

“The Universe’s Story”
Genesis 1

Who Are You?

Who are you? Who are we?

Consider this question for a moment. Do you define yourself by the events of your life, by your physical appearance, by your nationality, your family, or your work? How we see ourselves makes a huge difference in the way we lead our lives.

There are many layers to our identity, but during this sermon series, I invite you to consider your identity from the perspective of the soul. You are a **cosmic being**, and you belong to the Creator of the universe.

This is how our faith ancestors defined life and our place in the world. The story of Genesis 1 is not a scientific textbook; it is an "origin story" rooted in the goodness and vastness of God. We are not here by accident. We are here because of an incredible and intricate design by God - the creative energy of all life.

The Context of Exile

It is powerful to remember that this beautiful poem of creation was likely published during the **Babylonian Exile** (around 587 BCE). Our ancestors were living in a time of deep human division, displacement, and fear. They were surrounded by the Babylonian creation myths, which claimed the world was born out of war, violence, and the carcasses of dead gods.

The people of Israel knew that the answer to their struggles was not to assert more differences or lean into more violence. Instead, the key was to reclaim their **Cosmic Soul**. They looked past their status as "refugees" or "conquered people" to see their origins in the Universe’s story. They insisted that the world was born not of violence, but of **Blessing**.

Genesis 1: A Litany of Goodness

(The congregation reads the litany as provided in your text, ending with: "God saw everything that was created, and indeed, it was very good.")

Whenever we feel separate from others, small in our own lives, unworthy, or disconnected from nature, we are invited to reclaim the cosmic nature of our being. This is the heart of James Conlon’s work: moving from **belonging** only to our small tribes to belonging to the **Universe**.

A Story for All Ages: *Child of the Universe*

To help us grasp this, let us listen to the words of the children's book *Child of the Universe* by Ray Jayawardhana. It echoes the ancient truth of Genesis in a language of modern wonder.

The Text of "Child of the Universe"

"Deep in the night, a father says to his child: 'You are a child of the universe.'

Before you were born, the stars were your ancestors. The iron in your blood, the calcium in your bones— they were all forged in the hearts of stars that lived and died long ago. When you look up at the night sky, you are looking at your origins.

You are made of stardust. The same atoms that dance in the distant galaxies are the atoms that breathe in you. The moon pulls the tides of the sea, just as your heart pulls the tides of your love.

You belong to the sun, the moon, and the rolling hills. You belong to the deep blue sea and the wide, open sky. You are not just a tiny speck; you are the universe expressing itself in a single, precious life. Remember, my child: the universe is your home, and you are never alone."

This week, take time to look outside, and better yet, to go outside and behold the stars and let your soul guide you into your larger connection.

Cosmic Guided Imagery: The Soul's Home

I invite you to close your eyes. Take a deep, slow breath. Let the weight of your ego— your worries about work, your anxieties about the world, your labels - fall away for just a moment.

1. The Earth Beneath: Feel the floor beneath your feet, but look deeper. Visualize the Earth spinning silently in space. Feel yourself held by gravity - a constant, loving embrace from the planet itself. You are not "on" the Earth; you are a part of it, like a leaf is part of a tree.

2. The Stars Within: Recall the iron in your blood. That iron was born in the furnace of a star billions of years ago. As you breathe, imagine a soft, golden light pulsing in your veins. You are carrying the light of the first "Let there be light" inside your very body.

3. The Breath of God: Genesis tells us a "wind" or "spirit" swept over the waters. That same breath is in your lungs right now. Feel the connection between your breath and

the wind outside, the trees breathing, and the vast atmosphere. You are connected to everything that has "the breath of life."

4. The Blessing: Hear the Creator looking at the galaxies, the seas, the stars, and finally, at **you**. Hear the divine voice whisper: *"It is good. It is very good."*

Stay in this space of belonging for a moment. You are a cosmic being. You are home. Amen.