

9And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 10God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. 12The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Join me in prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts find their way up to the heart of God today. Amen.

Our verse this morning is just one stanza in the poem of creation from the first chapter of Genesis. This is the story of the beginning of the world. The pastor at my home church, Robin Bartlett, loves to talk about this poem as the story of original blessing. God blesses the earth and everything in it, calls it good seven times. It is good, it is good, it is good, it is good, it is good, it is good - it is *very* good. You might think that makes sense since there are seven days in this poem, seven blessings makes sense. But the blessings don't actually start until the third day. On the third day, God gathers the waters up and lets the dry ground appear, and God names the ground Earth and the water the Sea, and calls it good. And then, once the Earth has been created, God tells the earth to put forth plants that make seeds, and trees that bear fruit with seeds in it.” And God saw that the plants and the trees and their seeds were good.

This is the poem of creation. And right away, creation is given the power to create. Humans are not the only ones created in the image of the creator. The earth has the power to create plants and trees, and the plants and trees have the power to create seeds. God is creating an ecosystem that can sustain itself, but not just itself, because then God creates fish and birds and animals and humans, and all of creation is told to bear fruit and multiply. But before any of these things come the plants and their seeds.

This time last year my husband and I were in the middle of selling our house. We lived on two acres of land in central Massachusetts, where we had planted a dozen fruit trees, a hedge of elderberries, and twenty chestnuts. We had rows of herbs and flowers and a strawberry patch, and a big garden box where I planted my radishes and peas and cucumbers. We thought we would be there for a long time. We thought we would see the

plums and cherries and paw paws get so big they covered the yard in shade. But that's not what happened. Instead, we were packing most of our belongings into storage and moving into a one bedroom apartment with our son and our dog so that I could go to Boston University School of Theology.

But, I was in denial about the garden. I had decided to let some of my radishes go to seed, which I'd never done before. Radishes only take about a month from planting to harvesting, but they take much longer to get to seed. The little green tops bolt out to tall flowering stems and once those are pollinated, they form little seed pods that kind of look like a green bean. And you wait for those to dry out, and then you just open them up and you have ready to store radish seeds.

I watched those radishes every single day. As we packed our storage container, as we staged the house, as we went away for the showings, and then started negotiating. I went out to the garden box and prayed that I'd be able to take these seeds with me.

I don't know if you all have had the chance to check out the gardens we planted a couple weeks ago. Have you? We planted two gardens, one right out front by the bell filled with perennial herbs and native flowers that pollinators love, and the other at the parsonage, filled with vegetables that our kids will tend and learn about and share and save seeds from. And we're spending all this time in the garden this summer because I believe that the lessons we learn from our gardens are lessons about God. So I wonder what lessons we might take from the seeds.

A seed has potential. It has the potential to support life, to grow and produce fruit or vegetables or grasses or trees. Or given enough time it can grow and produce more seeds. Or it can be food for people or birds or deer. Or it can decompose and put its life back into the soil to nourish the next seed that comes along. The nature of a seed is to sustain life in all its forms. It's a promise for the future. The work of seedkeeping is a labor of love and trust and promise. It's ancient labor that we share not only with our ancestors, not only with the authors of Genesis, but also with birds and squirrels and bears and even the wind. But it does take time. And last summer I didn't have time to wait on those radishes.

But something else was happening, not in the vegetable box but in the herb garden. The chives that I'd planted from seeds *three years ago*, which hadn't sprouted when I planted them but somehow survived the winter and sprouted the next year, were suddenly

flowering. And even though my radish pods were not ready to harvest, as our close date came around the chive flowers had dried up and were starting to open to reveal little black seeds. On the morning of our close I took a brown paper bag and shook those flower heads into it, harvesting thousands of round seeds that smelled just a little bit like onions.

The lesson of seeds is abundance and generosity. The kind of generosity I'm talking about is hard for us to wrap our heads around really. We live in a not-enough society. Not enough time, not enough success, not enough friends, not enough goodness. We spend all our energy worrying about what we don't have that we miss the outrageous abundance of this world. It stifles our imagination. We look around at injustice, at environmental degradation, at systems that keep whole populations of people poor or imprisoned, and YES we want to live in a better world, but none of the solutions seem really possible, do they? There's not enough money, not enough food, not enough land, not enough good people to actually take care of all the people on the Earth, *let alone the Earth itself, right?*

These are the same worries that the original listeners of the creation poem had. People who worried that life was only hard work, day in and day out, until they died. People who worried that God was not really on their side, that the world was only war and chaos.

But the story of Genesis is of a world that makes sense. A world created by a loving God who has woven an intricate tapestry of creation, an ecosystem so interconnected that every single living thing is of service to each other.

And the first living things are the plants and their seeds. Seeds, promises of abundance. Of more than enough. They exist in abundance because they serve the whole ecosystem, and the ecosystem enlists many hands, beaks, paws, and antennae to return the favor. An abundance that teaches us that it is in our very nature to take care of not only ourselves, but each other. It is in our very nature to be of service. The world feels so broken because we have started to believe that our nature is to be individuals. When we do this we cut ourselves off, we disappear into isolation. But our nature is to be in community with each other, in community with the trees and birds rivers and to tend our community so that it can tend to us in return.

The promise is a world so abundant that all are fed, all are housed, all are cared for. This is the story God tells us in Genesis. This world is teeming with life, with potential, with

enough-ness. There is enough food to eat, there is enough time to rest, there is enough wealth to share, there is enough love, there is enough goodness to make this world whole. This is the world that we baptize our babies into! This is the church that we welcome new members into.

When we start to believe in God's promise of abundance, in God's promise of more than enough, we start to act like people who have hope. People who have a mission.

And that's what we are, because this church is called to fulfill God's promise of abundant life. That's the world we are working towards when we prepare food at Father Bills, when we provide a safe haven for queer kids in the Rainbow Youth Alliance, when we partner with the UCC to plan a week-long environmental justice program for our kids, and when we save seeds because we believe in the promise that there will be land and water and time to tend them.

A few weeks ago, we gathered in the front lawn to install our gardens. Kids, teenagers, young adults, not so young adults. Members of the church and friends who'd been recruited to help. We dug up the grass, we weeded, we planted, we spread mulch, we watered, we hauled away bag after bag of upturned lawn. We shared what we knew about plants and the names of weeds and how to get rosemary to last through the winter. And we played in the shade. We turned the hose on each other. We blessed the gardens with our laughter.

Beloved, a better world *is* possible. May we make it so. Amen.