

## Day 1—Ash Wednesday

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

Genesis 1:1-3

Every journey has a beginning. Our Lenten journey takes us back to the very beginning, the creation story. The Scriptures themselves are the story of people on a journey: a journey with God, a journey from a garden paradise to a heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

Some stories begin with the storyteller's familiar phrase "Once upon a time." Our story begins with God's creative command "Let there be." God speaks, and the story begins. God speaks, and day by day, bit by bit, the entire universe comes into existence. God speaks, and God's Word creates what it names.

We underestimate God if we think the creation story only lasts for a week. Ours is no absentee god who creates the world and then leaves it to fend for itself. In the Apostles' Creed, when we confess our faith in God as the "creator of heaven and earth," we are not talking only about what God did "in the beginning." We are also describing the present relationship between God and God's created world. We never say, "God was the Creator," but always, "God is the Creator." God continues to speak to the creation, and through the Word, God continues to give life to the creation, today and every day.

In the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we hear the words "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." That's an organic description of creaturely death and decay, but it is not the final word. God's Word created us from the dust of the earth, and it is God's Word that will raise us up from the dust of the grave. Between the dawn of creation and the final day, God continues to be with us on this earthly journey. Thanks be to God!

*Biblical Wisdom*

*“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:20b

*Theological Thoughts*

“Since the divine life is essentially creative, all three modes of time must be used in symbolizing it. God *has* created the world, he is creative in the present moment, and he *will* creatively fulfill his *telos* [goal or purpose].”<sup>3</sup>

*Paul Tillich*

*Silence for Meditation*

*Psalm Fragment*

*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.*

Psalm 33:6

*Questions to Ponder*

- If you think about creation as something that is still happening today, what do you notice about the world around you? Where do you discern God’s presence?
- What message does the world need to hear from its Creator today? Finish the sentence: “Let there be \_\_\_\_\_.”

*Prayer for Today*

I thank you, God, for if you can create the entire world out of nothing, you can surely make something out of me. Amen.

## Day 2—Thursday

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:1

The opening sentence of John’s Gospel is both familiar and poetic. It is also very different from the beginning of the other three Gospels. Matthew reports the genealogy of Jesus. Luke tells the stories of the unexpected pregnancies of Elizabeth and Mary. Mark fast-forwards to Jesus’ adulthood and describes the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. But John gives us poetry—poetry that takes us all the way back to the creation. John, like the author of Genesis, begins the story “in the beginning.”

In Genesis 1, God brings the whole creation into being by speaking the words “Let there be. . . .” Now John connects God’s creative speech “in the beginning” with the coming of God here and now. Jesus of Nazareth is not just a prophet who brings God’s Word to the people. Jesus is God’s Word, in the flesh.

It’s hard for us to understand how all-encompassing a statement it is that John is making. The Greek word John uses, *Logos*, is more than a reference to a part of speech. *Logos* is the root from which all our “-ology” words come: biology, geology, psychology. Used this way, it describes the academic study of a particular subject. Used more broadly, the related word “logic” refers to a comprehensive system of reasoning. The ancient Greeks used *Logos* as a technical term in the disciplines of philosophy, mathematics, and rhetoric. Depending on its context, *Logos* can be translated not only as “word” but as “speech,” “principle,” “thought,” or “reason.” The concept of *Logos* expressed the claim that the universe as a whole had structure and meaning.

So what John is saying here is that the world is not random but was created with a purpose, according to a plan. And that purpose, the meaning of created life, the reason there is something rather than nothing, is God. Philosophy, mathematics, science—these are all tools we can use to help us understand the world and how it works. But the world makes sense because the world was created by God, by a personal God who orders all things for our good.

*Biblical Wisdom*

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.*

Colossians 1:15-16

*Theological Thoughts*

“As the Word of God, the Logos had spoken in creation, and spoken in the prophets of Israel, and spoken again—and decisively—in the life and teachings of Jesus. As the Reason of God, the Logos made sense out of the madness of the world and the power of evil.”<sup>4</sup>

*Jaroslav Pelikan*

*Silence for Meditation*

*Psalm Fragment*

*The LORD exists forever;  
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.*

Psalm 119:89

*Questions to Ponder*

- What insights does the word *Logos* offer into the relationship between faith and science?
- How would you explain to someone else the purpose for which the world was created?

*Prayer for Today*

Help me to recognize your Word, O God, not only in the Scriptures but also in the world you have created. Amen.

## Day 3—Friday

*... and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:1

The doctrine of the Trinity is sometimes referred to as one of the “mysteries of the faith.” The belief that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet one God, is hard to wrap our heads around. We can’t explain it. Try as we might, there are no earthly analogies that accurately communicate the fullness of who the triune God is. We can’t explain it, but we believe it.