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The Caring Steward

Genesis 1:26-28
Mother's Day

They didn't come with instruction manuals. If they had the first one should have been, "Slippery when wet." But they sent them home with us anyway. Wouldn't let us carry them out, needed to be strapped in, they knew they were slippery.

How many times we looked at them in wonder: I wonder why they are crying. I wonder if they are getting enough to eat. If they are seeing angels? I wonder if we could die from lack of sleep.

Many nights, I would say my prayers and review the day smiling about what went well and crying where I had regrets. I'd vow, with God's help, to do better tomorrow. We prayed, "God, thank you, God, keep them, God, help us. And forgive us God; we know not what we do."

"Be fruitful and multiply," today's scripture says.

You know what today's scripture is?

It is **the** birth announcement.

God announces the creation of: humankind.

Likeness: of God, male and female

Weight: of the world, or at least the fish, birds, cattle and the wild and creepy things.

Born: Creation the sixth

Right away, in reading this announcement I have two questions:

Who is God talking to and who is listening?

Now maybe the ancient Hebrew narrative speaks of self as **us and we** even though there is only one. Like I do when I make a mistake, "Well we certainly got that wrong." Someone is quick to point out, there isn't any we in what you just did. Sometimes **we**, is our affiliation like with a favorite team, "We won!" So maybe, God is delighting in God's self and "we" is just a manner of God talk.

Or maybe this is evidence of the trinity. God the Creator, Jesus the son and the Holy Spirit, all for one and one for all, God before time, In the beginning was the word and the word was God and the word was with God. (John 1) Is this the three-fold essence of God, having a conversation about the creation of humankind? "In our image, male and female, God created them."

Or perhaps the heavenly hosts of angels are God's companions and audience in this creation narrative. Maybe even all of us who God knew before we were born.

I just think it is interesting that God is creating in concert with someone male and female. Maybe at the end of these seven days of creation, while resting, God says something like, "It takes a village."

This plurality of characters is interesting because I think of God breathing life into the world and getting everything going out of nothingness. Somehow it comforts me to know that even in OUR beginning, God was not alone. God was not lonely, but God wanted something wonderful to happen that could only be set in motion with the creation of the world.. We were God's next good idea and the idea of us was bounced off on God's companions as the earth took shape. Then God did the most amazing thing and gave humankind the power to partner in creation.

Happy Mother's Day.

This is sort of like last week's seeding idea, plant it and then trust the tending to others. God gave dominion or care of the earth to us. How do we do this? Well, we figure it out along the way sometimes smiling about what went well and crying about regrets because we love. We become
THE CARING STEWARD.

Today in services we are blessing babies. We are rejoicing in the miracle of birth. We join the parents in embracing the children with our open arms and the welcome of Jesus. We make a covenant, a sacred and holy promise to nurture these children into the fullness of life! We vow Proverbs 22:6, to "train up a child the way they should go...

So thank you, and thank God that blessings of children are spoken in a trinity of commitment: God, Church community and family. As family, I'd like to apply our parenting philosophy to this community; steer, cheer and rear.

Steering:

God steers them in and we gaze on them, deeply. We discover that children come to us with their own spirits attached, their holy spirits and their less holy ones. The image of God is in each. Ours is to seek them, to honor their natures and to guide them to appropriate and unique responses in the world. That parenting is on all of us. Sometimes in uniquely seeing the person, something new is born in our love of them. Here is a beautiful example of what steering through love and hope can do, from our own Teri Walden.

Video: EnCircle

Caring Stewards steer.

Cheering:

Jesus steps in for the cheering. Jesus came into the playing field and joined the celebration. It is our nature to cheer for the goodness in anything and to get on board with our endorsement. When things are done or even attempted (whether from the eyes of the player or the fans) we show enthusiasm and engagement. Shows of gratitude, appreciation, generous support, encouragement, approval, and compassion; these are all elements of the cheer! They make us want to schedule another event, even train for it. I think this picture of Staton sleeping as illustration of the Jesus cheer...Look at Jacob.

Picture: Staton and Jacob

Jesus is for us! It is ours to bring love onto the mission field with the care of Christ. We are cheering on Staton and Michael Tatum in this moment toward their calling to enter into ministry. You are cheering on many who have become ordained or commissioned to ministry from Broadway. And you, you are engaging yourselves in the cheering on of God's possibilities with every committee, call, and space bar you advance:

To enable persons to encounter the living God, as disclosed through Jesus Christ; to serve and celebrate God in an ever-changing society (BCC mission statement).

I remember when Michael, at seventeen, handed me a sermon he had written. A moment! We invited him to deliver it as a Teen Talk. What an inspiration it was for all of us when he said this about worth:

To show God his worth to us in our lives, we must give abundantly and from the heart. We must give like all other facets of our lives, we give our money, we give our talents and gifts, we give our time, and most importantly we give our love.

Caring Stewards cheer!

Rearing:

Rearing is something we do when we care enough to direct and redirect. When we shoulder up to be an advocate, like the Holy Spirit is for us.

Rearing is our education, our guidance, our seeing to rites of passage, our nurture, our tending, our training up, our rerouting! It sometimes requires a disciplinary action. In that moment, the consequence for a misstep should be edifying. Our correctional actions, be they legal or familial, should lift one up out of *less holy* action and set them into something new, even during the time out; grounded from and guided to. We should be a voice for reform of reform methods. We should watch for the moment when one step moves us to rebuilding.

In other times rearing requires an affirming action. One step, blessing a baby, one step, teaching Sunday school, one step, being a baptism mentor, one step, writing a note, spreading mulch, supervising in the gym, pledging an offering. Each and every step we take toward God and holiness exhibits our care for the spirit in all of us.

Hannah was sad when I picked her up from junior high volleyball. She could not get her serve

over the net. As a teacher, I had a key to the Rock Bridge Gym and their net was up in season. We ate first, nobody takes a step forward if they are hangry. We went to an easy place in the court where she could serve over the net five times. Then one step back and five serves. Then step by step until she was at the line and serving. I chased a lot of balls. The last game her team played that season was won with Hannah serving. One step taken for rearing, for teaching, guiding, tending, training and strengthening from where we are to where we can be.

Caring Stewards rear.

Back to the questions: **Who is God talking to and who is listening?** **God is talking** to the complete essence of team God: Creator who steers, Son who cheers and Spirit who rears and the hosts of heaven are tuning in. **Who is listening?** We are. We are the caring stewards. We are children of God, one and all. Today we bless babies, in ten years we will baptize them and we will need each other even more because the baptized children of God can be slippery when wet.

God is still coming into the world, and the beat goes on!

Show ultrasound photo

Amen and amen.

Benediction:

God has always loved you, God will always love you.

You are created in God's image; you are perfect as you are.

Life is an opportunity to love and be loved.

Caring stewards and children of God, go in peace to steer, cheer and rear.