

Our scripture for today is the familiar first chapter of Genesis, a creation story. Instead of reading the scripture this morning, we will watch a video of the scripture according to *The Message*.

**[show video]**

The existence of the world as we know it, was created as a new beginning. Each "day" in the creation story is a new beginning. Each element and animal created, fit together as important parts of God's creation. Nothing is made for itself. Everything contributes to the whole of creation. When God gives humans "dominion" over creation, many have misinterpreted that to mean, domination. Humans are to control and dominate all the other parts of God's creation. Yet, the *Message* version of the story doesn't use the word "dominion." It says that humans are to be responsible for God's creation and to generate life.

That's a big difference in my mind. Being responsible to generate life and to control and dominate the other equally important parts of creation are two, very different things. With domination, we think of supremacy, superiority, a show of force. With responsibility, we think of respect, duty, accountability. Although we were made in God's image, that doesn't mean that we're God. God is the creator of new beginnings and invites all parts of creation to do its unique part to collaborate with God.

God initiates a new beginning with creation, and we collaborate with God to make the new beginning fruitful. Each animal and natural element does the work they instinctively know how to do. God created them that way. They can't NOT do the work they were created to do. They also don't try to do the work of another. A beaver is busy doing a beaver's work. A beaver doesn't try to be a duck. A duck doesn't try to be the ocean. A beaver does a beaver's work, a duck does a duck's work,

and the ocean does its work. All work together for the good of creation.

Humans are the only ones who can choose to work or attempts to do someone else's work. We focus on controlling or dominating instead of collaborating and being responsible. And, chaos enters into the equation. We have certainly seen chaos in the last few weeks and months and years. Too many of us are trying to dominate and control instead of collaborating with one another for the benefit of the whole.

What we can remember from the creation story that we can apply to our chaos today, is that God is the initiator of this new beginning, and we are to collaborate with God for peace and wholeness. None of us should be the gods demanding to be in charge. Our God has already started the new movement, and we are to collaborate with God to do our part, the work we were created to do.

There are new beginnings all around us. Coming out of lockdown, we are faced with how to safely re-open businesses, schools, and churches. Our separation and isolation have put us in a desperate longing to rush right out and resume life as we knew it. We may be tempted to force our own wants, desires, and beliefs on others. We may find ourselves in that all too familiar place where dominion conflicts with responsibility.

We are also facing what long-term effect the pandemic will have on the church in general, and Chapel of the Hills. Everything we do in worship is considered a potential risk right now, so we are faced with a new beginning, to innovate and collaborate on how to worship in a new way. It is really meaningful for us to physically worship together. We feel the energy and love permeate throughout the physical sanctuary. Yet, during our online worship, we have had more people view the worship videos than ever before. And, not only at

Chapel of the Hills. This new format has given people the opportunity to see what we do as a church, to see what God's love can do in the midst of chaos. And, it gives people who aren't able to leave their homes or worship on Sundays, the opportunity to worship with a community. Physical distance no longer prevents people from coming together to worship as people all over the world are tuning in to online worship. This new beginning of digital ministry won't go away once we find a cure and treatment for the coronavirus. It shouldn't go away. This is a new beginning that God has created.

At Chapel of the Hills, we are on the cusp of a new beginning with a clergy change. I have enjoyed leading this church for the past three years, and walking with you on your spiritual journey, as individuals and as the church. Of course, I had planned to be the pastor here longer than three years, but we all know the saying about how God reacts to our plans. As much as we don't like it, we are not in control. God has initiated this new beginning for Chapel of the Hills, and I cannot wait to see how you will work together with Pastor Kate to collaborate with God during this new chapter.

And, I encourage you to do that. The pastor cannot do all the work that God is calling the church to do. The pastor is to lead, according to God's initiative, and everyone is to come together and be co-creators as one. Everyone has their unique gifts and experiences to do their part in this new thing God is creating.

So, I encourage you in this new beginning, to open your hearts to Pastor Kate. Be mindful of her authority as the appointed pastor to lead the church. Trust that God is the one who put this plan into motion and is calling you to collaborate with God to do your unique part.

A beaver can't be a beaver and a duck. A beaver can only be a beaver. The sky can only be the sky. Each new day is a new beginning. Each new opportunity is a chance to be co-creators with God. New beginnings are all around us. Let us do our part and have all of God's creation come together and collaborate with God for the good of the whole creation. Amen.