

Genesis: 2:4b-23

At the time when YAHWEH Made the heavens and the earth, there was still no wild bush on the earth nor had any wild plant sprung up, for YAHWEH had not yet sent rain to the earth, and there was no human being to till the soil. Instead, a flow of water would well up from the ground and irrigate the soil. So YAHWEH fashioned an earth creature out of the clay of the earth, and blew into its nostrils the breath of life. And the earth creature became a living being. YAHWEH planted a garden to the east, in Eden—"land of Pleasure"—and placed in it the earth creature that had been made. Then YAHWEH caused every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, to spring from the soil. In the center of the garden was the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." A river flows through Eden to water the garden, after which it branches into four tributaries. The first stream is named Pishon, or "Spreader." It circles through Havilah, a land rich in gold, gold of the highest quality. There are gum resins there, and precious onyx stones. The second stream is named Gihon, or "Gusher," and it flows through the entire land of Cush. The third stream is the Tigris, which borders Assyria on the east. The fourth stream is the Euphrates.

Then YAHWEH took the earth creature and settled it in the garden of Eden so that it might cultivate and care for the land. YAHWEH commanded the earth creature, "You may eat as much as you like from any of the trees of the garden—except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. You must not eat from that tree, for on the day you eat from that tree, that is the day you will die—yes, die."

Then YAHWEH said, "It is not good for the earth creature to be alone. I will make a fitting companion for it." So from the soil YAHWEH formed the various wild beasts and all the birds of the air, and brought them to the earth creature to be named. Whatever the earth creature called each one, that became its name. The earth creature gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals.

But none of them proved to be a fitting companion, so YAHWEH made the earth creature fall into a deep sleep, and while it slept, God divided the earth creature in two, then closed up the flesh from its side. YAHWEH then fashioned the two halves into male and female, and presented them to one another. When the male realized what had happened, he exclaimed, "This time, this is the one! Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! Now, she will be Woman, and I will be Man, because we are of one flesh!"

*Contemporary Reading: from "The Rebirthing of God" by John Philip Newell - 2014*

"Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century Christian mystic, said most simply but most radically that we are not just made by God, we are made of God. We are not just fashioned from afar by a distant Creator. We are born from the very womb of the Divine. This is why Julian so loves to refer to God as Mother as well as Father. She sees us as coming forth from the essence of the One who is the Source of all things.

What does it mean that we are made of God rather than simply by God?

In part it means that the wisdom of God is deep within us, deeper than the ignorance of what we have done. It is to say that the creativity of God is deep within us, deeper than any barrenness in our lives or relationships, deeper than any endings in our families or our world. Within us—as a sheer gift of God—is the capacity to bring forth what has never

been before, including what has never been imagined before. Above all else, as Julian says, the love-longings of God are at the heart of our being. We and all things have come forth from the One. Deep within us are holy, natural longings for oneness, primal sacred drives for union. We may live in tragic exile from these longings, or we may have spent a whole lifetime not knowing how to truly satisfy them, but they are there at the heart of our being, waiting to be born afresh.”

John 3:1-16

A Certain Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus at night. “Rabbi,” he said, “we know you’re a teacher come from God, for no one can perform the signs and wonders you do, unless by the power of God.”

Jesus gave Nicodemus this answer: “The truth of the matter is, unless one is born from above, one cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said, “How can an adult be born a second time? I can’t go back into my mother’s womb to be born again!”

Jesus replied: “The truth of the matter is, no one can enter God’s kingdom without being born of water and the Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. So don’t be surprised when I tell you that you must be born from above.

The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes, but you don’t know where it comes or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be possible? Asked Nicodemus.

Jesus replied, “You’re a teacher of Israel, and you still don’t understand these matters?

The truth of the matter is, we’re talking about what we know; we’re testifying about what we’ve seen—yet you don’t accept our testimony. If you don’t believe when I tell you about earthly things, how will you believe when I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the One who came down from heaven—the Chosen One.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Chosen One must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One might have eternal life.

Yes, God so loved the world as to give the Only Begotten One, that whoever believes may not die, but have eternal life.

