

September 6, 2026 – The Feast of Creation in Christ – Genesis 1:1-2:4a | John 1:1-5

*In the Beginning: The Story of Creation Continues*

Today we are observing a new feast day in the church, one that comes to us from the Byzantine tradition and has been adopted by the Lutheran World Federation and World Council of Churches, the Feast of Creation in Christ. The last time the wider church added a new feast to its shared calendar was about one hundred years ago. And now this year churches all over the world are coming together to celebrate this ancient feast day.

I want to sit with that for a second, because I think it's easy to hear "new feast day" and file it under church trivia — a committee somewhere added a date to a calendar. But think about what it actually means for a 2,000-year-old institution to say: there is something here we have not yet said out loud together. Something true the whole time, that we are only now finding the words for.

Here's why this is important this morning: we as a congregation have spent some time feeling like we're running low — on people, on resources, on whatever we think churches are supposed to have in order to count. And I don't want to talk us out of that feeling this morning. But if the whole church can still come together to establish a new feast, our small church here in this small town can't be counted out from anything just by being small. Running low isn't the same as running out.

This ties in well with this new feast day. The Feast of Creation is a day to look at the stories of creation in scripture and to remember that God is still working, still creating, even today, even in spaces we cannot see. Not just the spaces past the edge of the universe or back at the start of time — but the ordinary, overlooked spaces close to us. God isn't retired from that work, it's still happening, right here, whether or not we can point to it yet.

So where do we start on this new feast day? As Julie Andrews famously sang in the Sound of Music, "Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start." Quite literally, the first words of our first reading today are "In the beginning..."

Let's look closely in Genesis at what happened there in the beginning. The earth was a ball of dark chaos, formless and empty, the kind of nothing that isn't peaceful, just a void. And hovering over that chaos was a holy wind from God, the *ruach*, the same word that later means breath, spirit, the thing that animates a body. Before God says a single word, He is already present in the chaos, already hovering over it. Not distant from the mess. In it.

Then God speaks. Not once but six times. Listen to what gets called into being, and listen to what follows every single time: Light — and God saw that it was good. Sky, water pulled back into place — and it was good. Land, and everything growing out of it — good. The sun, moon, stars set to keep time — good. Every living creature in the water and the air — good. And finally everything that walks the land — good. Out of that chaos and darkness came light and life.

But notice what hasn't happened yet. Nothing that's been created to this point has done anything. No creature has proven itself. No plant has produced fruit yet worth measuring. The land hasn't grown a single harvest anyone could point to and say, "See, that's why it's good." None of that. And yet God has already declared all of it good. Which means goodness isn't the prize at the end of the process — it's the ground the process stands on.

Think about what that actually asks of us. Every other verdict we've ever received in our lives came after something — after a test, a harvest, a performance review. This one doesn't. It comes first. Before the fruit, before the harvest, before there's anything at all to point to. Which means goodness, here, isn't something earned or taught or built up over time through good behavior. It's declared. Spoken over us by the One who made us, before we had the chance to do a single thing to deserve it or ruin it. That's not how we usually measure worth. We measure worth by output — what got produced, what got accomplished, what's left when we tally it up. Genesis refuses that math entirely.

That's not an accident of ancient poetry. It's the whole point, and it's aimed directly at every version of the question we keep quietly asking ourselves here: are we still good for something? Is there still enough here to matter?

Now we jump to John. He opens with the same three words — *In the beginning* — and that's not a coincidence. John is quoting Genesis directly, pulling us back to those six days, back to the voice that hovered over the chaos and spoke. And he tells us something Genesis never says out loud on its own: who was speaking those words. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things came into being through him.*

That voice that spoke light into the dark — John says it belongs to someone specific. The one doing the naming, declaring goodness before there's anything to show for it, isn't some abstract force hovering out past the edge of the universe. It's Jesus, the Word made flesh. Which means the good spoken over creation was

never a verdict handed down once and filed away in some ancient chapter. It's a person. Still speaking. Still here. Right now, in this room.

And that changes what kind of claim we're actually dealing with. This isn't "God liked the world once, a long time ago, under very different circumstances, before things got this hard." This is: the one who called it good then is the same one standing here now, and he hasn't changed his mind about it.

Now watch the order John puts things in. He doesn't say the light produced life. He says the opposite: *In him was life, and the life was the light of all people*. Life is the source. Light is what that life looks like once it meets the dark. That matters, because it means this light was never a decoration added on top of creation to make it look nicer. It's what life itself does the instant it touches what isn't alive yet. The chaos doesn't get illuminated from the outside, the way you'd shine a lamp into a room. It gets entered, by life itself, and then it starts, on its own terms, to shine.

Which is exactly why what comes next lands the way it does: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*. Not will not. Not someday won't. Past-to-present — already accomplished, still holding, right now while you're sitting in this room. And notice why the darkness can't touch it. Darkness was never a rival power throwing punches back. It's just the absence that life, showing up as light, is filling. You don't overcome an absence by fighting harder than it. You overcome it by refusing to stop existing there. That's what this light has already done, and is still doing — not arguing with whatever dark you carried in here this morning, not waiting it out, just quietly refusing to be extinguished by it.

And that's not just a claim about something that happened once, at the start of everything. If the light is still burning, it's still lighting something up. Which means the question is "where is that same light showing up now, doing the same thing it did in the beginning?"

Look around. God is still creating new life around us. We tend to have this view that the creation story in Genesis was just a one and done event, God created everything, let it run free, and he decided to just sit back and let things go. While he did rest on the seventh day, that rest wasn't permanent, because new life continues to happen around us.

You've probably noticed I've used a lot of growth imagery in my most recent pastoral letters. The apple tree that blew over and broke in a storm a couple

months ago. The rose bush that I intentionally dug out of the ground that recently resprouted from a piece of root that I neglected to dig out, which by the way has gone from one shoot to three total. One I haven't written about is the red maple sapling that has popped up among the weeds in one of my flowerbeds.

In each and every one of those cases, that new life didn't come from the greatest of conditions, but in fact quite the opposite. God didn't care that there was only a stump left, that I dug up the rose bush, or that a flowerbed is no place for a tree. God saw an opportunity for new life and let it happen.

I know we keep asking amongst ourselves, whether quietly or outloud, if there is new life happening in this congregation. We look around and see the empty pews that used to be fuller, the giving getting smaller as we continue to tighten the budget. We wonder if we're still good enough, forgetting that before anything needed to prove itself, God called it good.

Here's the good news I want us to hear this morning — there is new life happening here. Rather than being big and grandiose, it may be more like those small rose bush shoots in my backyard. Regardless of the size, they're still there. It may not be as bright as the sun but more like a flickering candle, but it's still there, pushing back against the darkness. The size doesn't matter, we still nurture it, care for it, help it along because it will continue to grow.

That's the work. Not manufacturing new life out of nothing — that was never ours to do — but noticing where God's already put it and then showing up and tending to it anyway. Very often it will show up in unlikely places or spaces where we would never give a second look. The location is not the point, it's the life and growth that matter.

That's what this first Feast of Creation is asking of us. Not to prove that we can fix every problem that comes up by faith alone — but to go looking, honestly, for where the light is already flickering in this place and to stop assuming that because it's small, it isn't real. The God who spoke over the chaos and called it good before there was a single harvest to show for it is the same God still speaking over this congregation now because the work is still not finished.

So look for the saplings around you, water and tend to them. Trust that the light hasn't gone out just because it's small enough that you have to look twice to see it — because it hasn't. That life and light are what give us hope for what is still to come.

And all of God's people said, Amen!