

A Big God
Genesis 1:1-5, 26, 27
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For the past few weeks, I have had a song stuck in my head. I suppose that is not surprising and no, it is not still Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do With It?" from our last 3 week series.

Actually, it is "This Is My Song;" it's a hymn written by Georgia Harkness and Lloyd Stone in the 1930's.

It goes like this: *"This is my song, O God of all the nations, a song of peace for lands afar and mine. This is my home, the country where my heart is; here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine, but other hearts in other lands are beating with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.*

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine; but other lands have sunlight too, and clover, and skies are everywhere as blue as mine. O hear my song, thou God of all the nations, a song of peace for their land and for mine.

This is my prayer, O lord of all Earth's kingdoms: Thy kingdom come; on earth thy will be done. Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve him, and hearts united learn to live as one. O hear my prayer thou God of all

the nations; myself I give thee; let thy will be done.

I love this song. The melody haunts me, the words strike deep into the heart of our world's situations, both in the 30s and 40s when it was written and even now... It reminds me of national pride, loving our land and treasuring the blessings that most people experience by being in our country. It is the same pride that rests in the hearts of soldiers present and past who desire to protect those things that we appreciate here. On this Memorial Day we remember those who died to protect our right to live here.

The song also highlights that other countries are beautiful and have people who are just like us who love their country who want to protect what God has provided. The song speaks of peace for all people. For people who are benefiting from the way the world and its societies function, and I aimed to pray for those who are not benefiting from how our societies function. It is a unifying song, a prayer with a melody - for this to be God's world, and not our own.

It connects me to the scripture passage today because it reminds me that God is a God of everyone, of me, of my household, of our communities, our nation, and God of all nations. God is very big. God is bigger than I can see or think; God is covering all

of God's children and loving all of them. God is very big.

You have probably read the passage from today many times. It is at the very beginning of the Bible and so it is possible that even as a child you read this if you started at the beginning.

There is some really beautiful imagery of God's hand in the formation of all creation. It is like a love poem written to God thanking God for each aspect of creation, for order out of chaos, for light and darkness, for oceans and lands, for plants and creatures. Recognizing God's hand in each of these praises God for who mighty and powerful God is. Then we have a peculiar phrase:

'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.' Why does it say OUR likeness? Why not MY likeness?

It has something to do with the word for God that is used in the first 2 chapters of Genesis. In ancient Hebrew, it is the word Elohim. It is different from other Old Testament words for God like - the Lord God Almighty. (Yahweh.)

From bible study tools online:
"Another interesting aspect of the name Elohim is that it is, in fact, a plural. Does this mean this is a clear

reference to the Trinity? While that cannot be disproven, it also could not be proven from the plurality. Many scholars refer to this as a divine plural."

I love the word Elohim. In Strong's concordance Elohim is used in other passages in the Bible and outside of the Bible to refer to even human kings and rulers. In fact, its roots may predate Judaism and be the word that cultures used to refer to the divine, and so it existed within polytheistic cultures who worshipped more than one god before it was used in our Holy text for our God who is one God.

This plural word for God, suggests to me that our God is a very big God indeed. Big enough to have a multiplicity of identity relationships with us. Big enough to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.

A God so big that all of humankind was created in God's image: Imagine all faces, all bodies, all people, ALLLLL people are images of God. That is a wonderfully beautiful and very large God.

Story of Buffy and Notebook of Doom:

Recently my family and I were reflecting on some of our fictional interests: specifically, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and the elementary chapter book series, Notebook of

Doom. Notebook of Doom follows 3 children as they observe and interact with creatures like the socktopus and the Jampire - creatures that exist in the minds of children. Unfortunately, adults cannot see them, unless they are very special adults.

In both of these book universes, it seems that the struggles of good and evil only exist in the world of the protagonists. It isn't until we hear stories of other people having the same struggles that we realize the world is full of them, not just in the little towns of Sunnydale or Stermont.

Sometimes I feel like we cannot see outside of our own little bubbles. We don't really think about what life is like for people in other towns, other states, other countries. We do not try and find similarities or differences. For the most part if something, even people are out of sight, out of mind. People in other nations are not in our radar. But they are in God's radar.

And if we took the time to reach out to people outside our own spheres of existence, we would find that people of all nations work, play, eat, have children, etc. just as we do. They have concerns over the future. They desire the best for their children.

When we look outside our bubbles, we see that the world is filled with people whom God loves, just as God loves us.

However, the passage from Genesis that describes humankind as being made in God's image has been used to lift up people as near Godliness, and not just all people, but some people. When you read that humankind was made in the image of God, do you think more on the nature of human beings (that we must be powerful indeed because we have been created in God's image? Or do you think on God's bigness that all the people of the earth are an image of God?)

Was this phrase included in our scriptures to boost our egos as humans? Science looks at the world and tries to understand its processes, science is humans trying to make sense of what we see and experience. Because of scientific endeavors, we have learned how to help people who are sick or injured, how to use natural processes to help us with the way we live life. Some worry that our desire to know the world we live in places us too close to God, that at one point we "play" God. This idea is especially noted as doctors use medicine and technology to save lives, or to fail to save lives. That power to affect life could make one feel godly. But humans have always had the ability to take lives or save them. We do that through our choices. Through our will we can prevent violence, death, we can choose to reach out to the lonely, care for the sick, the hungry, the

impoverished. We save lives every day. It is not this act that places us in the same position as God. God gave us the responsibility to care for life. In this Genesis passage we have been given stewardship over plant and animal life.

People use passages like the one here in Genesis to elevate their status towards God. But that isn't what we should be reading from this text. We should use it to learn more about who God is than who humans are. If humankind was created in God's image, all we have to do is look around to get a sense of God's bigness. God is not just the God in our heads and hearts, God is not just the God of our devotion and love, God is big enough to reflect faces and personalities of all who live here, and God is the God of nations besides ours and people who are different from us too. God is at the center of other people's devotions. We do not have a monopoly on God.

Go out this week with an eye open for God. As you see the people in the grocery store, as you interact online with new friends or old friends, open your eye. What is God trying to tell you about God's self?

Thank you for your bigness God and for the fact that you love a person even like me. Amen.