficult for us. Well, she did start and while her mom and middle sister did not handle it all that well, she seemed to enjoy it thoroughly. This week I did a lot more reflecting and I remembered that when she was two years old I was walking with her in a grocery store parking lot and I thought to myself, "These two years have gone by pretty slowly and we still have three more years until kindergarten...I've got tons of time." Well now, like most of you, I now know that we don't have tons of time.

Anyway, I tend to be a fairly nostalgic person and I like to keep a lot of things from my past. Now Megan would call me a "pack rat", but I like to say that I simply have a heart. And so I was intrigued that this week as I continued to think about Shaughnessy that I came across a sermon that I had written and gave one day before she was born. As the Spirit would have it, it was written not just in response to Shauny's imminent birth, but as a response to Genesis 1 and 2. Now, I don't do this often, but I decided that I would read the letter this morning, though I promise you that next week I will say nothing about Shaughnessy

Dear . . . You,

May 17, 2009

Let me begin by apologizing for using you as a part of my sermon today. Actually, let me go ahead and apologize right now for all the times I will use you as a part of my sermon in the future! I will do my best to not embarrass you and hopefully you will be a good sport like your mom.

Well, I have to say it's been very hard to think about a sermon this week. The truth is there's been a lot going on. Your mom and I have been doing our best to get everything ready for you: cleaning your clothes, putting the last touches on your room, installing a car seat, watching a DVD to see how we can get you to stop crying, talking on the phone to your grandparents, and having a nice dinner with your mom for what might be the last time for quite a while.

Of course it hasn't really been all those things that have made it hard to write a sermon. What's really made it hard is the excitement of knowing that you are coming. As we sat at the doctor's office last Monday and he said that you'd be coming in one week, all of a sudden things became very real. To think about everything changing in seven days. To think that in a week that which had been thought about and hoped for and frightened of and imagined would finally be here. I knew that the beginning, the real beginning was about to well . . . begin. And I am incredibly excited.

I am excited to kiss what I'm sure will be your chubby cheeks, to see your first steps and to hear your first words (remember Dada is easier to say than Mama). I am excited to go to your ball games and your concerts and to get your report cards full of "A's," right?! I'm excited to travel different places with you and to experience life together. I'm excited to teach you and to be taught by you. But most of all I'm excited to simply be with you. I've waited for this for a long time, but it's really hit me just this week how incredibly excited I am that you are coming.

And as I'm sure I've told you many, many times we did a lot of work to prepare for your arriving on the scene. With our friends we have painted walls, tore out carpets, put in boards, tore out those boards when we realized we miscut them, put them back in, tore them out when we realized. . . you get the point. We also, with the help of our friends, have gotten clothes and blankets and a mattress and toys and blankets and a stroller and gift cards and blankets and well, let's just put it this way, we will be writing thank you cards for a long time.

We did all this even though we had never seen you, didn't know what your name was going to be, didn't know if you were a boy or a girl, didn't know if we'd like you or not (I'm sure we do), didn't know if you'd be cute or not (really how could you not be). We did all this preparation, got so much help from so many people, simply because we were excited about you. And it is only after all that and as we sit here hours away from when we will first lay our eyes on you that I realized you have already begun to teach me something.

What this whole waiting and preparing for you has helped me to see is that as many times as I've heard the story of the creation of this world, as many times as I've read the first couple chapters of Genesis, I have never really seen this incredible story as the expectation story that it is.

That God was doing everything He could to prepare this world so that it would be just right for those first humans long ago all the way until you. I mean think about all He did. God gave us the sun and the moon as a great nightlight. He separated the dry land from the water which gave us the great beaches where you love to play. He made sure that we had all our fruits and vegetables (okay, I realize you may not think that's so great right now but some day you will). He made certain that there were different seasons so that you could smell the flowers in the spring, play at the pool in the summer, jump in the leaves in the fall and build great snowmen in the winter. Then he put birds in the air so grandma Deck could point out to you what kind each is and animals in the water so you and grandpa Selby could go fishing.

And then God decided that it wasn't quite enough and so He made sure we had animals on the ground and thank God he did. Otherwise we wouldn't have our dog J.P. whom you love to torture and you couldn't go to grandpa Deck's farm to play with the goats, the llama, the cow, the bull and whatever else he might now have. Can you even imagine a world without those things! Well neither could God. And so he did all these

things in preparation because He wanted to make sure that that this world would be just right for us.

And I have never appreciated so much as I do now that when God created this world he didn't do it all in one fell swoop. Just as your room wasn't prepared in a flash (have I mentioned before how much work that was?) neither did God just snap His fingers and everything came in place immediately. It took time. And as I imagine this scene anew I see God getting more and more excited each day. As the world slowly began to take shape I see him getting louder and louder, not because he's angry, but because he could hardly contain himself with the joy of what he knew was coming. In fact, I think that may have been why he didn't rest until after everything was finished. Just like your mom and I will be tonight, just as you will be the night before Christmas, God couldn't rest because He was too excited about what was coming. Too excited about these new people who would soon join him in this world. And I had never thought about it like that before?

To be honest I think that perhaps too many of us don't think about. That God's creation of each of us was never an accident, but was very intentional. And you can see that all around us, if we but open our eyes and our ears to the ways that he has prepared this earth for us. Sometimes we adults get way too busy and miss the signs that reveal just how excited God is that we are here. And when we do this we end up missing the clear signs that show how much God loves us, how excited He is that we are here and how much he has prepared for our arrival. You can hear it in the sound of birds chirping in the morning or drops of rain crashing to the ground. You can see it in the bright colors of a sunset or the new leaves that burst forth each spring.

You see what you cannot forget is that not only are these things for us to enjoy for the great gifts they are, but they are also signs to us of how excited God is that we are here. They should move us with their beauty, but they should also move us out in order to help others to see how God has prepared this incredible world for them.

My hope for you on this eve of your arrival is that you will come to understand just how much you mean to God. That as you go out and explore this world as children are so apt to do, that your excitement of what you discover, the leaping of a frog or the squirminess of a worm, will not only confirm for you how amazing and creative God is, but also how incredibly excited God is that you are a part of this world.

And I hope that your delight in all of these seemingly simple things will awaken all of us to that which surrounds us, speaking to God's enduring love and care. That we might never forget God's passion and excitement for us his children.

I thank God for you on this day and know that we both eagerly await your arrival. I love you.

Dad

If there is one thing I want you to hear out from this creation story, it is that God loves you so much, is so excited about you, that he created this world for you. I know that amidst our own self-doubt, our own times of falling short, what others may say or not say, it can be easy for us to forget this. But each time we walk outside and feel the warmth of the sun or see the beauty of the stars, they are reminders to us of how excited God is that we are here and the work God has done to prepare a place for us.

And as we go through the stories of the Bible in this next year, it is important that you remember that these stories are simply further testimonies and reminders of the love we see in the creation story. So whether it's the story of creation or God's call to Abraham or Moses or saving the Israelites or Daniel in the Lion's Den or Jesus' coming as a baby to Bethlehem or the healing of a little girl or showing the love of God to the likes of wee Zacchaeus or Saul turned Paul, they are all reminders that God loves us. Yes, sure the Bible is full of stories about what we are called to do and who Christ wants us to become, but none of that begins until after this foundational story that God loves us, well before we can do anything for him.

And as a staff we talked about the importance of remembering this pivotal story, especially as we begin this new series. We thought it would be a good idea to have something tangible, that we could see each day as a reminder of God's love first and foremost. Of course, we see something tangible each day as we go outside and are surrounded by nature, however, truth be known we unfortunately become quite oblivious to it. So, we thought that perhaps a good sign, a good reminder, would be to have a piece of clay. On the one hand, clay is a foundational substance earth, of God's creation and so when we see it we are reminded of the ground upon which we walk and build and live. A ground prepared for us by the almighty. Of course, the clay is also a great reminder of the substance with which God made Adam and us. A reminder of the fact that not only has the ground and seas and stars been created by a loving God for us, but that we have been created by God out of love, hope, and delight.

And so I am going to encourage you to come forward in the next few minutes and to get a piece of clay and then to take it home and put it some place where each day you are sure to see it. Sure to be reminded of this creation story. Sure to be reminded of how God has created this world out of love for us. Sure to be reminded that each one of us, no matter who we are or what we have done or left undone is loved by the Almighty God.