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How to Make a World With a Word

Genesis 1:26-2:3

May 27, 2007

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[Song “My Own Prison”]

[Twilight Zone Movie Clip, Scene 1:]

Ethel: Go ahead, Anthony. Do it! Do it!

Anthony: Do what, Ethel?

Ethel: Now do you realize you'll never get out of here? You think it was an accident you came here? He made it happen. He brought you here, just like he brought us here and kept us here. Just the way he'll keep *you* here. Maybe he'll get mad at you like he did to his real sister, and cripple you and take away your mouth so you won't be able to yell at him any more. Or maybe he'll do to you what he did to his real mother and father.

Anthony: Time for you to go now, Ethel.

Lady: Anthony, don't!

Anthony: It's a big surprise. I just made it up. I'm wishing you into cartoon land. [Ethel disappears.] I told you cartoons are good. [Ethel appears on the TV screen in a cartoon.]

[Twilight Zone Movie Clip, Scene 2]

Anthony: I hate this house. I hate everything about it. I wish it away. I wish it *all* away! [Anthony closes his eyes. People disappear.]

Lady: Anthony, where are we?

Anthony: Nowhere.

That was Anthony in *Twilight Zone: The Movie*. Anthony is a young boy who creates his own world, for Anthony can get whatever he wants with just a word. It's obvious that what Anthony most deeply wants is love, but he's having a hard time knowing how to want what he really wants.

So Anthony wishes his parents away, wishes his sister's mouth away, and wishes his other sister into cartoon land. He's wished all those people into his house with him, but they're all enslaved in fear of him and so unable to give love to him.

Finally, Anthony wishes them all away and then wishes himself into nowhere—the empty—formless and void. He's alone . . . except for one person. It turns out that one person wills to be there with him. She descends into nowhere and tells Anthony she'll help him with what's good.

I hope that sounds familiar.

But, you see, by creating his own world, Anthony created his own hell—his own prison.

Have you ever wondered why rich people and powerful people are often such sad people? Maybe because they can get whatever they want . . . but they don't want what they get.

We're all rather rich and powerful. And whenever we get a chance to create our own world, we tend to create our own hell . . . like Gollum did.

Remember Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*? He has a ring of power, and with all that power, he crawls into a hole under the mountains. He chooses nowhere and nothing. He gets what he wants and doesn't want what he gets.

Gollum is based on the Jewish legend of the Golem. Golem means “unformed substance.” According to the Talmud, Adam was a Golem until he received the breath of God and Spirit of God, the Word that rides on breath.

Maybe we're Golem until we fully receive the Word of God; we're not fully created until we're finally created by the Word—the Logos—the wisdom and meaning of God. And until then, if we choose to make a world, we only choose to make our own hell, empty and void.

We all dream of making our world with just a wish or a word. Modern physicists are puzzled as to why we can't, for they say we *do* at the quantum level. We create particles with our perception or word. Well, maybe some do create their own reality, but that reality is empty and void, nowhere and nothing, and lonely as hell. For it's their *own* reality and no one else's. Alone.¹

“Making a world with a word.” What a bizarre idea . . . and what a biblical idea.

John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Genesis 1:1:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Then, for all of Genesis 1, for all of six days, God “creates,” “makes,” and “lets” with just a word. A word is meaning that rides on breath. In Scripture, breath also means *spirit*.

God creates all with a word, and then in verse 26: “Then God said, ‘Let us’” Who’s “us”? Well maybe God, His Word, and His Spirit. “Let us make man in our image and after our likeness.” Well, what is His image?

Theologians have debated this for thousands of years, so we certainly won’t answer it conclusively, but it is rather interesting to note that when God says this, He’s been doing nothing but creating with a word. “Creating with a word,” and then He says, “Let *us* make man in our image.” So it would seem that creating a world with a word would somehow be His image.

And it seems that none of us can do that, at least not very well. We’re not good at moving mountains with just a word, for instance. But, you see, we’re still being made in God’s image.

You know, if we could move mountains with a word, and we all spoke a different word:

A. We’d all have to live in separate worlds

-or-

B. All our mountains would be crashing into each other in this world.

I mean, we’ve had a hard enough time with handguns. Imagine if each of us could move mountains with a word, and each word was our *own word*. We’d have mountains flying all over the place and crashing into each other over the streets of Denver.

Maybe that’s why Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in my name”—*my name*. So there’s one Word, and we can all live in one world.

Well, for four months we’ve been talking about Genesis 1. I’ve taken some time, because I think that Genesis 1 may be the most neglected chapter in all of Scripture. And yet it’s the most foundational in all of Scripture. And if our foundation is crooked, the whole house will be crooked.

So God creates all things with a Word, and *that Word* is our solid foundation—the rock. The Word is the light, the light is life, and life is good.

So we’ve talked about good and evil, life and death, light and dark, solid and empty: the idea that the things we think are empty may be full and the things we think are full may be empty. So we may be utterly full of ourselves and truly be entirely empty.

Empty . . . yet God is speaking substance into us—light and life into us.

Empty . . . yet God is speaking His Word into the void that is us and our world.

He does it over the span of seven days (six days and one day), which we're called to repeat as the pattern of our lives. It's called a week.

Over the six days, the Father is telling us who we are. We're not orphans that make our own world. He's making us. And we're not finished until we come to judgment, which is the cross where Jesus—God's Word—cries, "It is finished!"

The cross is the edge of the seventh day—God's Sabbath rest where God finishes creation.

If you think I've been harping on that, I'm sorry. I just want you to believe God *is* making you in His image, and He *is* doing it with a Word.

Genesis 1:26-2:3:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

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

And 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens 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. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

"It is finished."

As we've preached through Genesis 1, I've had a vision stuck in my head and even more in my heart. I didn't *see* the vision; I've never seen a vision. But my friend Dale did. He received it during three worship services last year as we preached through Matthew.

God speaks through visions, and God speaks through Scripture. Scripture always

takes priority over modern day visions, but sometimes visions open up Scripture and help us to see.

This is Dale's vision. I want you to try to see it:

I saw God the Father, having made himself small, standing on the stage behind the cross and tall enough that His head hit the ceiling. He had a robe that covered the cross, and the train flowed over the entire stage and spilled onto the floor. His robe shimmered such that when I looked on it one minute it looked like silver, the next like a starry night, the next like water, the next like fire. [He is the Lord of all creation.] The only parts of His body that were not covered by the robe were His head and hands, and from these issued such a light, brighter than staring directly at the sun, that I could not look anywhere near them or discern any details or form. As Peter was preaching, standing in front of God with His robe flowing around Peter's legs, the Word issued from Peter's mouth like water, and it flowed off the stage and mingled with blood coming from under the robe.

Now I want you to hear me very, very well. I am nothing in and of myself. But the Word I preach, the Word that Brian, Aram, Mike, Duncan, Frances, and *you* preach, that Word you are called to proclaim. That Word is *everything*.

The water and blood filled the room all the way to the ceiling. The people sat in the rising flood and some breathed in the Word while others tried to hold their breath . . . they were afraid of drowning. As the blood and water reached the ceiling, the Glory of God sparkled through the water as light through the most brilliant and perfect diamond, except the diamond was red.

It's a blood diamond. So can you see the picture? The Word in the air in the sanctuary was like a brilliant, red diamond full of light. Dale says we were like empty, jagged holes in that brilliant red fluid—jagged holes, the edges of which burned like paper on fire.

Remember that the Word of God is our judgment.

Dale writes that those who held their breath and refused the Word slowly shriveled up or burned away until there was nothing left. You see, the light of the Word burns our minds and our old ways of thinking. But then Dale says that those who received the Word and breathed it in began to sing and dance.

Dale asked, "Where is the music coming from?" Then he saw the Father open His robe revealing Jesus hanging on our cross—the source of the blood. And the music came from His mouth.

Dale then saw orphans dancing around the foot of the cross. The orphans were like the people: empty vessels—voids.

We are all like empty vessels with dark, empty, little, bubble hearts that God

wants to fill with light, life, and meaning. And we are all like orphans to whom God the Father is revealing our story. He's telling us our identity: no longer orphans but sons and daughters. Dale continues:

All those empty and identity-less vessels began to float around in the blood. And then I noticed that the inside of the church had become so large that it encompassed the entire earth, and the stage was filled with thousands upon thousands of "Peters" and the sanctuary was filled with billions more empty vessels, all floating. And God had grown proportionally large and the number of orphans had grown into the millions

However, the cross and Jesus did NOT change size. It was still the same as the little cross in our little LMCC building. And then Jesus opened a door . . . that is, while He was hanging there and continuing to bleed, He opened His chest, and through it I could see daylight on the other side. And that "door" became like a drain and all of the flood filled with us vessels poured through the drain.

You know that Jesus is the door to God's finished creation—the seventh day. And at the cross we surrender ourselves and the isolated, lonely, empty worlds we have created. We surrender our emptiness and are filled with God's fullness: light, life, love, mercy, and blood. Dale writes:

When we each reached the drain, our clay vessels were broken so we would be small enough to fit through. On the other side we would suddenly realize that we had a body and we could see with our eyes . . . except that our body, every limb, was connected, fused to someone else so that the blood that flowed through our veins also flowed through theirs, and the only thing we could see was light. We were all now literally part of Jesus' body; we were the blood vessels. Then I watched as God the Father hugged His Son, Jesus, took the hand of the Holy Spirit, and together they picked up what was left of this now empty "hell hole," crumpled it, swallowed it, and said to each other, "It is finished!"

Well, that's incredible, and there are a million and one things to talk about in that vision. But what I want you to see now is that we are created with God's Word: the good news of God's love in Jesus, the proclamation of God's grace. So . . .

1. In the beginning, we are empty and void. If we create anything with our own word, it is the dark, meaningless, loveless, lifeless, lonely, self-centered worlds in which we are each trapped. But . . .
2. God speaks light, meaning, love, life, *Himself* into us and separates heaven and hell.
3. The Word He speaks is more solid than anything in our empty, little worlds. It is His kingdom of love that is at hand (like dry land under our feet, like light and life that always surround us).

4. The Word He speaks is Jesus, who descends into our darkness and through His Spirit causes us to see the good and *want* the good. He separates night from day.
5. The Word is God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
 - A. Nothing is more offensive, for it reveals our emptiness and sin. The reality is that we can't make ourselves, save ourselves, or redeem ourselves.
 - B. Nothing is more offensive, and nothing is more desirable than God's grace. Grace is what we each truly want but are terrified to receive, for when we receive it, we lose our lives and find them. We lose our emptiness but find our fullness in Him. Born of His seed, no longer orphans, but sons and daughters.
6. Through the Word, God makes us in His image and is still making us in His image.
7. God will finish what He has started.

So God creates the world with His Word. And God creates you with His Word. And God creates you in His image, the image of the one who creates worlds with a Word. He calls you to preach that Word. That means proclaim that Word, announce that Word to His unfinished creation, and create in His image. You are a herald.

To our dark, little hearts, the Word seems unsubstantial, inconsequential, weak, and foolish. But nothing is more substantial, consequential, powerful, and wise than the Word of God.

I want you to *trust* God's Word so you'll hear it and speak it.

- A. The Word is a thing more substantial, more solid, than all creation. In Hebrew, the word for *word* is "davar," which also means *thing*. The Word of God is the *thing of God* on which all things rest. The Word isn't empty; we are empty.
- B. The Word is seed. Six times Genesis 1 has referred to seed, and Scripture says the Word is seed—eternal seed. We only sow seed. We don't make it grow. If we think we make it grow, we kill it. We don't have to argue the seed or defend the seed; just sow the seed. The Word carries its own future in its bosom like a seed.
 - So when Andrew preaches in Cambodia, he doesn't topple empires, but he sows a seed that will.
 - Kiss your kids before bed and tell them, "God loves you." You sow a seed that will change a life.
 - The Word is a seed, like the Big Bang was a seed.
 - The Word is an entire universe ready to spring into existence. You can't create a universe, but you can sow a seed that does—a seed of eternal consequence.
- C. The seed is living and active. The Word of God is living and active. We think *people* are living and active and the *Word* is dead. But *people* are dead and passive; the *Word* is living and active.
 - It's not you that must make the Word come to life; it's the Word that makes

you come to life.

- The Word has spoken you long before you ever spoke the Word. So the Word really doesn't ride on your tongue; your tongue rides on the Word.
- We don't judge the Word; the Word judges us. We don't choose the Word; the Word chooses us.

D. The Word is Jesus. He is revealed in infallible Scripture, but the Word is Jesus. He's not a formula; He's not print on a page. So when you speak the Word, you're not speaking a formula. You're not just speaking words on a page or steps in a booklet. You're not just making sound waves in the air. You're expressing the love of God, who is a person named Jesus.

Jesus, the Word of God, said, "You didn't choose me; I chose you." When you proclaim the Word, you are expressing Jesus.

- Jesus is more solid than all creation.
- Jesus is imperishable seed.
- Jesus is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."
- Jesus is the judgment of God and the wisdom of God.
- Jesus is a rider on a white horse with a name written on His thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords," and He is called the Word of God.
- Through Jesus all things are created and sustained.

So Jesus can take care of Himself.

You see, I think I get so scared to proclaim the Word, because:

I think I have to protect the Word.

I think I have to make the Word work.

I think I have to create someone's world.

And every time I've tried to create a world with *my* words, I create chaos and the void. But if I preach Jesus, who is God's Word, He makes the world.

You see, I don't have to make Him work. And if I do, it's not the Word that I'm preaching. I don't have to convince folks to choose Him. And if I do, it's not the Word that folks are choosing.

They don't choose Him; He chooses them.

They are not living and active; I myself am not living and active. The Word is living and active.

So I'm not called to sell Jesus, market Jesus, or package Jesus. I am called to proclaim Jesus. I am called to testify of Jesus in my own life, and use the language of my culture, *but* it must be Jesus I proclaim, not an idol I make and call Jesus. And if it's Jesus, well, He can take care of Himself. He just invites me along for the ride, leading me in His train as I learn to create in His image

. . . as we learn to create in God's image: the image of love.

You see, there is a Word you can speak that creates a world. The Word is Jesus, and the world is the kingdom of heaven. And when you speak that Word, you yourself are being created in the image of God.

In Mark 16:15, Jesus says to His disciples: "Go into all the world and preach"—that means *proclaim, announce*, not argue or convince. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel"—that means *good news*. "Preach the Gospel to the whole creation." Go tell them who God is and what He's done and how He loves them, and so who they really are and what it is that they really want.

When my children were little and I was creating them, I told them what they wanted, for they were confused and didn't always know. They wanted me their father and Susan their mother. They wanted us more than chocolate . . . and even more than their own way.

So tell the world, "God is your Father. He makes you and forgives you with His own blood. You are His child, and He wants you to come home. He is what you want." Tell them, "God saves." In a Word, tell them: "*Jesus*." Tell them their story, like God the Father has been telling us our story in Genesis 1. Tell them and help create them in God's image. They are God's treasure. They are His blood diamond, which He is creating with His Word.

How many of you have seen the movie *Blood Diamond*? It's about a father named Solomon and his son Dia in Sierra Leone, Africa. The father works hard as a fisherman to support his family and keep his son Dia in school.

One day rebels come to their village and take Solomon captive to work in the diamond mines. But they conscript Dia into the rebel army. They brainwash him and tell him he has no father—no story. So he must create his own story. Worse, they make him do terrible things so that he'll start writing in their image.

One day his father escapes, having found and buried a priceless, red diamond—a blood diamond. A diamond hunter, played by Leonardo Dicaprio, wants to find that diamond. Solomon wants to find his son, who *is* his blood diamond—his treasure.

When Solomon finds Dia, Dia has forgotten who he is . . . or it's too painful for him to remember who he is, where he's from, and what he really wants. He's trapped in his own hell.

In this scene, Solomon finds the diamond, and he also finds his son Dia. Solomon means "peace." Well, this is how the Prince of Peace creates His child and shapes him in His image. Solomon creates Dia with his word.

[Movie Clip: *Blood Diamond*]

Archer: Have you got it? Have you got it?

Solomon: Yes, I've got it [holding a diamond he dug out of the ground].

Danny: Oh, yeah. Solomon . . .

[Dia stands holding a gun aimed at Archer.]

Solomon: Dia, what are you doing? Dia? Look at me. What are you doing? You're Dia Vandy, of the proud Mende tribe. [Dia points the gun at his father.] You are a good boy who loves soccer and school. Your mother loves you so much. [Solomon moves towards his son.] She waits by the fire making plantains and red palm stew with your sister, N'yanda, and the new baby. [Tears roll down Dia's cheeks.] The cows wait for you. And Babu the wild dog, who minds no one but you. I know they made you do bad things. But you are not a bad boy. I am your father who loves you. And you will come home with me and be my son again.

[Solomon walks up to Dia and wraps his arms around him.]

Do you see what this means? [Peter is standing behind the communion table with his hand on the cross.] We hold a gun to our Father's head, and He speaks to us. He says:

I am your Father who loves you. You will come home and live with me. You are my son. You are my daughter. I know you've been made to do terrible things. But I cleanse you. I tell you who you are and what you want. You want me.

So on the night the heart of God was betrayed, the Word took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Eat it." And in the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Drink it." So He's calling you. He's telling you, "Receive my love."

Tonight when we take communion, I want to do it in a different way. I want you to tear off a piece of bread and dip it in the cup. Then turn around, look the person behind you in the eye, and feed them as you say, "The Father loves you."

[Communion]

How did that feel? Awesome? Confusing? Well, as I was watching you, you reminded me of someone. You were in the likeness of someone, or in the image of someone. Who was that? *Jesus. God.* You're in the image of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! What you did just now is what you're supposed to do every day, every minute. You're to feed the people around you with the Word of God.

Now, when I try to speak my own word, I usually create chaos and a void. But maybe what we did today can be a picture inside you so that whenever you speak to people, you remember you're giving them the body and the blood of the Lord. You're telling them the Father loves them.

You can say a lot of words that way . . . sometimes tender words, sometimes hard words, but they are all to be words of love. You are Christ's Body. His breath comes out of you. Believe the Gospel, ingest the Gospel, and speak the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.

End Notes

¹If it was utterly impossible to create reality with just a “word,” or create matter with simply “meaning,” why would we dream about it? That’s a philosophical question we don’t have time for. However, in recent years physicists have been asking that question from the other direction: that is, why don’t we create reality with just a word? Because at the subatomic level, we do.

Physicists say that at a subatomic level, particles of matter exist or don’t exist depending on whether or not someone expects them to exist or wants them to exist. Those particles make up reality as we know it. So how come we can’t simply create our own reality with a word? That’s a very difficult question for physicists these days. How come we can’t simply create our own reality with a thought? Maybe some do. Maybe some are stuck in nowhere like hell. Or maybe our ability to create our own world in little ways, but not in big ways, is God’s mercy keeping us from damning ourselves to hell.

One of the kids from my old youth group called me. He was studying quantum physics at U. C. Santa Cruz and struggling with his Christian faith. And then he said this to me:

Peter, I have to believe there’s a God. Physics clearly shows that an observer creates reality. So if you and I can coexist in the same reality, if we can have a relationship in the same reality, there must be an observer observing us both, creating reality—our reality—with His Word.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

court is in session, a verdict is in
no appeal on the docket today
just my own sin
the walls are cold and pale
the cage made of steel
screams fill the room
alone I drop and kneel . . .

I cry out to God

seeking only his decision
Gabriel stands and confirms
I've created my own prison
~ *Creed, My Own Prison*

The will of the world is always a will to death, a will to suicide.
~ *Jacques Ellul, The Presence of the Kingdom*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. . . . Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after 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 earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And 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." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 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. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.
~ *Genesis 1:1-3, 26-2:3 (RSV)*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
~ *John 1:1-3*

And in the last days it shall be," God declares, "that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. . . ."
~ *Acts 2:17*

I saw God the Father, having made himself small, standing on the stage behind the cross and tall enough that His head hit the ceiling. He had a robe that covered the cross and the train flowed over the entire stage and spilled onto the floor. His robe shimmered such that when I looked on it one minute it looked like silver, the next like a starry night, the next like water, the next like fire. The only parts of His body that were not covered by the robe were His head and hands and from these issued such a light, brighter than staring directly at the sun, that I could not look anywhere near them or discern any details or form.

As Peter was preaching, standing in front of God with His robe flowing around Peter's legs, the Word issued from Peter's mouth like water and it flowed off the stage and mingled with blood coming from under the robe. The water and blood filled the room all the way to the ceiling. The people sat in the rising flood and some breathed in the Word while others tried to hold their breath. . . . they were afraid of drowning.

As the blood and water reached the ceiling the Glory of God sparkled through the water as light through the most brilliant and perfect diamond, except the diamond was red. Then God showed me the people and everyone, whether breathing or holding their breath, did not have a mouth or eyes or ears or nose. There were only jagged holes, like the edge of paper that is on fire. The light sparkling through the flood would enter directly into the orifices of each person and burn their brains, like stepping into sunlight after being in a pitch black room.

Those who were breathing in the Word began to raise their hands and sing and dance even though I could not hear any words, only noise. Those who held their breath remained still and over a long period of time, even years, shriveled until there was nothing left. Then I asked what the music was that the people were singing and dancing to and He, God the Father, opened His robe and showed me Jesus on the cross, the

source of the blood and He had music coming out of His mouth. And all around the base of the cross danced some of the most pathetic, destitute, sickly, starving, diseased orphans I have ever seen, their faces aglow with the same light that came from God.

Then I saw that the faces of the orphans looked just like the people. They too had jagged holes where their eyes, ears, nose, mouth should have been. . . No one had an identity, only a form. All those empty and identity-less vessels began to float around in the blood. And then I noticed that the inside of the church had become so large that it encompassed the entire earth and the stage was filled with thousands upon thousands of "Peters" and the sanctuary was filled with billions more empty vessels, all floating. And God had grown proportionally larger and the number of orphans had grown into the millions. . . . However, the cross and Jesus did NOT change size, it was still the same as the little cross in our little LMCC building. And then Jesus opened a door. . . that is while He was hanging there and continuing to bleed, He opened His chest and through it I could see daylight on the other side. And that "door" became like a drain and all of the blood filled with us vessels poured through the drain. But when we each reached the drain our clay vessels were broken so we would be small enough to fit through. On the other side we would suddenly realize that we had a body and we could see with our eyes. . . except that our body, every limb, was connected, fused to someone else so that the blood that flowed through our veins also flowed through theirs and the only thing we could see was light. We were all now literally part of Jesus' body, we were the blood vessels. Then I watched as God the Father hugged His Son, Jesus, took the hand of the Holy Spirit and together they picked up what was left of this now empty "hell hole," crumpled it and swallowed it and said to each other, "It is finished!"

~ Dale Eben, LMCC, Winter 2006

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

~ John 19:30

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. . . . Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

~ Hebrews 4:11-13, 11:1-3

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

~ 1 Corinthians 1:18-24

And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

~ John 12:50

And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

~ 1 John 3:23

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-- to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

~ Romans 16:25-27

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. . . .” But Joshua (*Jesus* in Greek) said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.”

~ Joshua 24:15a-16, 19a

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

~ John 15:16-17

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

~ Luke 24:45-47 (RSV)

“We have not searched for him. He has searched for us. He has searched us out and found us. All the time we think we are the lion. In the end, the lion is God.”

The lion is God. Of course. Goodness and kindness and holiness and grace and divine presence and creating power and salvation were here before I got here. Even the fuller understanding of God’s revelation to man, of the gospel, of the salvific act that had been accomplished once and for all for the human race was here before I got here. My role as a herald of that gospel, as a messenger of the news of what had already happened in the world, as the person whose task it was to point to “the one who had stood in their midst whom they did not recognize” was only a small part of the mission of God to the world. It was a mysterious part, a part barely understood. It was a necessary part, a demanded part— “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.” It was a role that would require every talent and insight and skill and gift and strength I had, to be spent without question, without stint, and yet in the humbling knowledge that only that part of it would be made use of which fit into the immeasurably greater plan of the relentless pursuing God whose will on the world must not be thwarted. The lion is God.

~ Vincent J. Donovan, *Rediscovering Christianity*

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.”

~ Mark 16:15 (RSV)

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