

## Bone of My Bone

By: Meagan McLaughlin

October 6, 2024. Pastor Meagan preaches on our intimate, often messy connections with one another. In all of our readings today, we're reminded that we are responsible to care for all that God created.

Readings: [Genesis 2:18-24](#), [Psalm 8](#), [Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12](#), [Mark 10:2-16](#)

\*\*\* Transcript \*\*\*

In the Bible, our sacred text that has thousands of pages, it only takes until Chapter 2 of Genesis before some very significant things happen.

Just before this passage, God breathed Spirit into Adam — in Hebrew it's actually pronounced /a: 'da:m/, meaning earth-person, or human, still beyond gender — bringing them to life, like a mother gives life to her child. God formed Adam out of the earth with her hands, like a potter working with clay, and then breathed life into them. Think about that for a minute. Our life came to be out of God's very breath.

Right after that, still not out of Chapter 2 yet, God knew the human she'd given birth to needed community. It is, in fact, why God created us. And God invests creative energy — more Spirit unleashed — to bring about more life, all around that original human being.

And already, here in Chapter 2, God invites us into that creative work. Naming is a profound thing, isn't it? Think about your own name for a minute. My first name, Meagan, is unique in my family. My given middle name is Catherine, and that connects me to my mother's mother, an Irish Catholic doctor's wife with an epic sense of humor. And Anne, that name that I chose at Confirmation, connects me to my father's mother, a tough-as-nails-yet-soft-as-cotton Croatian who grew up trading with her native neighbors in her father's shop on the Iron Range in northern Minnesota, and whose gift for making friends out of strangers and feeding anything that moved was legendary. I carry their names, Catherine and Anne, given them by their parents when they were born.

Parents have the joy of choosing a name for their children, and those with animal companions often listen closely for the perfect name. Our cat, Dewey, was named after a cat in a book we were reading when his older brother Elmo crossed the Rainbow Bridge. I had the privilege of being present for a dear friend's court hearing when they chose a name that fit who they had come to understand themselves to be. I have known youth of our own congregation who have done the same.

Names are powerful, and it is no wonder that attempts to harm others almost always begin by taking away their names, and replacing them with pejoratives, or stories designed to create otherness and fear. We've seen the incredible harm this has done to the Haitian immigrants and the whole community of Springfield, Ohio. Taking away someone's name erases their very humanity. And God invites Adam in this creative venture to do the exact opposite, giving Adam responsibility for seeing, knowing, and naming all of the beloved beings that are created around them.

And then, God created a partner for Adam, gave them to one another so that neither would ever be alone. Gave us all to each other, in all of the ways that we humans can be together — friends, siblings, ministry partners, spouses, neighbors, parents and caregivers, colleagues in learning — so that we would never have to be alone. And Adam exclaims, perhaps singing or even dancing with delight, that

they and the one God created to be with them, are connected, from the flesh, right through to the very bone.

And all of our readings today talk about our intimate connection with one another — from Genesis to our Psalm and Hebrews, where we're reminded that we are responsible to care for all that God created. Love, care, responsibility, mutuality, and commitment are upheld as ideals for our relationships with God, one another, and the world around us.

In Mark, we are reminded that sometimes our human relationships fail. This passage in Mark about divorce has been used to do so much harm. My grandma Anne and my grandpa Philip, faithful Christians who attended worship every Sunday and raised my dad and his siblings to do the same, went decades without ever receiving communion. Philip had been married and divorced, and the church, guided by this passage, told them that they were living in sin, not worthy of the sacrament.

We live in a beautiful and often messy world, and sometimes human brokenness leads to abuse and other harms that make it clear that remaining in relationship is not healthy or even safe for ourselves or our families. As in all things, we humans are not perfect, and the truth is there is brokenness in relationships that may not be healed in our lifetimes.

And yet, the dream of God, the vision of the one who unleashes the Spirit and breathed life into us — breathes life into us — still prevails. In a culture that allowed men to wield divorce as a weapon over women, Jesus called his listeners back to the ideals of Genesis, where Adam claimed the companion God made for them not as a servant to be owned or controlled, but “bone of my bone,” an equal partner with the same rights and responsibilities. And then, with words that sound like judgement to our ears, Jesus gives women the agency to leave their husbands too, when it is necessary. Divorce, ending of relationships, is not to be taken lightly. Jesus makes this abundantly clear. And, even when our relationships with individuals in this world end, God wants for us to experience the mutual love and intimacy they meant for us to have — with God, our fellow humans, and with the creatures created in the world around us from the very beginning.

Today, in this messy, complicated, broken, healing, renewing, creative world, we remember God's vision for creation. In text study this week led by theologians Rev. Drs. Aimee Appell and Jia Starr Brown we reflected that when our hearts and minds and spirits are open, our visions of family, and relationships, and community, become so much more creative, and dynamic, and beautiful, and full of love than we can imagine on our own. God's vision for us never fails.

On this Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, we especially celebrate how this vision is revealed in the relationships we have with our beloved animal companions, with all their fur, scales, feathers, and fins. Sometimes, it seems, these relationships can be so much easier and smoother than our relationships with other humans, right? St. Francis is thought to have said, "Ask the beasts and they will tell you the beauty of this earth."

We often in jest think of the creation of animals as failed attempts to find a partner for Adam. Nope, that's not it! Nope, that's wrong, that's wrong, that's wrong. But it occurs to me today that there may have been a beautiful wisdom in imagining God creating animal companions first for Adam, after all. And as a cat parent myself, I know the truth of another St. Francis of Assisi quote: “A cat purring on your lap is more healing than any drug in the world, as the vibrations you are receiving are of pure love and contentment.”

Our human relationships are messy, and we get frustrated with ourselves for not being perfect, for not showing up as God called us to. But today, we're invited to celebrate all that we can be, all that God created us to be. All the creatures around us remind us that in the brokenness and sin of this world, the Spirit is alive, and there is also unconditional love, healing, joy, and peace. We learn from our pets especially that God's vision for intimate connection is not only possible, but is embodied in the created world God gave us to live in and care for. Christ came to model this for us. We are flesh of one another's flesh, bone of one another's bone. We listen to the words of Genesis, and Hebrews, and even Mark, and we know that this promise of God, like all others, will never fail.

Thanks be to God.

\*\*\* Keywords \*\*\*

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