

Genesis 3:8-1
“God Within”
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“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.” Thus, opens the first book and the first verse of Hebrew and Christian scripture. Thus, begins one of the most universally familiar stories across the world. Thus, begins probably the most commonly-held image of God, captured on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the north porch of Chartres Cathedral in France and on an icon I bought at Santa Fe Spanish Market and hangs in my family room. Thus, begins the way most Christians picture God - Creator, Heavenly, Almighty, Distant, a Superhuman Power. As the rest of the Genesis story unfolds, this description of God becomes more firmly in place. With mighty power and vast imagination, God brings forth the sun, moon and stars, animals and plants, and finally, God makes humankind in God’s image. The story takes some 31 verses and slips into Chapter 2: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” It seems clear that God is finished. God has completed the work and takes a rest. “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” Sounds like the end of creation’s story, but listen again to today’s first reading:

“They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze...”. What a different picture of God. What a different picture of creation. The Holy is present not just in the highest of the starry vault, caught on the currents of outer space. God’s Love, as given in the cosmos and in nature, has sound, movement and presence in midst of our human story. The fullness of God’s Love is all around although hidden in the ordinary of a garden, in the coolness of a breeze, as if walking beside us. God “appears” in creation. God “appears” in us. Made in God’s Love, we are created to be one with God. God’s Love desires to be close. God wants to find us in the midst of our life.

This part of the Genesis story tells us that God does find us in our life. It’s not when we are good that God decides to draw near. It is not when we have obeyed the rules. It is not when we live from our intimate connection to the “other” in our midst. It is not when we tell the truth and stop blaming. The fullness of God’s Love does not wait. The overflowing of God’s Love finds us in the depth of our being. At the end of day, when we have done our best and done our worst, God calls to us, “Where are you?” God comes to Adam and Eve to complete creation with relationship and connection. God calls forth the image, the divine image, placed in them. Or, in the words of an orthodox theologian, “God is a beggar of love waiting at the soul’s door...”. (The Unbearable Wholeness of Being, Delio page 80)

Then, what do we do with the rest of the passage? The part with God’s conversation with the serpent? Tradition has always interpreted the outcome is a curse for Eve, and then Adam, for eating the apple. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers...”. Yet, why does it have to be a “curse”? Couldn’t God’s message be a description of what life is also about - separate,

enmity, labor, toil? Could God recognize and affirm the gift of blessing and connection, of the divine spark hidden within, and God also not hide the hard work of living from our inner well of holy love. Thus, it's not an either/or, a blessing or a curse, but a both/and. In God's realm, in the cosmos and on earth, there is both blessing and work for Adam and Eve, for you and me.

Etty Hillsum was one of thousands of young Jews whose life ended in a Nazi concentration camp. Her words in a small diary survived her:

“Dear God, these are anxious times. Tonight, for the first time I lay in the dark with burning eyes as scene after scene of human suffering passed before me. I shall promise You one thing, God, just one very small thing: I shall never burden my today with cares about tomorrow, although that takes some practice. Each day is sufficient unto itself. I shall try to help You, God, to stop Your strength ebbing away, though I cannot vouch for it in advance. But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You cannot help us, that we help You to help ourselves. And that that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters: that we safeguard that little of You, God, in ourselves. And perhaps in others as well. Alas, there doesn't seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold You responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last.” (The Unbearable Wholeness of Being” Delio, page 89).
AMEN.