

Chrismons Mini-Sermons  
Waupun UMC, Advent 2020

Week 1  
11/29/2020

**The Hand**

Genesis 1:1-5

For those of you who are, for those of you who did, work for a living; how many of you loved your work? Many people find fulfillment, creativity, and meaning in the work of their hands.

The place to begin a theological definition of work is in the very beginning: the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. In this story of creation, we learn that God is a creative worker.

Notice how productive God is throughout the first creation story in the Book of Genesis: God begins with a brainstorm, saying, "Let there be light," and there is light; then God separates the light from the darkness. The Lord behaves like a benevolent boss, giving the orders, "Let the earth put forth vegetation" ... "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky" ... "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind" ... and all these creations come into being.

God works like a cosmic craftsman, making the sun and the moon, creating the great sea monsters, forming the wild animals of the earth, and finally making humankind in his image, according to his likeness. We humans turn out to be the Lord's finest "work product," and he gives us "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

It was the word of God and the breath of God and the hand of God which created and shaped all of the world around us. Creation, plant, animal, and mineral, all point to the Creator and so it is the hand of God which we hang on the Christmas tree today which points to God and is a sign of God among us.

## The Cross

1 Corinthians 1:18, 21-25

While it's often worn in churches by pastors and others who preach and teach, it also adorns the necks of people who glam it up, using it as jewelry whether they're Christians or not. Sexy starlets and violent rappers can wear a cross, and not see a paradox between the symbol and their words and actions. It's just jewelry.

What does the symbol of the cross really mean? How do we reclaim that Christian symbol in a world where the cross has become a fashion accessory or a sign that is often ignored? First, the powerful sign of the cross has to be *activated* within the people for whom it is giving life. The best sign of the cross is found in the life and conduct of those who are being saved through it by the power of God. "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters," says Paul (v. 26). Christians should not be recognized by the usual signs of success in this world, but by the sign and work of Christ within us. It's in Christ that we find true wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (v. 30). We demonstrate Christ best not by the jewelry that we wear or the fish signs we stick on our car and truck bumpers, but by living lives that are scandalously humble, generous and meek. The cross reminds us of our own spiritual limitations and allows God's grace to come through us on its way to someone else.

And, then, having recognized that the cross has offered salvation to us individually, *we then begin to live as a cross-shaped community*. Paul's letter to the Corinthians was designed to address divisions in the church, which obscure the sign of the cross in the world. Instead, we are to be "united in the same mind and the same purpose" (v. 10). The early church thrived in the Roman world because it continued to live the life of the cross, despite ridicule, censure and persecution (Acts 2:42-47). In a world that's becoming ever more divisive, even within the church, the sign of the cross can once again become the sign that reminds us that it's not about us, but about what God has done for us in Christ.