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This year in Bible school, for four consecutive Wednesday afternoons, the children gathered in this sanctuary to hear their Bible story. Instead of teaching them a different story from the Bible each week, the education committee and I decided this year to instead teach them the same story each week. Not only would this facilitate the usual flux in kids who might miss out on a week or two, but would also allow us to really learn this story well by focusing on a different part of it each week.

And so for four weeks, the kids and staff and I delved in deep to the feeding of the five thousand; we looked at it from four different angles—healing, feeding, caring and sharing. If you think of a diamond, you can understand why looking at something from different angles really makes it sparkle and shine. Even stories we think we know so well reveal new things to us when we stop and really pay attention.

Which is why I decided to focus this week on the reading from the Hebrew Scriptures.

It's a familiar enough story, too familiar, perhaps.

These verses and chapters are sacred to Christians and Jews around the world; they contain the poetic description of the beginning of time as we know it. They beautifully illustrate the entire being of God—Father, breath and word—working together in triune harmony to bring about light and earth and stars and sky and plants and animals and people.

And yet, as it true with all things rooted in religion, they are not only the story of God's harmonious creation, but they are also the source of dispute and conflict. For these verses and chapters, as beautiful and sacred as they might be, are also the contended chapters in the never-ending battle between creationists and evolutionists.

This sermon does not seek to resolve the exact method by which God chose to bring about the earth upon which I stand or the air that I breathe or the water that I bathe in and drink, but it is to lift up to you something about this gorgeous story of creation that I noticed one day for the first time, even after hearing this story perhaps a hundred times...I discovered it in Hebrew class in seminary one day while we were translating these same verses from Hebrew into English, and the words that I am referring to are the words “let the earth bring forth...”

You'll notice on the third day and on the fifth day and on the sixth day, God gives the command, “let the earth bring forth....” vegetation and plants and creeping things and crawling things and swarming things and finally human kind, male and female. Let the earth bring forth, the voice of God commands. In other words, God commands the earth—you do it.

This is a beautiful gem, hidden here in the middle of a beautiful story. What this reveals to us is not a God who is a master puppeteer way up high in heaven who is tugging and pulling on strings making is dance like little marionettes...but it is a God who equips the earth to do what it is created to do, to be fruitful, to flourish, to grow, to

blossom.

Let the earth bring forth.

The power of God shimmers behind every dividing of cells, giving it the creative energy this universe needs to keep expanding. You do it, God tells the earth. I bestow upon you all the gifts you need to excel.

God continues to do this, not only with all of creation, but especially with people. Each and every day, God whispers in your ear ways in which you can make this creation be fruitful and flourish and blossom. Every day, God stirs gifts in your heart that this world needs, so that peace and justice and health might prevail.

Do not wait for God to tug on your legs or arms, because more than likely this won't happen although it might. Better yet, wait upon God's word, his breath in your ear and his spirit in your heart. God has created you so that you can bring forth things in this world that nobody else can—this world is waiting on you to bring forth those astounding and surprising things that only you can bring forth.

Be fruitful and multiply, God commends you—whether this be with children, with sharing, with compassion, with love, with wisdom, with patience, with kindness, with generosity. God commends this world to be fruitful because God knows what you have to offer, and trusts that you will share it.