

Creation 3A - Cosmos  
Peace, Seattle  
June 25, 2017  
Proverbs 8, Colossians 1

## **COSMIC SCALE**

### **FRAME ~ ELDON**

- On this final Sunday of this Season of Creation, we pull out our telescopes to behold a universe unimaginably more vast and complex than our wildest imaginations.
- A universe made up of galaxies with billions of stars; where peering at the night sky means peering back into deep time.

### **TELESCOPIC LENS 1 ~ ERIK**

- On a clear night, away from the glare of city lights, turn your gaze skyward and you'll see that great river of stars we call the Milky Way, home to perhaps two hundred billion stars—of which our Sun is just one.
- Tools like the Hubble Telescope enable us to look deep into the universe, and still, we've observed only the tiniest sliver of the estimated 100 billion galaxies beyond our own Milky Way.<sup>1</sup>

### **TELESCOPIC LENS 2 ~ ELDON**

- The Hubble photo featured on our bulletin cover is of The Pillars of Creation,
- a formation of hydrogen gas and dust 30 trillion miles across, located 6,500 light years from Earth.
- Think of it as a stellar nursery—a womb from which new stars are born.

### **TELESCOPIC LENS 1 ~ ERIK**

- Over the 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang, the universe has been constantly recycling itself.
- Astrophysicists like Neil DeGrasse Tyson tell us the very atoms that comprise life on Earth—the atoms that make up the human body—are traceable to stellar crucibles that cooked light elements into heavy elements under extreme temperatures and pressures.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Owen Gingerich (Prof. of Astronomy and the History of Science, Harvard U.) in his book: GOD'S UNIVERSE.)

## **TELESCOPIC LENS 2 ~ ELDON**

- When the first generation of stars reached the end of their lifespans they collapsed and exploded, hurling the fundamental ingredients of life out from their cores, setting the stage for solar systems like ours to eventually form.
- So...“when we look at the night sky, we can know that, yes, we are part of this universe,” as Tyson suggests, “But perhaps more importantly we can know that the universe is in us.”

## **TELESCOPIC LENS 1 ~ ERIK**

**When did human beings enter this vast cosmic drama? Here’s an image to ponder:<sup>2</sup>**

- Imagine that each of the Universe’s 13.8 billion years is contained in 30 volumes,
- and that each volume has 460 pages;
- and that each of these pages represents 1 million years.

## **TELESCOPIC LENS 2 ~ ELDON**

**Using this analogy...The Big Bang constitutes the 1st letter of the 1st word on the 1st page of Volume 1.**

- But it isn’t until Volume 21 that Earth itself is completely formed,
- and in Volume 22 that the first forms of life emerge.

## **TELESCOPIC LENS 1 ~ ERIK**

- Dinosaurs don’t make their entrance until Volume 30, the final book, and they become extinct on p. 393.
- Most startling of all, modern humans like us only appear on the last paragraph or so of the last page of the last volume.

## **PERCEPTION ~ ELDON**

**When measured against deep time, the human story is very late to the stage. Yet we’re making an oversized impact on our planet home.**

**In his book, THE DREAM OF THE EARTH, Thomas Berry writes:**

“We have no functional cosmology to guide and discipline our...knowledge and skill...We really do not understand the new story of the universe or its meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The image comes from a presentation by John Haught. See also John Haught’s book, *God After Darwin, A Theology of Evolution. Second Edition.* Westview Press, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> T. Berry p 111-112

## **PERCEPTION ~ ERIK**

**Whether by microscope or telescope, our perception of God's creation is a matter of 'seeing'.**

- What are we seeing? And what are we not seeing?
- Our challenge is to see the cosmos – because in seeing, something happens that changes how we relate to it as God's creation.

## **REFORMATION LENS 1 ~ ELDON**

As we celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, let's make a parallel between what Luther called us to see about salvation and what we are called to see about creation.

- Luther's Reformation was mainly about Salvation – that our salvation is entirely a matter of God's gracious love for us in Jesus Christ.
- What provoked him to act was the attempt to "sell" salvation by selling indulgences.
- But Salvation is not for sale. Salvation is what God has done in Christ.
- We cannot own or sell or measure or impact in any way the grace of God Salvation is God's gift.

## **REFORMATION LENS 2 ~ ERIK**

**Creation is also God's wonderful and amazing gift – no less beautiful, no less gracious.**

- Chief Sealth was right – we can't own creation. It's not our property.
- We are in fact part of it, interdependently connected with all its life forms.
- We benefit from creation's lavish fruitfulness – with the strong belief that it truly belongs to him who "holds it all together."<sup>4</sup>
- It is God's gracious gift in Christ, and we surrender it to God as unblemished, abundant, and beautiful for generations that follow us. So we're free!

## **REFORMATION LENS 1 ~ ELDON**

**As Luther pointed out regarding our Salvation – we're free now to serve others!**

- We don't have to fret, worry, finagle, moralize, or rationalize our salvation – we're free of all that self-absorbed nonsense.
- No more hair shirts, no more plaster saints, no more monastic purity, no more self-righteous platitudes. We're free.
- In the same way, now that the cosmos has become defined as the work of Christ's good creation, given in Grace, we're free! Not free to make a mess of creation – but free to serve creation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:17

## **COSMIC CHRIST 1 ~ ERIK**

**Our faith affirms that within the vast spaces of the universe, within the human story of countless generations, at a particular moment in time, God entered in Jesus.**

- Christ's incarnation, his dying and rising, become the *lens* through which we clearly see WHO WE ARE, and HOW WE ARE TO BE—OUR VOCATION—WITHIN THIS UNFOLDING DRAMA OF LIFE.
- In Christ all things in the universe come to birth, all things are ordered, and all things are reconciled to God.

## **COSMIC CHRIST 2 ~ ELDON**

- When we view the rest of creation through the lens of Christ, when we observe the cosmos through the eyes of faith, something happens within us – a new creation is formed, a new relationship with the cosmos.
- In Christ, we live in community with all things—with the microbial colonies that inhabit our bodies; with the species and features which make up our bioregions; with one another; with all humanity and all the structures of politics, economics, welfare, learning, and good will.
- All of these we now see through the eyes of a Christ incarnate in human flesh.
- And that community in Christ now calls us to see the cosmos itself as the creation in which Christ is present.

## **SALVATION TODAY ~ ERIK**

**What, finally, does this new way of “seeing” show us?**

- **That CREATION IS NOT FOR SALE.**
- That the way we have made Earth, its species and resources into commodities is not sustainable.

## **SALVATION TODAY ~ ELDON**

In the words of Pope Francis:

- Earth is “a sister who cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.
- The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.”
- The Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail.”

## **IMPLICATIONS ~ ERIK**

Giving voice to this truth is a necessary first step, but our response must not stop there.

- At this moment in time, on this planet we call home, our species is being called to align ourselves—our hearts and minds and appetites—with God’s deep wisdom.
- To exchange exploitation for delight. To undergo a conversion to Earth.

## **IMPLICATIONS ~ ELDON**

- Luther taught us that serving the neighbor means seeing Christ in the neighbor—especially in the suffering and abandoned ones. For this is where Christ is found.
- In order to forge a new relationship with Earth in our time, we must first learn to see Christ in creation.

## **IMPLICATIONS ~ ERIK**

- Searching for Christ in creation leads us to see our collective complicity in Earth’s exploitation and degradation, and our collective responsibility to act faithfully.
- As our new perception grows, we pay closer and closer attention to the voice of God emerging through Earth herself, “God’s first, oldest, and clearest Scripture.”<sup>5</sup>

## **IMPLICATIONS ~ ELDON**

**Recognizing Christ’s presence in all creation leads to our conversion:**

- Leaving old ways behind, we give ourselves to the love of God, love of neighbor, and love of Earth.
- This gift of sight reshapes what we see in every place, by every measure—from the microbotic scale, to the human scale, to the cosmic scale.

## **CLOSING ~ ERIK**

“In the future,” writes Richard Rohr, “morality will come primarily from the Earth and the very nature of the cosmos, not from religion.

“This one planet on which all of us stand will tell us that we must live simple lives, and that we must live reverent lives that produce and create instead of merely consume and destroy.

“And if creation itself is the body of God—the visible revelation of who God is—won’t we find ourselves at home again?”

---

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rohr. *On the Threshold of Transformation*. P. 24.