

“BEGINNINGS” DELIVERED @ HOPE, FRESNO
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Grace, mercy and peace from God, our Creator and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Mommy, where do babies come from? This is one of the questions parents fear. What do you say, how much do you tell, what prompted the question? It’s a natural question for a child to ask, but sometimes the answer is “the hospital” and sometimes the answer is a more complex explanation.

The Abraham story today is similar to that. It is an attempt to explain how the Hebrew nation came to be. God chose Abraham to become a great nation by his own offspring. This story is told whenever Jewish children ask how the Jews came to be. As much theology as history (this is not a newspaper article from 6013 BC) this story of the visitors to Abraham and Sarah is the origin of God’s promise and display of God’s faithfulness to divine promises as much as anything else.

Among the questions Lutherans are asking this summer is “What do Lutherans Believe about the Big Bang Theory, Evolution and Creation?” I find it interesting that both ends of time are represented among the questions this summer. We have this question and similar ones, and we have the “end times” question which is for another Sunday. We want to know where we come from and where we’re going.

They say that those who don't study history are bound to repeat it. They say that if you don't know where you're going, you're not going to get there. They say a lot of things, whoever they are. But the real issue is a lot like the first question, "Mommy, where do babies come from?" You don't know what the answer is unless you know where the question comes from. It's similar to today's question.

Does the question want to shoot down scientific explanation because there is a felt conflict with the religious explanation? Does the question seek to affirm the scientific within the realm of the religious? Does the question imply that perhaps what the Bible teaches is wrong, and should not be taught?

If you want a lot more information on what I will say today, there will be two shows on KNXT beginning Monday at 9:30 in the evening, airing again Friday, the 27th, at 11:30 am, and then the following Monday and Friday, is a second show, same times. The guest is Dr. Ted Peters, a seminary professor of mine, and he addresses this topic in more extended discussion.

He begins, however, with the statement that religion and science exist side by side. It is not an either/or proposition when it comes to what you believe. From the scientific side there may be one theory, supported by evidence or proofs of a material nature, and from the religious side, there is a story supported by evidence from the lives of God's people of a spiritual nature.

When someone demands that a true Christian must believe that God created the universe in 7 24 hour days, I like to take them to the creation story they are claiming is true, which it is. There is nothing there that either explicitly states or implies that these were 24 hour days. In fact, take out the pew bibles and open to the first page of Genesis at the beginning, and look at verse 13 and following. How did they have 24 hour days without timers?

The purpose of the Genesis story is not scientific, therefore, it doesn't necessarily conflict with science. It's purpose is to say that God's hand was in creation from the very beginning and there is order in the universe. If you spend some time in the first 2 chapters of Genesis, you will notice the second creation story which has things created in a different order. This begins at Genesis 2:4. In the things we teach about creation, we kind of blend the 2 accounts depending on the point we're trying to convey. Are those accounts conflicting? No more than how we might answer our child's question about where babies come from.

There is a wide difference of opinion as to what is necessary to believe. Some say the Bible must prove Evolution wrong, and others say evolution proves the Bible wrong. Even among those who formed the criteria for fundamentalism, the group from which creationists (24 hour days) have sprung, there were 2 who believed in evolution. From fundamentalists to atheists, there is a whole range of thought, and the closest we come to a balance is somewhere in the middle, still with a range of

thought within it, called theistic evolution. This perspective says yes to both evolution and God's hand in it.

Perhaps today's Gospel lesson can be helpful. Jesus is visiting Mary and Martha. Martha is in the kitchen setting up dinner, cooking, getting dishes out, directing servants, and supervising. She comes out where Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to him and asks "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?" Jesus replies "...there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Is Martha criticized for making dinner? No, although Jesus says it is distracting her from something important. The lesson is that there are all kinds of distractions from our one main task in life, which is to learn from and follow Jesus. Distractions such as job, family, status, money, food, drink, and go ahead and complete that list for yourself, keep us from focusing on the thing that is needful and important. I wondered, as I pondered the question for today, if we don't sometimes prefer the distraction to the needful thing. Do we ask where we've come from or where we're going to avoid asking what are we doing? Do we look at the past and look at the future to avoid looking at the present? I prefer to think we ask those questions to inform the present, to point to what we should be doing now.

Science and religion do not have to be in conflict. I believe those who force them into conflict are perhaps themselves distracted from the one thing that is needful. Between the Alpha, the beginning, and Omega, the end, there is the life

of Jesus, and there is each of our lives. Perhaps the best thing to learn is let God be Alpha and Omega, and let's get on with following Jesus. AMEN.