

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.*

*3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

*6And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

*9And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. 12The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*

*14And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*

*20And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.*

*24And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*26Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*

*29God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.*

*31God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

*2Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. 4These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.*

Let's design a god.

What should our god look like? Blue eyes? Brown? Maybe steel gray? A god should be big, I suppose, but not too big. It would be nice to be able to look our god in the eye. 5'5", 5'11", 6'3"? Or maybe our god should be bigger than anyone – how about ten feet tall? Or ten thousand? Maybe we could design a god for each one of us. Your god could be exactly like you. Wouldn't that be great!

What should our god do? Manage? Send the right amount of rain at exactly the right time? Keep cars from colliding? Reward good people and punish evil people? Wouldn't it be nice if our god could do exactly what we wanted our god to do? Heal grandma. Make my uncle's company successful. Keep my dad from drinking too much.

It would be easy to worship a god of our own making – kind of like worshipping ourselves. God would like what I like – bless the ones I love – reward the ones who are just like me - even like my favorite kind of music.

Then our holy book would say, "And man created God in man's own image. And woman created God in woman's own image too."

Are my words foolishness? Or are they truth?

In Genesis we read the story of creation. And God said, Let us make humankind in our own image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in God's own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

We are created in the image of God – not God in our image.

God is not some piece of clay that you and I get to shape. You and I are clay in the hands of God, created by God's speaking, God's word, shaped even still by God's word.

So who is this God who has created us? How will we know this God?

One says, "I experience God in nature – in the beauty of mountains, the rhythms of waves on the shore, in a gentle breeze.

But the scripture teaches that nature is not God. The ancients worshiped the sun, and prayed to trees, and heard God's voice in the thunder. But these are as distinct from God as a chair is distinct from the man who has designed and made it.

Others have thought to find God within – in the human heart, in the human soul, in the human mind. Now we are so marvelously made that there is much to explore within. Whole worlds are left to be discovered within us and around us – but whatever we discover will not be the creator but only the work of the creator. A piece of chocolate cake may express the love of a mother in a way that words cannot but the mother herself is not in the cake.

Then where will we find God, encounter God, experience God? In the word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us - in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is not just a revealer of God, one of many, or a teacher of God, one of many, or a miracle worker of God, one of many, but Jesus is the very being and person and presence of God in human flesh. And God has chosen that the very center of the being and presence and person of God in this world is the cross of Jesus. God is known in the cross in a way that God is known nowhere else, not in creation, not in human wisdom or philosophy, not in the greatest works of beauty, but in the suffering and death of Jesus the very person of God is given to you.

The body of Christ given to you, the blood of Christ shed for you.

Now I think that the cross is the very last place I would ever think to look for God. For I see no beauty there, but an ugly cruelty. I see no justice there, but the greatest injustice. I see no miracle there, no God coming

to the rescue but abandonment. I see no loyalty there, but friends betraying, denying fleeing. I see no dignity there but the greatest indignity, a man stripped naked, mocked, ridiculed. I see no noble strength there but weakness, life itself being drained. And yet, God has declared, “Here is where you will know me – in my suffering and dying for you - the body of Christ given for you - the blood of Christ shed for you.”

And know that the love of this God for you is greater than all else, greater than even death itself.