

John 1:1-5, 9, 10, 12, 14

In the beginning was the Creative Energy:  
The Creative Energy was with God  
And the Creative Energy was God.  
It was with God in the beginning.  
Through it all things came to be,  
Not one thing had its being but through it.  
All that came to be had life in it  
And that life was the light of persons,  
A light that shines in the dark,  
A light that darkness could not overpower . . .  
The Creative Energy was the true light  
That enlightens all people;  
And it was coming into the world.  
It was in the world  
That had its being through it,  
And the world did not know it . . .  
But to all who did accept it  
It gave power to become children of God . . .  
The Creative Energy was made flesh,  
It pitched its tent among us,  
And we saw its glory,  
The glory that is his as the only Child of the Creator  
Full of grace and full of truth.

Prayer.

Gracious God, bless and keep us  
that we might be a blessing for You.  
Amen.

### **“Original Blessing”**

We enter a broken and torn and sinful world---that is for sure.

But we do not enter as blotches on existence, as sinful creatures, we burst into the world as “original blessings.”

Matthew Fox (Original Blessing, p. 47)

A unexpected thing happened to a five and three year old when they arrived at the playground with their mother. Four teenagers from a fundamental Christian church approached the family and invited the kids to join in their Vacation Bible School games. They did and fun was had by all. Following the games the children gathered around a grown-up for a talk about Jesus. She began her teaching by pulling a big yellow heart with black spots on it out of her lesson bag. Then she asked the children, “What does the color yellow make you think of?” The three year old who loves to eat, yelled out “bananas!” The boy in love with cars hollered “school bus!” Sun, flowers, and Sponge Bob Square Pants trailed right behind from other kids. After that the teacher said, “Yellow makes me think of heaven.” Then she asked of the children, “What do you think the black spots on the heart are?” Not one child answered. No one had a clue. Except, of course, for the teacher who was certain of the answer to her own question. So she broke the silence by explaining that the black spots are sins that Jesus Christ washes away so that we can go to heaven. “Jesus saves you and Jesus saves me,” she told them. “All you have to do is to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior!” When she was done the teacher said that if anybody wanted to be saved they could stand up or raise their hand. That’s true, exclaimed someone from the crowd: “Last year my daughter was saved right here!” Immediately upon hearing this, the mother of the two, grabbed her children and high tailed it home. On the way she asked her son who was very concerned about heaven since his dog’s death: “Do you know what belief means?” “No,” he said. “Well, she said. “You know how your cousin believes that Batman is the best superhero and you believe that Super-man is the best? And, it’s O.K. that you believe different things?” “Yes,” he said.

“Well,” Mom explained, “the teacher in the park believes that God won’t let children with sin spots on their heart into heaven. It’s O.K. for you to believe something different. I do. And so does your Sunday School teacher at our church.”

So . . . next Sunday when the boy went to church, he sat close to the teacher to hear from him what his chances were of heaven. Fearful of the lies he had told, the mistakes he had made, the angry punches he had thrown, and the tricks he had played to get his way, his heart started racing as his teacher opened up the Bible. All he could do was to hold his breath, keep his secrets, and see if Jesus himself had anything to say about heaven and the sin spots on his heart. That day, it turns out that Jesus did. **Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought him. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”** Matthew 19:13-14 After that, the class learned to sing: What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer. . . When the singing was over the boy had a ton of questions for his teacher. Where is heaven? Is it cool? So the teacher took this cartoon out of his lesson bag



and went on to explain that the beauty of heaven was also dancing inside, outside, and all around them. Jesus came to teach everyone how to forgive and to open up their heart to let God’s sun shine in.

When he was done a hand shot up again. “If I am not baptized, will I go to hell?” “Baptism”, replied the teacher, “is not magic. God loves all of God’s children. Baptism means entry into the church, the community that teaches us that God loves us and how to live in response.” Then they sang: “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world; red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. . . ”

In Christian Baptism we promise to live creatively in response to our Maker’s Love by denouncing and resisting the powers of evil, by following in the way of Jesus, by showing love and justice, and by ‘saying yes’ when we hear God calling us to serve. One of the favorite gospel tunes of the young is, “Here I Am, Lord.’ Its refrain is a positive call to help the Lord of all Life, soften, mend, and strengthen fainting hearts. It goes: “Here I am Lord, it is I Lord. I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me, I will hold Your people in my heart.



**Mural on the way down to the Guadeloupe River at Slumber Falls United Church of Christ camp in New Brunfels, Texas. Campers names are on the mushrooms.**