

TRINITY SUNDAY June 4, 2023

Introduction for the day-

Let's choose imagination as the portal to today's experience in faith. We will read the first chapter of Genesis as poetry—that's how it was meant to be read in the first place. May that lead us to imagine God's creative and exuberant ways...and may that imagination shape how we relate to God, each other, and to creation itself.

GENESIS 1:1-24a

READER ONE 1 When God began to create[a] the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

4 And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

Reader 2: And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." **7** So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. **8** God called the dome Sky.

Reader 2 And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.

READER 2: And God saw that it was good.

ALL: **And God saw that it was good.**

11 Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.

Reader 2: **And God saw that it was good.**

ALL: **And God saw that it was good.**

Reader 2 **13** *And there was evening and there was morning,
the third day.*

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, **15** and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. **16** God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. **17** God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, **18** to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.

Reader 2: **And God saw that it was good.**

ALL: **And God saw that it was good.**

Reader 2 **19** *And there was evening and there was morning,
the fourth day.*

20 And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” **21** So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind.

Reader 2: **And God saw that it was good.**

ALL: **And God saw that it was good.**

22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

Reader 2 **23** *And there was evening and there was morning,
the fifth day.*

24 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. **25** God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind.

Reader 2: **And God saw that it was good.**

ALL: **And God saw that it was good.**

READER ONE **26** Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

27

So God created humans in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” **29** God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

Reader 2: **And God saw that it was good.**

ALL: And God saw that it was good.

READER ONE **3**1 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

READER 2 *And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

READER ONE 2.1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. 4These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

SERMON

The priestly writers who gave us Genesis one invite us to imagine and reflect on what the creator might be like...after all, there are two different accounts of creation in the first two chapters of the Bible. It's not like someone was on hand to transcribe events or to prepare a tech manual for scientists to develop theories of the cosmos.

Imagine chaos without form or purpose. Professor Vanessa Lovelace from Lancaster Seminary specializes in Old Testament and the Hebrew language. Turns out she's a bit of a Star Wars geek too. She imagines the jumble and disorder resembling a scene from Episode II Attack of the Clones—a couple of clips from You Tube of Obi Wan Kenobi landing on the planet Kamino, a watery swirly, stormy nearly formless place helped me appreciate Dr. Lovelace's imagining what primordial chaos might be like.

Putting her professor of Hebrew language hat back on, Professor Lovelace asserts that the wind or Spirit of God is no gentle breeze—imagine Holy, gale force wind colliding with chaos.

God's intention described as speech transforms chaos into the coherence of the created world—And Rhythm! There's Rhythm! We entered into the rhythm by reading Genesis one together—God speaks, day and night are partitioned, landmass separates from water, and life emerges—Evening and morning...one day and another...All along the way God sees Good—moral good, aesthetic good, cosmic harmony good.

At the sight of it all, God rejoices and exults in the Good-ness of it all.

Where can such imagination take us? The suggestions are far from an exhaustive list...

imagine that primeval infusion of gale force spirit into the swirling chaos

when scripture speaks of liberation of people,

when God's Word becoming flesh,

when Jesus calms stormy seas,

when earth shakes and temple curtains rip on Good Friday,

when earth rattles and stones roll aside on resurrection day

and when the Spirit of Pentecost poured out on EVERYONE.

Visualize God's exuberant end zone dance at creation's dawn when when you're gardening...golfing...or camping.

When humans violate one another and when cacophonous voices tell us some are more equal than others, and that discrimination is justified-remember God's fierce cyclone of spirit whooshing in and God's exclamation of joy at the form, harmony and goodness of it all. Imagine. Imagine...and let imagination propel you as you think, speak, act, and God willing rejoice.

Vanessa Lovelace is Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster Pennsylvania. Her publications include *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse* co-edited with Gay L. Byron, "Jonah" in *The Oxford Handbook of The Minor Prophets* edited by Julia O'Brien, and "The Deuteronomistic History: Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Nation" in *The Hebrew Bible: Feminist and Intersectional Perspectives* edited by Gale A. Yee.