

You have probably heard the quote that it is aerodynamically impossible for a bee to fly. However a bee does not care about what humans think is possible or impossible and so it flies anyway.

This is a playful little statement, but it does get at the point that we humans think we can -or should- be able to intellectually comprehend everything. In the case of a bee, we kept studying and studying them until we figured out the principles at work which allow them to fly. Our persistence is to our credit, but we can also become arrogant about our abilities.

Today we are looking at creation in cooperation with the Sunday school's curriculum for September. But we aren't talking about creation as being Nature, or the earth, or even the solar system. We're talking about creation on a cosmic scale - God as the creator of everything. Even time itself is a creation of God.

There's an old joke about a group of scientists that got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and mind your own business?" God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this? Let's say we have a man-making contest." To which the scientist replied, "Okay, we can handle that!" "But," God added, "we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You create your own dirt."

Or as Carl Sagan said, "If you want to make an apple pie from scratch you must begin by inventing the universe."

I sound like I'm mocking scientific principles, but if we want to really grasp the enormity of God's creative powers we are wise to apply scientifically critical thought to what the Bible says about creation.

In my opinion the account of creation that opens our Bible gets way too much press coverage. People become so trapped in the six day creation story that they forget there are several creation accounts in the Bible. All of our Bible passages today talk about the creation of the universe. Notice that none of them are the Genesis 1 text. I'm going to focus on our 1st reading from Genesis 2 because it so contradicts what was just said in Genesis 1.

In the creation account of Genesis 2 how many days does it take for God to create things? Not six days but one day. And what is the order of creation? Genesis 1 shows that its author had a fairly decent understanding of what we think of as a scientific understanding of creation - you start with land and water then move into lower forms of animals, then land animals and ultimately humans. But what about Genesis 2? It goes: land, then Adam, then plants, then animals, and finally woman.

(If it's true that you save the best for last then as a man I don't like this passage!)

Why would there be two stories of creation that so obviously contradict each other placed side by side in the Bible? Many people these days think the Bible was written by a bunch of ignorant simpletons, but were they really that thick as to overlook such obvious contradictions?

In our current beliefs of progress and sophistication we often overlook the complexity of the ancient minds. Of course the person who compiled Genesis into the book we have today knew the two creation stories contradicted each other. The Bible is full of such contradictory stories. The four gospels contradict each other in many places. You may remember I did a sermon a few years ago about the two contradictory stories of Noah that are both in Genesis. Why is this so?

Today we like to have clear and definite answers. We like to say, "How did it happen?" and then get a definitive answer. What we don't like is the truth of the world around us which is, that the world is complex and messy. Things are seldom clear

and absolute. If we come to the Bible and say, "How did creation really happen?" we're going to get answers that are nonsense. Critics of Christianity have a field day with the nonsense answers the Bible gives.

Dr. Richard Nelson, my one professor in seminary used to say, "The Bible is humanity's attempt to grasp that which cannot be grasped."

Why are there multiple contradictory creation accounts? Because creation out of nothing is a truth the human brain cannot even begin to imagine. The ancient authors and compilers of these texts knew that no one account could fully grasp what God was doing. No multiple accounts could grasp it either, but the tensions and contradictions between them begin to open the door into God a bit farther than just confining God to the limits of human logic.

That's hard for us. We want to know, to understand, and to define God. But we simply can't.

There's a lot in this universe that we can understand and comprehend by the critical thought processes of science. It is exciting to see new truths discovered every day. But we will never be able to invent the universe or even something so simple as making our own dirt out of nothing. That is God's power and God's alone.

The awesome power of our creating God can be frightening and absolutely unknowable. That is where our Christian faith gives us guidance. God knows that we can't know him. It is impossible. So God comes to us in a form we can understand - a human being. What does the gospel of John say, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life... And the Word became flesh and lived among us."

What does the Word made flesh - the one we call Jesus of Nazareth - do? He reveals God's nature to us, and God's nature is love.

We cannot comprehend God's creative power. God hasn't given us access into that. But we can comprehend God's power of love, because that's been revealed to us. And the Bible tells us that God's greatest power is not the power to create or to obliterate. It is this power of love.

Ironically quantum physics tells us that we can create and obliterate matter. Someday perhaps we will be able to create our own dirt. And those of you who know your advanced physics well know what lies behind all matter? Energy. In fact matter, time, distance, and everything that seems permanent is really not real. The only absolute is energy, and that is something we cannot create from nothing.

It's enough to make our heads spin. That's okay because we simply cannot know. But we can and do live God's greatest power, the creative and eternal power of love. Thank God for this gracious gift. Amen