Sermon for the Second Sunday of Christmas

January 2, 2022

John 1:1-18

 Most of my yarn is in bins in our guest bedroom. We put up two shelves in a nook, and I put the bins on those shelves.

 A few weeks ago, one of those shelves fell off the wall, sending half of my yarn flying…and forcing me to realize that my yarn stash has grown out of control.

 When I first began to knit, I bought yarn and I knitted it. At some point along the way, I began to collect yarn faster than I can knit it. It is no longer what anybody would consider organized, other than the fact that everything in each of the bins is yarn.

 Every now and then, though, some yarn comes out of a bin and is knit up into something — a hat, a blanket, a scarf.

 I like to think of this as an act of creation out of chaos.

 Genesis 1 tells us that, in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void — essentially, chaos. As God spoke, creation took place. God creating order out of chaos.

 Eventually, Genesis tells us, God rested.

 This should not suggest to us that God was done creating.

 It was just the beginning of the story.

 And that story continues today.

 When John the Evangelist uses those same words — “in the beginning” — we’re meant to hold the Genesis stories of creation in our minds as we read.

 Which got me to wondering… What if the *entire Bible* is the beginning of the story of creation?

 Not just Genesis 1, but *all* of Scripture?

 And not just a story of the *beginning* of creation, but the *beginning* of God revealing who God *is* to that which God creates?

 Because that tells us that God’s work of creation, God’s work of self-revelation is ongoing. God declared what was created good, but by no means complete.

Creation is a work in progress.

Throughout Scripture, we get these wonderful moments when a little bit more of who God is, what God is all about, gets revealed.

 We see God’s compassion and mercy in the story of the first man and woman being sent out of the Garden of Eden. God tells them that their disobedience will have repercussions, but God provides for them.

 In the story of the Exodus, we see God invite humans into the work God does to bring justice to creation. Moses and Aaron become the defenders of the people of God. And in the wilderness, the people are given teachings about how to live while they are being formed into a community of faith.

 In the story of Jonah, we see God call a prophet to speak not to Israelites, but to their enemies. We see God decide to not punish the Ninevites for their sins, and inviting Jonah to see things from God’s perspective.

 In each of these stories, in *all* of the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, we see God’s self-revelation: what God values, what God’s characteristics are, what God’s intent for creation is. We see compassion and mercy and justice. We see the ways God teaches and offers consolation. We see concern for the well-being of not just a segment of people, but *all people.*

We see light shining in the darkness, growing a little brighter with every encounter the people have with God.

 Most of all, we see love, the love of a creator for the created.

 Two of my favorite verses come from Isaiah 43. The first is, “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” And, a little while later: “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

 God’s work of creation is ongoing. We’re invited to not just notice this, but participate in the work God is doing.

 John the Evangelist reminds us of this in the introduction to his Gospel, with the inclusion of the other John.

 In this Gospel, he’s not John the Baptizer. He’s John the Witness. John the Pointer. He doesn’t baptize Jesus. But he says, “I came baptizing for this reason, that ***he*** might be revealed to Israel,” and “I myself have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

John the Witness’s task was to point people *away* from himself and *to* God, so they could see that God was doing a new thing.

 And that thing was the incarnation, God come to dwell among us as fully human and fully divine.

 John could have accepted some of the glory. Could have relished the attention he got for being the guy in the wilderness everyone wanted to see. The guy who ate locusts and honey, and called people a brood of vipers.

 Instead, John directed the people’s attention to Jesus, to the Son of God.

 He did so in order that the glory would be pointed where it ought to be — to God. To the new thing that God was doing in the world.

 And it was a pretty big thing.

 God become incarnate, taking on human form, so that God could further reveal to us who God is, what God is all about.

 But also? So God could continue the work of creation, bringing God’s good creation closer to fullness. Closer to what God intends creation to be.

 The incarnation reveals to us the expansiveness of God’s commitment to humanity, to all of creation. The extravagance of God’s mercy.

 God coming into the world is another step in God’s work to make everything right in the end. To bring order out of chaos.

 John pointed to Jesus. Jesus pointed to God, showing us what God is all about: love, mercy, compassion, abundance.

 *That’s* what we get when God dwells among us.

 As we begin this new year, we’re invited to ask ourselves where we see God’s creative energies at work. What we are hoping to see God make new this year.

 And how we will point to the light shining in the darkness.

 Because our sacred work is to bear as much light as possible, pointing to, witnessing to who Jesus is. Pointing to God dwelling among us, full of grace and truth, and bringing love into the chaos of our broken, hurting world.

 We do this work, trusting that, no matter how bleak things feel, how tired we are, how hard it is to be entering the 3rd year of this pandemic…trusting that the light shines. And darkness will never overcome it. Thanks be to God.