

The Answer to Breaking Chaos

Baptism of our Lord – 01/10/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Genesis 1:1-5 Pastor Keith Besel

vv.1-2, **“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.”**

Introduction

- ⌘ Oh, this world in which we live today. Have you ever wanted to shout out, “Stop the world! I just want to get off!”?
 - ➔ I think, even before all of the latest political unrest, social protest and upheaval, and pandemic turmoil, most of us still experienced this feeling; times when we ran into a major roadblock or struggle where we were unsure how to respond and get through the issue.
 - ➔ Think for example of a time when something out of your control has happened to throw a monkey wrench or more into your day. Maybe the coffee pot just exploded, or your computer decides to take the day off when you need to finish an important project at school or work, or the dishwasher and the washing machine stage a rebellion at the same time that your water heater springs a leak and the house is filling with soap and water. Yes, there are times when life becomes downright chaotic.
- ⌘ And nobody likes chaos, which the dictionary defines as “complete disorder and confusion”. People just can’t thrive when we are constantly bombarded by demands, worries, and problems from every direction.
 - ➔ A nice way to describe the outcome - we go bananas! The kids are late, you’ve got to get to work early and the dog tracks who-knows-what into the house...at times like that; at times like this we just want things to stop. Life isn’t meant to exist in chaos, right?

I. Chaos Reigns

- ⌘ In the Book of Genesis today, God’s author, Moses takes us back to the beginning – actually even before the beginning. We get a quick peek here into those moments of prehistory – before the fall into sin; before the rat race of modern life; before work; before crashing computers and cars that won’t start.
 - ➔ When most people first encounter Genesis, they often think of the Garden of Eden; of paradise or perfection. But here at the very beginning – at the time when there is God and only God – we find chaos.
 - ➔ And as we already said, life cannot exist in the midst of chaos. Life is impossible in the void of nothingness. Yet at the time of these early verses; as the Spirit of Yahweh hovers over the waters, chaos reigns.
- ⌘ The Hebrew words used to describe this stage of pre-creation are “tohu wabohu” (תהו וָבוהו); a phrase that is difficult to translate into English. “Tohu” speaks of “unformedness” as if a substance is there but it has “not yet been put into shape”. It is also understood as “confusion”. The second word, “Bohu” means “emptiness”.
 - ➔ So together this phrase means something like “formless void” or “swirling watery mass” or “shapeless, unformed, orderless thing”. Let’s be clear, it’s not evil; there’s no sin yet.

- But whatever the Hebrew means, the point still stands: life cannot exist where chaos reigns. You can't build a castle on top of a black hole; it just won't work. There's nothing solid on which to build. For life to take place, chaos must be subdued. It must be defeated.
- ✘ Martin Luther said this in his commentary on Genesis, "Here then we have the first thing...: that the heavens and the earth were created on the first day; but, that the heaven was as yet unformed, not separated from the waters, destitute of its luminaries, and not elevated to its position; and the earth in like manner was as yet without its animals, its rivers and its mountains" (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, translated by J.N. Lenker, © 1904).
 - The following verses in Genesis describe how God brought about order and life into this world only by the power of His Word – all of it in six 24-hour days.
 - ✘ But it wasn't long afterward that chaos came roaring back in the form of a seductive serpent and a bite of forbidden fruit. Now that was evil!
 - From that moment on, the fall into sin assured us that life in the world would be a pitched battle against sin and chaos. Cast out of the Garden and cut off from the Creator, Adam and Eve and all their children right down to you and me today have been caught up in a world doing its best to tear itself apart. And that is evil.
 - ✘ It all started badly enough in Genesis, chapter three. To Adam the farmer, God told him that thorns and thistles would infest his field, and every field from that day forward. Things grow only by the sweat of your brow and still crops fail. If you're a woman, now there's pain in childbirth. Those are the curses of sin that God demanded; the beginning of chaos.
 - And of course there is death. God said, to Adam in Genesis 2:17, "in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die". Well, they ate of the forbidden fruit – and the result is unchecked chaos.
 - ✘ Now, you and I know how things have gone ever since. We see and feel this chaos every day. It's as if we can sense it stalking us like a wild animal hunts its prey.
 - We feel the void collapsing around us when we lose a job and the bills are due. We feel it trying to swallow us whole at the hospital and at the funeral home. Chaos shows itself when we struggle with addiction or depression or when we fight with our spouse and our kids and our co-workers.
 - It confronts us when we believers in Christ suffer persecution; when ungodly agendas are forced down our cultural throats. Name your poison – abortion, violence, abuse, neglect, the sins others commit against us, and the sins we commit with our own hands, minds, and hearts – they all tempt us to the edge of the abyss. Yes, the void; the chaos; the enemy of life seeks to devour us all like a roaring lion.
 - ✘ It's only fair for us to look at this honestly. Some of these chaotic effects we bring upon ourselves by our own evil living; by our own selfish decisions and desires. And some are done to us by others in their sin.
 - No, it's not that every time the computer locks up or the washing machine goes on the blink – or more seriously, we lose a job or suffer a terrible accident that it is because of some particular sin that we've committed.
 - But in every case, the root problem is still sin – Adam's sin; Eve's sin, my sin; your sin; the world's sin that has separated us from God. Yes sin, disorder, confusion has thoroughly corrupted God's perfect creation. Chaos reigns!
 - ✘ And for life to exist, that chaos in this world and in our lives must be subdued. The enemies of sin, Satan, and death must be broken. And you and I can't do it! We have no strength of our own to fight the spiritual battles we face. This cosmic job is just too big.

II. Chaos is Broken

- ✘ When you and I look at the chaos in our lives and say, “Stop the world! I want to get off!” guess what. Yahweh, our God, still hovers over the void and says just as He did at the very beginning in Genesis, “Let there be...”.
 - ➔ You see, with His powerful and creative Word, He breaks the chaos. Remember what God said, after each day in the creation process? Six times in six days God saw what He had made, and, behold, it was “good”!
 - ➔ The formless substance heeds God’s orderly Word and life abounds, not because God had to do it, but because of His limitless love. God our Father created life and all things out of nothing. Where there is disorder and confusion and chaos God creates new life as the result.
 - ➔ In the void; in the black hole; in the chaos; life cannot abide. But with the Word of God proclaimed and in the flesh there is life, life, and more life.
- ✘ Too often we forget this important fact - this is God’s world. It all belongs to Him. Everything is His, from the cattle on a thousand hills to the people from a thousand nations. Everything and everyone is His creation. He made it and He sustains it, and yes, He redeems it for Himself.
 - ➔ That’s why when the chaos of evil threatens to overtake His children; His creation or His Church, God’s living Word is the only answer that brings order, peace, and salvation to bear on the matter.
 - ➔ His Word created the world and His Word, made flesh and blood, in Jesus Christ has now re-created you and me to save us from sin, death, and the devil. That incarnate Word came to us first at Bethlehem’s manger. And today in our Gospel Reading we see It standing in the Jordan River with John.
 - ➔ It’s there that the mighty Son of God stands with lowly sinners. It’s there for the first time that my sins, your sins, and the sins of the world were poured upon Jesus’ head and the Holy Spirit of God was hovering over the waters once again – eager to be about His re-creative and gracious work for us all.
 - ➔ It’s there that the Father who called the light good now praises the Light of the world and proclaims an eternal “very good” upon Jesus as He says, “You are My beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Mk. 1:11).
- ✘ John 1:3 says of Jesus that “All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made”. That goes for you and me friends, as only Jesus has worked within us to re-create us!
 - ➔ He did it this time though, not in power but in weakness; with humility and service; with lowliness and stripes; with a cross and nails and a spear thrust into His side.
 - ➔ At that place called Skull Hill, Jesus worked to re-create a fallen world; to rescue hell-bent sinners like you and me by dying our death. When the baptized Son of God said from the cross, “It is finished”, He spoke a deeper truth than we can ever fathom.
 - ➔ For His baptized, crucified flesh on that cross redeemed our fallen, sinful flesh. By removing the sin that separated us from God, Jesus’ death reconciled us back to our God. He restored our relationship with the One who brings order where there was chaos; perfection where there was a formless void; paradise where there was a black hole.

- So, know this with confidence Christians, Jesus' perfect life has redeemed your wretched performance and unclean choices. His beauty re-creates your ugliness and makes you beautiful in the eyes of your loving Father.
- ✘ So take heart, the void is not your fate. The chaos of sin, death, and devil no longer have power over you. God created us and gave us life, and He has re-created us in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters and descended upon Jesus at the Jordan River, so the same Spirit of God has washed and re-created you at your Baptism. It is a big event; a miraculous day – worthy of your thanks and praise and worship toward God.
- For on that day; the day of your baptism and every day since as you live in the power of His re-creative Word and grace, you know in joy that the Baptized, Crucified, and Resurrected Lord Jesus has broken the power of chaos and death for you.
- Yes, He looks at you, His handiwork; relishing your worship and praise and He says, "It is very good – my beloved son/daughter; with whom I am well pleased". Amen.