

Gen 1 and Mark 1: Order Restored

This week and this year we have all been witnesses of disorder. Whatever side of the aisle you may be sitting on, we can all agree that, it's a mess out there.

Welcome to a broken world! You are not the first to see such things. The black plague, the French revolution, the fall of Rome, the slave trade, the civil war, 9/11, the world wars, the middle east. You think 2020 was the worst? No. It was sad to be sure, and as I joked about, flipping a calendar over doesn't fix this. Humanity has flipped the calendars over thousands of times, and this stuff is still here.

But perhaps we haven't been particularly used to this amount of chaos on our screens. And I think if we are honest, we should admit that we are living in a pretty affluent place and time in history. But, of course, that doesn't mean we've never had any interaction with disorder. Can't we also admit that in our work, in our families, in our congregation even, there has been disorder?

Now you may be thinking that "disorder" is not a strong enough word for what amounts to broken hearts, homes, wars, riots, terrorism, injustice, conspiracy.

Perhaps you are right. In Church we often simply use the word "sin" as what leads to these things. But today I will stand by this premise: disorder is the symptom of a broken world.

Our God is a God of order. Look at our Genesis text. There is so much in there, I commend our Bible Class to you for its many implications on time, genre, and the very existence of, well... everything. It came from somewhere, right? There was nothing, then there was something. “Nothing” is a stable compound, so what, or dare I say, who, sparked it? Someone outside of time and space, something beyond it. Something that took nothing and put something into, or on it. Then formed it in an orderly fashion.

The earth was formless and void. The early materials our Lord called into existence, frothing. The Spirit, hovering. The Lord, like any good craftsman, bathes the project in light. “Now we can see what we are working with!” But he pulls no chain with sawdust on it to get light. He flips no switch. He speaks and the Word of God, which took on flesh at Christmas, this Word of God goes forth and accomplishes exactly what it says. And there is light.

And then the categories come, the labels, the definitions, the divisions. Things we so often push back against, things we so often want to break and usurp. Sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly. But our God’s good creation is the beginning of order. He cordons off one area, “You are day,” to another, “you are night and you only go so far.” He puts boundaries on another thing, gives definition to another, and a place for one thing to flourish, another place for another thing to run, or swim, or fly. And he sculpts, arranges, and *orders* a creation.

You are a part of this ordered creation. And we rightly examine the laws, the boundaries, the categories. We look at cell pathways, we look at planetary alignments, we look at waterfalls. How curious, how ordered, how beautiful! And yet so many walk around as if these realities are meaningless or, worse, accidental. Even a child knows their legos and blocks don't randomly fall into an arrangement of a castle. Yet we look at ordered and refined cell pathways that rage a million times over in your body even now as you listen to me drone on, these functions which include harmony between, cell walls, ribosomes, ATP, DNA, polymerase chains, protein replication, osmosis, and a thousand other irreducibly complex systems where if one piece in the chain falters everything falls apart. We look at that and say, "Hmm, what a happy coincidence!" Not to mention the fact that if our brains are just random chemicals interacting how could we ever trust the thoughts in them are accurate or informed any more than a mixed together test tube?

Yet we are the fools? I disagree. And in this madness, the fool saying in their heart there is no god, what are we doing other than trying to usurp the order that has been laid plain in front of us. This is the first sin, pride, "we can be like God." "We don't need him, we can make the rules, we can make the order how we want it, don't tell me how to live my life or my truth!" And we pushed the good God away and are left with a world of disorder, which, as we have seen plain this week and throughout time – well, it isn't always that great.

And even we who acknowledge a Creator aren't immune to this desire for entropy and chaos. Even though our Lord said, "love your enemies." We have people we, if we are honest, want bad things to happen to. We have lustful desires that seek to break the boundaries of chastity, sexuality, and marriage. We read those Bible verses that attack our pet sins so we try to find excuses for why we can go out of bounds. We read those verses that disagree with our idea of what we would do if we were God. "He wouldn't tell someone they were wrong, he wouldn't get all worked up over those 'doctrines.'" And so we apologize for Him as if He is too mean, when really perhaps we should just admit, He's God, we aren't. And maybe his ways are higher and better than ours, as we try desperately to usurp his truth, his ways, his order. That's called sin. And it brings with it a whole lot of pain. From the cellular level to the planetary level, and we are caught in the middle of it. But since we are in the middle of all this chaos, let's transition to our Gospel lesson. At Christmas and here in Epiphany we see that our Lord is not apart from his creation or distant, but that he comes into the middle of it himself. So at Christmas we celebrate how he comes into the corner of a galaxy, on this piece of rock to dwell with us. And in our gospel lesson we have opportunity to celebrate as he goes to the middle of the Jordan river to stand with us sinners.

Those of us who have seen that Jordan river, touched it's waters, we can attest, it isn't a clear rocky mountain stream, and it is no Snake river. But there in the brown

and not too wide or deep waters of the Jordan, John received the people of God who came and confessed that they were well-deserved victims of a an disordered and broken world, and that they had contributed to its disorder and brokenness. Jesus stands in the middle of that line. Not because he had contributed to the brokenness, no, he had no sin. So what is he doing in the water, especially when, as Matthew tells us, John said, “I need to be baptized by you”? He’s there because his work is to take our place. So he stands in place of the sinners being baptized for repentance to live the perfect repentance we cannot.

So our Lord comes to the middle of the chaos and disorder and begins to show how he is the one to put it back together. So as the Word of God said, “Let there be light,” and there was, likewise He, the Word made flesh, says, “Winds be still” and they are. “Little girl, arise,” and the dead girl lives. “Be clean,” and the lepers are clean. And we have these little instances of things being put back in place, being made right. And the result for those who witnessed it and experienced it: joy!

There wasn’t a whole lot of joy on the cross, however, where Jesus’ body is “disordered” to put it lightly (again maybe it isn’t a strong enough word). Skin rips, flesh bruises, and thorns, infection, nails, are put in places they don’t belong. But then again Jesus was there in a place he didn’t belong, he wasn’t supposed to be on a cross - you were. But just like at the Jordan river Jesus comes to a chaotic world to a place he shouldn’t be, that through his brokenness, we might be made

right. So all our disorder would be atoned for, paid for, and the debt we owed, the balance book with God, balanced out.

And lest anyone think the debt unpaid, or the brokenness victorious, or the epiphany light snuffed out, he rises up: healed, whole, back in order. The sin, the nails, the heart failure from crucifixion will not win and he is unbroken once more, as is the Trinity, no longer rifted. Everything back in order.

And he has promised that you will be put back in order, along with the creation, on the last day. And as we already mentioned, when He says something it goes. So fear not, you are washed clean by Christ's sacrifice, and you will rise again.

Because you are not a clump of cells, well, you are, but you are not *just* that. You are an ordered creation, even if a bit broken by genetic disorder, or age and time, but you believe in him, you have been baptized and brought into God's family and are an heir of his inheritance, which is a spot in his kingdom where all is made new. You heard Romans 6, baptism unites you with His death and resurrection. It's very ordered, his death, your death, his resurrection, your resurrection. Done.

Sealed. Rejoice! This world and it's rulers will rage and usurp order, but you have the name of the true God upon you, you know who's word to follow, you know you are not alone in the broken world, you know his promises are true. This means you can be of joy and good courage. In that same name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

