

13 March 2019
Lent 1 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Creation and Re-Creation”

Text: Genesis 1:1 - 2:3; The Passion, part 1

What you are going to do, do quickly.

That’s what Jesus told Judas. For it was time. Time for Jesus to die, and time to be betrayed. So go, Judas. Go and ***what you are going to do, do quickly.***

It is an interesting statement, for if you think about it, God never seems to be in a hurry. He’s going to send a flood to destroy all life, He tells Noah . . . but not for another 120 years. Abraham, you’re going to have a son . . . but then Abraham has to wait another 25 years, until he is 100 years old. His people in Egypt? 400 years. And God’s promise to send a Saviour, that’s the grand-daddy of them all - *thousands* of years until that promise is fulfilled. God never seems to be in a hurry.

And so with creation as well. Six days may seem quick to us, to create everything that exists. But it didn’t have to take that long. God could have done it in an instant. That would have been a true “Big Bang” - not the one evolutionists are so fond of talking about. But instead, God takes His time. He slowly, carefully, and deliberately, creates. One day at a time. One piece at a time. Nothing left to chance. Each piece good, and all the pieces working together perfectly, very good.

Luther said it was God building a house for man. He lays the foundation, erects the walls and roof, provides the rooms and the furnishings, stocks the pantry, and then creates a man and woman and places them into their new home. It could not have been better.

But then there is something quick again . . . and that should be our first clue that this is not of God. Satan moves in. Quickly. No sooner is the new carpet laid and the paint hardly dry on the walls, and satan is there, calling God’s good and very good, not good. Quickly. Evil has no time to wait. I don’t think the Scriptures ever say that satan is patient or long-suffering. Persistent, yes. Determined, yes. But patient and long-suffering are attributes of God, not satan. Of love, not lust. Of good, not evil.

Which maybe should cause us to take a look at ourselves and how busy we are, and how much of a hurry we are in; how quickly we want things, and want to get things done. Maybe this is not good. Maybe we need to slow down and trust. Maybe we need to slow down and repent.

And so as we heard in the reading of the Passion tonight, *when the hour was come*, when it was time, *Jesus* what? *Sat down*. Jesus eats with His disciples. He gives them a new meal, His Supper. He washes their feet. He teaches them. Soon enough, things would happen quickly, when the hour of darkness - of evil - had come. Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trials, beatings, crucifixion, and death would all take less than 24 hours. Less than one creation day. And the disciples would fear, deny, and hide. For we're not made for quickly, we're made for trust. Quickly doesn't bring out the best in us. It's satan that tells us: don't trust, be quick. Don't wait, you need it now. Do it now. Take it now. Have it all now.

And so Judas goes out quickly, and Jesus is quickly crucified. It takes only six hours for Him to die.

But if you were the one on that cross, or one of Jesus' loved ones keeping watch at the cross, I'll bet those six hours seemed like a lifetime. And so even though quick, there is at the same time a sense of slowness about crucifixion, as the life of the crucified slowly ebbs away. And this time Jesus uses in exactly the same way as He did with the time before He was lifted up. He prays. He speaks words of forgiveness. He promises. Because for Jesus, in a sense, nothing new is happening. This is the culmination of His work. This is what all His work, all His miracles and signs, all His teaching, was building to, pointing to. He was finishing His work of re-creating a creation ruined by sin. To make all things new and good again. And when He said *it is finished*, it was.

And even then, no hurry. Jesus rests in the tomb and rises on the third day. He didn't have to wait, but this good is worth waiting for.

And so we are now waiting. For the new heavens and the new earth, the new creation, when everything will be restored to the same good as it was in the beginning.

That restoration begins for us in Baptism. When Jesus *bathed you* with His Word and Spirit and forgiveness, so that *you have a part with Him*. When the Spirit that hovered over the waters in the beginning to create all that is, hovers over the waters still, to create sons and daughters of God. When the Spirit that brought order out of chaos in the beginning, brings order to our disordered world. And again, it is when God speaks. *Let there be*, and there was. *I baptize you*, and you are. And you are good again. For your sin is forgiven. And so when your Father looks at you now, He doesn't see a fallen Adam, but His Son, risen and restored to life again.

But the house we live in is still a mess. Life is still a mess, and so are we. And so the Spirit of God is still working, still speaking. *I forgive you*, and you are. For all will not be finally and fully restored until our own third day, the day when our bodies are raised from Ash Wednesday dust to lives that are victors over death and cannot die again. When the work begun in you in your baptism is finally brought to completion and fulfillment.

Perhaps we wish it would be quicker. Sin hurts, after all. Death hurts. The rubble of a broken world lies all around us. Perhaps we would like to say to God: *what you are going to do, do quickly!* But quick is not of God. Instead He is patient, *not wanting any to perish but all to come to a knowledge of the truth* (2 Peter 3:9). And so to wait is good. To wait is love for our neighbor.

And good for us, too. To trust. To let God be God, not us. To wait for His perfect time. For what God does is perfect. Just as in the beginning. It is us in our hurry that only messes it up. Forgive us, Lord, and help us to be patient and long-suffering, as You are. Work in us all that is pleasing to You, all that is good.

And so for this we pray in the Easter Vigil, after the reading of the account of creation:

Almighty God, through Your Word and Spirit You most wonderfully created all things, and through the Word made flesh You brought new life to fallen humanity. Grant that in Your mercy we may be conformed to the image of Him who shares fully in our humanity, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.