

**Sept. 8, 2019 – (Pentecost 14, Garden of Eden)**

**Sermon Text – Genesis 2:4b-24**

- Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken." -

**So, “What are you made of?” “What are you made of?” “What makes you you?” “Are you made of the right stuff?” Think about that for a moment. I mean, what is it that makes human beings different from other life forms? And what is it that gives us our certain essence, if you will? I’ve been pondering that these last days. Mark Twain said it was what we wear. “The clothes make the man” is the quote. I would add “The clothes make the man or the woman.” It seems he thought attire and style was very important. I’ve also heard it said that “You are what you eat.” Seems the things we put in our mouths can make a big difference. Eat a good, healthy diet and chances are more likely that you will be good and healthy. Eat nothing but junk food, and, well, you could have problems, like the young man who ate nothing but white bread and French fries. Or maybe “We are what we do.” Occupations are very important. Work is a mark of identity. “Are you a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a scientist, a builder, a farmer, a pastor or a myriad of other job titles?” What we do makes a difference. We are what we do. And we are what we eat. And we are probably what we wear, though I can’t say that I’m quite as fashion conscious as some people might be.**

**The writer(s) of Genesis, chapter 2, also wondered about such questions. I’m pretty sure they didn’t think it was clothes. Clothes wouldn’t even be invented until the end of chapter 3. And I don’t think it was food because people had all they wanted, the fruit of every plant and tree in the garden, except for the two trees in the middle. That was certainly plenty to eat and plenty from which to choose. That issue won’t come up until we get into chapter 3 a few verses either. And, I don’t think it was occupation so much, though God had been very specific about what a person was to**

do. The created one was to be like the creator. God was a gardener. So, the human was also to be a gardener. The purpose was to “fill and keep” the garden. But that doesn’t quite seem to be it either. There is something still more fundamental. One of the contrasts between this second story of creation and the one in chapter one of Genesis is that in the first one God is always looking at what has been created and saying that “it is good.” And in the end that “it is very good.” In the second story, the older one, by the way, God looks around at the creation and says that “it is not good.” “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” So, God forms other creatures out of the ground, just as God had formed the man. We are made of the stuff of this earth. About that the writer of Genesis 2 is clear. And so are the other creatures. They are made from the dust, just as we are. But they are different. When the human is created, God bends down and blows the breath of life into the human’s nostrils. Humans are enlivened by God’s own divine breath. The other creatures also breath the air, but they get it from the atmosphere around them. The implication is that there is a difference in degree of relationship. All the creatures are God’s, but humans are infused with God’s own spirit, the Hebrew notion being that breath, wind and spirit are all the same thing.

The problem of creation is however not yet solved. God brings to the human all the living things created “to see what he would call them,” and they are all named, but there is not one that is a suitable “helper” and “partner.” God must try again. So, this time God uses a different process. God causes the human to fall asleep and takes from him a rib bone, which he apparently didn’t need anyway. And from that rib, God builds a new creature. The words here are important. The first human and the other creatures were “formed” from the earth. This creature is “fashioned” or “made.” It is “built” from the substance of the first creature. They are meant to be together. This time, the human responds with great enthusiasm. “This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!” This one is made of the same stuff. She has within her the same divine breath of God. She is an equal and proper partner and helper. And there is naming, “This one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” They are made for relationship with one another. Problem solved. The human is no longer alone. The two are together and everything is good.

So, “What are you made of?” The writer of Genesis 2 wants you to know that you are made of the stuff of this earth. Just like all the other creatures, we are formed from the dust of the ground. We have much in common with them, and we have a responsibility to take care of them and all the rest of creation. But you are also made of

much more than that. You have within you the divine breath of God. You are created especially for relationship with God and with one another. And that relationship is intended as an equal partnership to be shared, not as subordinate in any way, but as built from the same stuff. And yes, this passage has been misused for years to argue that men are superior to women because Adam was created first. But my female colleagues point out that's not the way it works. In the Bible, what is last in a series is almost always the most important. That would argue that women are the superior ones, because Eve was created last. I'm not sure I want to let them get away with that! I'm going to stick with we're all equal. And that is what makes you who you are!

Amen.