

WGUMC December 18, 2016 Genesis 1:1-5; John 1:1-5
"The Chaos Theory of Incarnation"

Math was always my best subject in high school, but I didn't get past multivariate calculus in college. So I am no expert on chaos theory. All I know is that it helps explain why predictable systems can behave so unpredictably. Take the weather. We know a lot about the factors that determine weather, so why can't we predict it better? Because in a dynamic system like weather, there are a multitude of input variables. And if our measurement of any of these variables (such as temperature, humidity, barometric pressure, cloud cover, wind speed and direction) is off by just a tiny bit, our weather report can be way off. Tiny variations in initial conditions over time produce huge deviations from the expected behavior of that system. Without the mathematical equations, that's chaos theory. It explains a lot about weather and also traffic patterns. It certainly explains what was

happening when I was trying to drop Kristen and Chandra off at Valley Fair last weekend.

As I see it, chaos theory is a pretty good explanation not just for weather and traffic but for life in general. Chaos is what a lot of us feel this time of year, but this year more than most years. Everything seems to be in chaos. With the advent of fake news, the media is in chaos. With the Russians hacking into our elections, our political institutions are in chaos. With all the hate crimes happening, our communities are in chaos. And that sense of things being out of control in the larger world fuels the chaos that is going on in our own little worlds as well. Our lives are like the weather, complex dynamic systems, and anytime conditions change just a little bit, the results can be pretty chaotic.

Sometimes the chaos is all in our heads. Sometimes we feel it in our hearts. Sometimes we get caught up in chaotic situations at work or at school or at home. But I'm here today

to tell you that it's going to be okay. I know that because I happen to know that God can do amazing things with chaos. In fact, you might even say that God needs some chaos in order to bring about God's kingdom.

That's what we learn in the first few verses of the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of John. In Genesis, we begin with an emptiness, a "formless void," and that is one of the dictionary definitions of chaos. Here we have a "disordered state of unformed matter and infinite space." [*American Heritage Dictionary*] Into that chaos, God speaks the words, "Let there be." And the gravity of those divine words pulls and tugs at that great chaos until it begins to take form, until it becomes the Creation.

So you see, God took the chaos and worked with it and, like an artist, created something out of nothing. Entering into the chaos and bringing order and beauty out of it: that is what

God was doing on the first day and what God is doing every day.

The Gospel of John brings that cosmic vision of Creation down into human dimensions. Here we begin at the beginning, just as in Genesis, but in John's Gospel the chaos is symbolized by darkness rather than emptiness. Into deep darkness God speaks a Word. And that Word is life and that life is the light of all people, just as on the first day of Creation, except that this time, this time the light didn't just shine in the sky above us but entered our very flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth. [John 1:14]

This marked the beginning of the New Creation, a new way of God being in and for the world. In the church, we have a special word for it. We call it "Incarnation." And what we mean by that is that in the body of Jesus, God came into the chaos and darkness of our sin to bring us the light and hope of salvation.

Essentially, Genesis and John hold the same great promise for us: that God works wonders with chaos. But that was before the advent of the internet. We have certainly seen the chaos that social media can create for our country of late. Daily we are confronted with insults, accusations and outright lies. We ask, what is the truth? Where is the love?

When it comes to the internet, we are left wondering, why does chaos spread so effortlessly and quickly, but love does not? The answer to that question points back to the incarnation. I would say that chaos spreads so much faster in cyberspace because it doesn't need a body, and love does. You can telecast the hate on Twitter pretty easily. But sharing the love is far more complicated. There are many variables. At the least, it requires our heads and our hearts and our hands.

Love is the Word that must take flesh in our bodies in order to live. That's why Christ came in the flesh so that love could live among us, full of grace and truth. Since then, the

church has existed to be the visible body of Christ, the living word of love for all people today. And that's why the church, even with all of its faults and failures, is needed now more than ever. After the year we have been through, there is a new urgency for us to follow the Way, to tell the Truth and to live the Life of Christ for all the world to see.

So to sum up my chaos theory of the incarnation on this fourth Sunday of Advent, I say: do not despair if you see your country spiraling into chaos. Do not give up hope if your own life feels like a formless void and darkness covers the face of the deep. Hold on and wait for the wind to change direction. It always does. And when the Spirit of God, the wind from God, comes sweeping over your chaos, that one change in the variables is more than enough to change the outcome of the whole equation. This is the promise of Christmas: that out of your chaos will come your New Creation.