

*Theme: Where Science and Religion Meet*

# “Where Did We Come From?”

Based upon a sermon series by the Rev. Adam Hamilton  
January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at First United Methodist Church – Durango

Genesis 1: 20-31

*20 Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” 21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” 23 And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.*

*24 Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. 25 God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*26 Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”*

*27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”*

*29 Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. 30 And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened. 31 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!*

*And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.*

**SLIDE**      **“Where did We Come From?” - The Conflict Over Human Origins.**

Please take out of your bulletin your sermon notes and your study guide. The sermon notes are a chance for you to follow along and there are places to write down things you might like to remember from today's sermon. The study guide is a chance for you to do some reading of the Bible on your own and to follow up on the themes that we are talking about this morning. In particular, on Tuesday and Wednesday you will get a chance to read the two different creation accounts in Genesis. They dovetail together but there is an account in Genesis 1 and an account in Genesis 2. You will have a chance to study and reflect on the differences between those two creation accounts. I want to encourage you to take this home and use it. I think you will be blessed.

Today we continue in our series of sermons, "Where science and religion meet," in which we are looking at the themes of science and the themes of theology and where they seem to clash at times, and then where they connect. Today we turn our attention to the subject of human origins.

It is in this area of human origins that we have seen the greatest conflict between science and religion over the last 145 years. Not since the time of Galileo posing that earth actually rotated around the sun have we seen such a conflict between Christians and scientists. Almost weekly there is something new in the news or the focus story is on the issue of evolution and creation.

This is especially true in terms of what is taught in our public schools. Whenever the science standards are reviewed you will hear about this topic, and I guarantee that in this election year you will hear about it in the coming weeks and months. We even see the tension around the theory of evolution in our popular television shows. Maybe you have seen this scene where Phoebe challenges her archaeologist friend Ross on the theory of evolution.

**VIDEO Friends Evolution**

**SLIDE Understanding the Theory of Evolution**

Today we come to wrestle with this question. What does science teach us about human origins? What does the Bible teach us about human origins? Are these two positions irreconcilable or are there certain places where we can find common ground? That will be our aim today—to understand where we came from and then ultimately why we are here.

Before we go any further I think it's important to talk about what the

word "evolution" means. The word evolution itself simply means change over time.

**SLIDE Evolution = "change over time."**

Everything changes over time and you're aware of that. We are surrounded by a universe that is constantly evolving or changing over time. You, yourself are evolving and changing over time.

I know I have changed. I was conceived as a single celled organism and then I became a multi-cellular little ball that was not really recognizable. Then I developed a heartbeat that could be seen, but if you look at the sonograms you know that it is sort of difficult to actually recognize what is going on inside the womb. As I was maturing in my mother's womb I continue to evolve until finally I came into this world as a baby.

If you look at my baby picture and you look at me today than it is really hard to recognize that that is the same person.

**SLIDE Jeff's Baby Picture.**

Not long ago I was looking at a picture album my mother did for me when I turned 25 years old. My kids look at the pictures and can't believe how different I looked and that there was a day when I was their age. My daughter noted that I didn't have a beard when I was Thomas's age. My son noticed that I had more hair when I was in college.

I looked at a picture of myself from when I first came here to serve as your pastor five years ago and I look a lot different. Just in five years there has been quite a bit of change in this body. If evolution is change over time than we see that all around us. It is just a part of life.

**SLIDE Evolution = "change over time."**

Rather than try to describe this for you, once again I thought it would be good to turn to a local expert on the subject. So this last week I spent time with Dr. John Condie, and Associate Professor of Biology at Fort Lewis College. Dr. Condie has taught several classes on this subject and done several presentations in our community about human origins. Some of his presentations can be seen on Durango cable-television throughout the week. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

I had a great time with Dr. Condie and truly enjoy our time together. I told him that last week we had Dr. Tyler who was able to condense the 14 billion year history of the universe into less than two minutes and so I

figured he could do the 4 billion year history of humanity in less than one minute!

First I asked him if he could explain to us the idea of evolution and here's what he said.

**VIDEO Evolution Theory.**

**SLIDE Evolution proposes that complex forms of life evolved from simpler forms of life.**

When you get into the question of human origins we are talking more than just change over a two-year period. The theory of evolution which was around before Charles Darwin maintains that everything in life comes from a single cell. Everything you see around you evolved from one single cell. When you look at the fossil records and the reality that species have changed over time, evolution is a way of recognizing this reality.

Explaining how those changes occurred is a separate endeavor and this is where the idea of natural selection comes in. Dr. Condie explained to me that there are actually a number of theories about how evolution occurred, but the most popular one is the one put forth by Charles Darwin in his own landmark book in 1859, The Origin of the Species by Natural Selection.

**SLIDE The Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection explains HOW evolution occurred.**

Those who embrace natural selection as the means for evolution see that there are mutations that happen in our genetic code. These mutations happen regularly over a period of time. The mutations manifest themselves as variations in the offspring.

**SLIDE Mechanism: mutation, variation, natural selection**

Those variations will sometimes be neutral. They won't help or hurt the organism. Sometimes they will have a negative effect on the organism and its ability to survive in the environment. That means the organism may die or may not be able to reproduce.

But sometimes the variation caused by the mutation allows the organism to not only survive but thrive in its environment. That variation helps the organism to be healthier and to produce more offspring. When it produces more offspring the variation begins to become embedded in that species of that organism.

Over time there are certain variations and adaptations that enable organisms to thrive and so those species with those variations become the dominant ones. One of the most common ways that we see that as reality is in bacteria which mutate to become resistant to antibiotics. Over time, as an antibiotic is used more often, bacteria begin to change or mutate so that they can resist those antibiotics. Pretty soon that is all the kind of bacteria that we see and so the bacteria is able to resist the antibiotic which means we have to invent or discover another antibiotic for that strain of bacteria.

So we have mutation, we have adaptation by variation, and then we have natural selection because those that are better able to adapt are “naturally selected” to survive and thrive.

Those who embrace natural selection will say that this theory explains the development of all life, including human beings. Darwin himself was a bit ambiguous when it came to explaining how the first life forms came into existence. He did not explain that in his first book on the origin of the species. He was willing to speak of a Creator who developed the initial life forms but the rest of the process sort of took off on its own according to Darwin. Darwin thought the process only took millions of years, however we now understand it took 4 billion of years of tiny changes over time and in that process you will see major changes with new species developing.

Some life forms become extinct and others thrive until we get to where we are today in a world that contains 3 to 5 million species on planet Earth.

### **SLIDE      Why Christians Have Struggled with Evolution**

Some of you would say, "What's the fuss that Christians have with that?" It seems like it explains a lot about the fossil record and about how we see life today. We can see examples of microevolution on a small scale so why are Christians upset about this?

What I would like to do is offer you four reasons about why Christians are upset over evolution. Different Christians would probably fall into one or more of these categories.

### **SLIDE      Literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation**

The first is that evolution stands in contrast to a literal reading of the book of Genesis. If we take Genesis 1 and we understand that the creation story is meant to be read as biology and science and how God created

things, then clearly evolution is in contrast to that. Some folks take this very literally and they say that the Earth is less than 10,000 years old. They would say that creation happened in 6 24-hour periods. The Scripture is very clear that there was morning and there was evening and that was the first day. There was morning and evening in the second day and so on.

If you are reading the Bible in this way that it would be impossible to reconcile evolution, which sees change happening over 4 billion years and God's indirect involvement depends on whether you are a theistic evolutionist or an atheistic evolutionist, stands in contrast to a literal reading of the book of Genesis.

**SLIDE      A perceived diminution of the role of God in creation**

The second reason some Christians struggle with evolution is because they believe it diminishes God's role in the creation. This is a theological statement and not just a scientific or historical statement. The Bible says that God is the creator of all things. How can we talk about God as the creator of all things if in fact the life forms that we see today evolved over a long period of time through naturalistic processes?

Some would say those two perspectives seem to be incompatible—God as the creator and evolution as a naturalistic process.

**SLIDE      A perceived diminution of the place of humankind in creation**

Other Christians would say that evolution diminishes the role of human beings in the creation. They would say things like this, "I didn't evolve from an ape. My family did not come from monkeys. We human beings are not derived from primates."

Maybe some of us have said that before. Not long ago I saw the cover of *Discover* magazine which said these words.

**SLIDE      "Was your ancestor a sea sponge?"**

That kind of took me back. I have kind of worked through the primate thing but the sea sponge idea was a little unsettling to me! Sometimes we hear these things and they really trouble us. We say, "Wait a minute now. We were created in the image of God and what does that mean if there was an evolutionary process by which we were also developing along with the rest of life. Doesn't that take away from the distinctiveness of our humanity?"

For me personally, I can understand and reconcile these first three in terms of my theology and how I understand Scripture in God's work in the world.

But the fourth one for me is a deal killer when it comes to evolution. If this fourth one is so, and this is how one defines evolution, I cannot reconcile evolution with the Christian faith. I would also suggest that none of you in this room who believe in God could reconcile the Bible and God's Word in the Christian faith with evolution if this is true.

What am I talking about? What kind of definition are we looking at? In 1995 the National Association of Biology Teachers included in their teaching materials about evolution a statement which they believe accurately reflected the truth about the scientific theory of evolution. This is the statement as it appeared in 1995 and was just one part of a larger document on teaching evolution. Here's what they said.

**SLIDE**     **“The diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution, an *unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable* and natural process of temporal dissent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance historical contingencies and changing environments.”**

The two words in that statement that give me the trouble and heartburn are the words, "unsupervised" and, "impersonal."

**SLIDE**     **When evolution becomes a philosophy**

When scientists begin to make statements like that I believe they move outside the realm of science, and they begin talking about philosophy and theology. How does a scientist know that that process was unsupervised or impersonal?

As Christians, if one believes that evolution does explain the mechanism by which the creation occurred, we would certainly say that God wrote the software that makes that happen. God wrote the laws of nature that allowed evolution to take place. God is supervising the process and God is a personal being.

Those are theological statements we make about creation, by which one might reconcile theology and evolution.

But when the evolutionist says, "No, it was impersonal and there was no guiding hand—there was no purpose, no plan, no one who is

supervising the process." Those are theological or philosophical statements, and they are out of bounds for science.

So if that is the way evolution is to be defined, then I could not accept it. It would be irreconcilable with Christian faith, Jewish faith, Hindu faith, the Muslim faith, and a host of others.

There are some scientists who have gone on to make even more elaborate claims. Edward Wilson says:

**SLIDE "No species, ours included, possess a purpose beyond the imperatives created by its genetic history."**

How in the world do the scientists know that—that there is no purpose to human existence beyond our genetics?

Or George Gaylord Simpson who said this:

**SLIDE "Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind."**

How do you know that? Richard Dawkins says this in his book, God is Not Great.

**SLIDE "The universe has no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."**

Those are not scientific statements. Those are theological and philosophical statements, and if that is what evolution means then it is irreconcilable with the Christian faith.

However, most people who believed that evolution has something to say to us do not think this is what it means. In fact, the national Association of biology teachers in 1997, went back and said basically, "We stepped across a line and that really wasn't ours to say whether the process of evolution was unsupervised or impersonal," and they removed those two words from their statement about evolution. If you go to their website today you will not find those statements listed.

**SLIDE Three Christian Views of Evolution**

That would lead me to say that it is possible that some Christians could look at evolution and see that God is involved in this process. We will talk more about that in just a moment.

What I'd like to do right now is share with you three different Christian

responses to evolution. This is how different Christian groups respond to the idea of evolution. You'll be familiar with some of these and there are a whole host of places to be in between these three, but these are the predominant strains.

## **SLIDE      Creation Science**

The first one is scientific creationism or biblical creationism or creation science. Creation scientists begin with an idea about the Bible which is, "Whatever the Bible says, when it comes to history or science or origins of humanity, the Bible is to be read literally. It is the truth and the word of God. It is literally true and could not be figuratively true or metaphorically true, or God trying to explain to ancient people how things might have happened in a way they could understand. It is what it is and we take it at face value."

The scientists begin with this in mind and say that the Bible teaches us that the earth was created in six literal days. Then if you add up all the genealogies and all the dates we know in your Bible we come back to a creation date somewhere around 4004 B.C. Some are willing to go back a thousand years before Christ as the date for the creation of the entire universe.

The idea is that this is our starting point and from there we must make sure that science fits that data. These are the starting parameters and then when they begin to look at the observable data in our world they seek to figure out how that observable data fits in to the truth of the Bible.

They come up with some really interesting theories. Some see these scientists as backwards people but that is not the case. These are folks who began with the prior set of convictions but many of them are pretty smart people. The head of one of these organizations has his Ph.D. from MIT. They have 25 Ph.D.'s on their board from major universities in the areas of microbiology, zoology and a host of other fields. So if you think they are backwards people, think again.

However, they are people who start with a certain preconceived truth and then force the data to fit into that. This last week I watched a five-minute video clip which explained how this is all supposed to work and as I watched it I thought to myself, "That is very interesting."

I personally am not sure that is how it happened but I find it intriguing. I know that some of you in this room hold to this view. Some of you have

written me and shared with me that this is your view. Some of you have given me articles and research to look over and I know you take this seriously. I would tell you that I believe you are a brother or sister in Christ even if it doesn't happen to be my view, and I appreciate the fact that you start with a high value of the traditions of the Scriptures. I don't think this is the only way that Christians can look at creation but it is what creation science proposes to us, that this idea of six literal days of creation is an essential part of God's truth.

The second way of looking at and responding to evolution as Christians is what Intelligent Design theorists have proposed.

**SLIDE      Intelligent Design.**

Intelligent design theorists are by and large scientists and mathematicians who are very bright people in their fields of study. They have been looking at the data from science and they don't claim that the earth is 6000-10,000 years old. They agreed that the earth is probably around 4 1/2 billion years old. They say there is a lot in evolutionary theory that they find compelling, but it does not explain everything about the complexity of life.

A proponent of intelligent design and director of the Intelligent Design Network is Dr. Bill Harris. Dr. Harris is a professor of metabolism and vascular research at the University of Missouri School of Medicine. He is also the Co-director of the St. Luke's Lipid and Diabetes Research Center. He has published 89 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals and he has received a host of awards and recognition for his work. Dr. Harris is also a member of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City Missouri who put together this interview.

Bill is going to describe to us his understanding of intelligent design in what he finds compelling about this position.

**VIDEO      Intelligent Design 2**

**SLIDE      Intelligent Design.**

So Dr. Harris and others in intelligent design look at the data in life and say, "There are certain things in life that seem so complex that they seem to point towards intelligence and design. They don't seem to be the product of random mutations."

Let me share with you an example. You might find a rock in a field

that looks just like a rock. But if you found on the other side writings or figures than you would look at that and say, "That does not happen by itself. There is some form of intelligence that has attached these into this piece of stone."

Intelligent design movement says that when we look at things in life it appears that there is more than just random chance involved. You can look at the flagellum on a bacteria and it acts like an outboard motor.

### **SLIDE      Flagellum Bacteria**

It moves at more than 100 RPM and this is the simplest form of life. It is an amazing piece of technology and we cannot design one as humans. Those in intelligent design would say that the chance of this mutating over a long period of time is pretty remote. This looks like it was made to do exactly what it does that point to an intelligence who designed it.

Some scientists would say that when you start talking about the intelligence that is behind evolution you are leaving the realm of science and entering the realm of religion or philosophy. A pure scientist might say that we are dealing with simple natural causes that can be measured and not motives behind those.

But those in intelligent design say, "Now wait a minute. Shouldn't we be looking at the truth? If there is intelligence behind it, should we exclude that as a possible explanation for understanding how things developed?"

They are challenging us and what it means to do science. They are challenging us to look at the amazing complexities and marvels of life and wonder if it is impossible that there would be a creator beyond the process. Finally, they are challenging us as to whether it is really so that evolution is an unplanned process with no one guiding it.

They would say, along with most of us who are theists, that this is not so. Evolution is not unplanned or impersonal.

An example I have given you in the past is to take my laptop computer and show it to you. But I will take a box and put in some silicone and a battery and ask you, "How long will I have to shake this box until a computer pops out?"

Of course you laugh and say that would be impossible. But what if I did it for 4.5 billion years—surely after 4.5 billion years this would organize itself in such a way that it becomes a laptop computer. You still would

argue that it's ridiculous and impossible.

That really is in essence what the intelligent design folks are saying—that some aspects of life would be impossible to self organize and it takes intelligent design it. I appreciate much of what the intelligent design community is saying.

I will tell you that a woman once approached me and told me she had a real serious problem with intelligence design. She said that anyone who ever met her husband would know that intelligent design doesn't work!

This brings us to the third type of response that Christians might make when it comes to evolution.

### **SLIDE      Theistic Evolution.**

There are Christians who look at evolutionary theory and say, "This makes a lot of sense." When we look at the fossil record we realize there are gaps in evolutionary theory and things they don't know and can't explain, but as the overall thesis for the development of life evolution looks fairly reasonable.

They would say that as long as you don't say it is unplanned and unguided, and as long as you allow room for God to be the one who wrote the laws of nature into existence and who oversees the process, how does that conflict with our scriptures in our understanding of truth?

As long as we understand the book of Genesis is teaching us theology and not biology, and the things we've talked about the last two weeks that if God had tried to explain to people 3000 years ago how he created everything, how could he have explained that? They couldn't see cells and didn't understand that DNA.

I think when God gave his people the book of Genesis he gave them what they could understand and what was most important, and that is that God created everything. Life came out of God's creativity, God's compassion and God's love and mercy. Ultimately, human beings were fashioned in God's image—and God said it was good.

Many Christians look at evolution this way and it is not just liberals—many evangelical Christians and Roman Catholic Christians and even some fundamentalists. Benjamin Warfield was considered the father of modern day fundamentalism. He helped define the doctrine of inerrancy which is held in many fundamentalist churches. And yet Dr. Warfield out of

Princeton seminary believed that evolution was the best explanation for most of what we see in the natural universe, and he did not see that as irreconcilable with his understanding of inerrancy. Even the father of modern day fundamentalism was able to say, "I don't see these two things as incompatible with one another."

When I met this past week with Dr. Condie I asked him if he thought evolution was incompatible with the Christian faith. This is what he said.

**VIDEO     Evolution and the Christian Faith**

**SLIDE     Where Did We Come From?**

One of the questions that we looked at earlier is, "Doesn't the theory of evolution diminish the role of the Creator?"

The evolutionary theists would remind us of Henry Ford. Let's say that Henry Ford custom made the first model T with his own bare hands. That would be an amazing feat to make a model T all by himself. Let's just say that's all he ever did was to make model T's all by himself. There would be about 10 of them ever produced.

However, the genius of Henry Ford was that he designed a system by which you could make 15 million of them over the course of 20 years. Henry Ford designing the system and not building each automobile did not take anything away from the fact that he was the designer ultimately, and in fact every one of those 15 million automobiles had his name imprinted on them.

Some would say this is the same with creation. Whether God is involved in designing each individual species or whether God designed a process by which it happens makes the difference because God is still the Creator and the glory goes to God. God is magnificent and perhaps his glory is even magnified by creating a process with a beginning and an end in mind.

A Christian evolutionary theist would say that God knew the end from the beginning, that God had in mind were all this was going.

Personally, I see God as a symphony conductor. I have watched Susie conduct our choir and orchestra for the Cantata we did in December. Every once in a while she would point to a certain section or certain group and they would bring forth noise—well, not noise but sound—beautiful music!

In many ways, when it comes to the creation story over these billions of years, I see mutations naturally happening but on occasion God calling forth a particular mutation here, or a particular environment there in which certain forms of life are developing. They happen according to processes that evolution can partly understand, and in part the design of God at work. I find that amazing and compelling.

**SLIDE      Picture of Ape and Man**

Some have rejected the theory of evolution because they have a hard time with being the son of a monkey. "I didn't come from any apes," is something I have heard many times.

But there are several important things to remember here. First, evolution doesn't claim that you came from an ape. Evolution claims that you have a common ancestor in the past with primates.

Second, there are a host of skeletal remains of pre-homo sapiens, Neanderthals and others and you have to do something with them. You have to ask, "How do they fit in this?"

Finally, I like to point out to those who claim they didn't come from an ape or a sea sponge that the Bible is actually less flattering than that. What the Bible says is that you did not come from apes. The Bible says you came from dirt. It says you came from dust, mud, clay, slime and the stuff of the earth.

It is interesting that here is where the Bible and science are in agreement. Science says that we all probably came out of the prebiotic soup or stuff of the earth. The Bible says in Genesis 3:19...

**SLIDE      "For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return."**

That is true of every organism that lives. The Bible says that God called forth life from the ground and the plants. God called forth from the ground to the animals. God called forth from the ground human beings.

Your common ancestor is not necessarily a primate, but it is dirt—and that is where you came from. In some sense, your name is mud way back there in the past!

Evolution may teach us the process by which we came from dust to become human beings but the Bible teaches us who did that and why.

I spent more time on this sermon than any I have in a long time. I

studied biology in high school and in college. I also studied the Bible in high school and college and took it more literally than I do today, but somehow I did not see a conflict between these two ideas.

I never had a biology teacher tell me that evolution was purposeless and there was no room for our Creator. I am sure there are biology teachers who teach that but it happened to be that none of mine did. So I have always seen these two things as possibly sitting together.

What is fascinating is that I listen to the arguments from both the intelligent design community and the evolutionary theists and in some ways I think they are speaking the same language at points. I find myself drawn to the intelligent design proposals and the evolutionary theist proposals.

### **SLIDE     Darwin's Black Box.**

One of the good books on intelligent design is by Michael Behe called Darwin's Black Box. It talks about the intricate designs in nature and I read that book and I think that it makes a lot of sense.

Then I read Kenneth Miller's response to it called, Finding Darwin's God.

### **SLIDE     Finding Darwin's God.**

And I think that makes a lot of sense. Then he could go back and read Michael Behe's response to Kenneth Miller and I think that makes a lot of sense. Then you can read Kenneth Miller's response to Michael Behe's book and it makes a lot of sense.

So I look at all this and I realized that intelligent design has a lot to offer. I believe in an Intelligent Designer who oversaw this entire process and I believe there are things in nature that simply can't make sense apart from God.

I borrowed a Scrabble set from Joni Bender today because I could not find mine. If I dropped this set of Scrabble letters on the ground would they ever, of their own, spell out, "Jeffrey Scott Huber" and my social security number. That is a pretty simple set a code and not very complex. How many years would I have to spill out these tiles before they finally spelled that out? The answer is that it would never happen.

So I look at the intricacy of creation and I believe that without a designer, without intelligence, without God it simply doesn't make sense to me. Take a look at this picture again on the screen.

## **SLIDE      Flagellum Bacterium.**

This is a simple single cellular life form. There is no nucleus here. Instead the DNA simply floats freely inside the cytoplasm. There are flagella that propel at both forward and backward. This is a complex little creature and we can't make one.

A look at this and I realize that the genetic information, a software to make these and self replicate this one simple cell organism is the equivalent in text code of all the text in this volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica. This is how much genetic information is in that one little organism.

I look at that and I say, "That little organism represents the glory of God." I don't understand all of the little tweaks that happened in the process of evolution, but I embrace them and I think they make a lot of sense. And ultimately, somewhere along the way, there is a supervising, personal force which is involved in the creation. That is what I, as a Christian, think.

## **SLIDE      Evolution without religion and God's purpose in your life.**

Let me wrap this up by saying that I appreciate much of what evolution has to offer, but I think evolution is a classic case in point where we find why religion and science are both essential.

I think evolution as a basis for living our lives as human beings is absolutely bankrupt. It is a wonderful way of explaining how it might've come from dust, but I think as a way of deciding what life is really all about and why we are here, and what it means to be human, I believe it is bankrupt.

We have seen is in the last century when dictators who believed it was time to breed properly so that the superior race, particularly the Aryan race, would triumph. Survival of the fittest was about ensuring that the fittest did continue to survive and the weak could be set aside. I think if you live out the implications of evolutionary theory as a philosophy you end up not helping those who are weak, but you let them die as quickly as they can because they just muck up the gene pool.

The definition of success in evolutionary theory is about producing the most offspring so that your genetic code survives. This says nothing to us about the role of sexual intimacy or bonding human beings in a covenant

relationship for the rest of their lives.

This week I met with two different couples who will be getting married soon. They understand that they are doing more than simply producing progeny by their relationship. They understand that this is a spiritual bond and there is something called love which is more than just a function of evolution which helps us produce more offspring.

If we look at evolution as a way of building our lives then we can find a rather hopeless end, if we're talking about what it means to be human.

When it comes to understanding what it means to be human, I'm going to turn to the book of Genesis, where it says that after God created everything else from the dust of the ground, God formed human beings. God created them in God's image and breathed into them the spirit, the soul, and the breath of life.

The rest of the Bible tells us what it means to be created in God's image. It means, "Blessed are the meek." It means that those who are humble and just had to pursue mercy are the righteous. It means that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. It means you love God with all your heart and you love your neighbor as yourself. This is what it means to be human. It means that God stepped among us in the human flesh of Jesus Christ to model for us with the image God meant us to look like.

If I want to understand the process of how, I will turn to biology. But if I wonder what it means to be human I find biology absolutely inadequate to explain what it means to be you and me.

So biology is no threat to my faith. I embrace it and I am grateful for it, as long as I understand that theology goes hand-in-hand with it. That there is a God who created all things, who has written the software and the code that began the process—and who at some point in the development of life looked at one.

Here is where I become a creationist because I believe there was one human figure in which God changed and tweaked the process and breathed into him a soul. A scientist would tell us that this happens—that mutations happen.

I believe that God called that one Adam. He was different than any species that had come before. He had the capacity to understand God and to understand himself—to love and to know the difference between good

and evil. God looked at that one and as he lived among others God saw that there were no others quite like him, and so I believe and take quite seriously a scriptural teaching that God said, "It is not good for this one to be alone. I will make him a helper and companion."

Then God formed the new and improved model of the man. God created a woman with a soul—these two had a spirit and a capacity to see as God sees. God looked at them and said, "Now, in the fullness of time, you're different than anything which came before and you belong to me." I believe that was the beginning of the human race.

With this in mind I want to close by reading to you a column written by one of the premier poets of the 20th century, James Weldon Johnson. On this weekend when we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday it is appropriate to share this column because Johnson was an African American who lived in the first third of the 20th century. He composed this column in 1918 when science was delirious with the idea that it could explain everything there was to know about being human and about life. But to a black poet searching for the meaning of life, what it meant to be human was not to be found in evolutionary theory, but in Genesis chapter 1. Read by United Methodist Pastor Yolanda Villa.

**VIDEO James Weldon Johnson**  
**THE CREATION**

*by: James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)*

**A**ND God stepped out on space,  
And He looked around and said,  
*"I'm lonely --  
I'll make me a world."*

And far as the eye of God could see  
Darkness covered everything,  
Blacker than a hundred midnights  
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,  
And the light broke,  
And the darkness rolled up on one side,  
And the light stood shining on the other,  
And God said, *"That's good!"*

Then God reached out and took the light in His hands,  
And God rolled the light around in His hands  
Until He made the sun;  
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.  
And the light that was left from making the sun  
God gathered it up in a shining ball  
And flung it against the darkness,  
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.  
Then down between  
The darkness and the light  
He hurled the world;  
And God said, "*That's good!*"

Then God himself stepped down --  
And the sun was on His right hand,  
And the moon was on His left;  
The stars were clustered about His head,  
And the earth was under His feet.  
And God walked, and where He trod  
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out  
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked and saw  
That the earth was hot and barren.  
So God stepped over to the edge of the world  
And He spat out the seven seas;  
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed;  
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled;  
And the waters above the earth came down,  
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,  
And the little red flowers blossomed,  
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,  
And the oak spread out his arms,  
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,  
And the rivers ran down to the sea;  
And God smiled again,  
And the rainbow appeared,  
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand  
Over the sea and over the land,  
And He said, "*Bring forth! Bring forth!*"

And quicker than God could drop His hand.  
Fishes and fowls  
And beasts and birds  
Swam the rivers and the seas,  
Roamed the forests and the woods,  
And split the air with their wings.  
And God said, *"That's good!"*

Then God walked around,  
And God looked around  
On all that He had made.  
He looked at His sun,  
And He looked at His moon,  
And He looked at His little stars;  
He looked on His world  
With all its living things,  
And God said, *"I'm lonely still."*

Then God sat down  
On the side of a hill where He could think;  
By a deep, wide river He sat down;  
With His head in His hands,  
God thought and thought,  
Till He thought, *"I'll make me a man!"*

Up from the bed of the river  
God scooped the clay;  
And by the bank of the river  
He kneeled Him down;  
And there the great God Almighty  
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand;  
This Great God,  
Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
Kneeled down in the dust  
Toiling over a lump of clay  
Till He shaped it in His own image;

Then into it He blew the breath of life,  
And man became a living soul.  
Amen. Amen.

Let's pray... *Oh God we give you thanks and praise that you created*

*all that exists—that you wrote the code by which life developed into the intimate and magnificent structures we find in ourselves, in relationships with other people, and in the entire earth.*

*We see your handiwork in the bacteria. We see your handiwork in the plant life around us and in the animals. We see your handiwork in the heavens. We see your handiwork in our friends and family.*

*We thank you oh God that out of your goodness, your love, your mercy and your grace, you brought forth the miracle of life. We recognize that you entrusted to us as human beings a soul—that you made it possible that we might ask questions about our existence—that we might know you—that we might reach out to understand you—that we might understand ourselves—that we might know good from evil—and you called us to live into your image as our God.*

*So we pray this day that we might humbly bow before you and pursue your calling—that we might live as your people—that we might know your love—and we might walk in your ways. Help us oh God our Creator to do these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### ***Theme: Where Science and Religion Meet***

#### ***“Where Did We Come From? Apes, Evolution, Adam & Eve”***

Genesis 1: 20-31

*20 Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” 21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” 23 And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.*

*24 Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. 25 God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”*

*27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”*

*29 Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. 30 And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what*

*happened. 31 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!  
And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.*

## **Introduction: The Conflict Over Human Origins**

### **I. Understanding the Theory of Evolution**

- Evolution = \_\_\_\_\_
- The Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection = \_\_\_\_\_
- Complex forms of life evolved from simpler forms of life
- Mechanism: mutation, variation, natural selection

### **II. Why Christians Have Struggled with Evolution**

- A. Literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation
- B. A perceived diminution of the role of God in creation
- C. A perceived diminution of the place of humankind in creation
- D. Evolution as an “unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process”

When evolution becomes a philosophy

### **III. Three Christian Views of Evolution**

- A. Creation Science
- B. Intelligent Design
- C. Theistic Evolution

Two different theistic evolutionary positions:

## **Conclusion: Where Science and Religion Meet**

Evolution without religion, science standards, and God’s purpose in your life.

### *Study Guide*

**Monday, January 21** – As you look over yesterday’s sermon notes, take a moment to reflect upon the struggles Christians have had with evolution over the last hundred years. How do you view each of these? There is an interesting passage in the book of Jeremiah, when God calls Jeremiah to preach. Read Jeremiah 1:4-5. What might we infer from this passage about God’s plans for our lives, and God’s foreknowledge of us? What does it say about God’s involvement in the world? What would it mean to you that God knew you before you were formed in your mother’s womb? Evolution conflicts with this view only when the entire process is seen as unplanned, impersonal, and completely naturalistic. Spend a few moments in prayer inviting God to lead you and to help you to know his purpose for your life. Today is Martin Luther King Jr. day so spend some final moments in your prayer time asking God how you can see all of humanity with God’s vision—a vision that seeks to see beyond race and class and gender and celebrates God love for diversity in human beings.

**Tuesday, January 22** – Look over Sunday’s sermon notes. Which of the three Christian views of evolution most closely aligns with your view? Why do you hold this view? Why don’t you hold the others? Let’s go back to the Book of Genesis. Last week we read the first four days of the creation story. Today we’ll read the entire account from Genesis 1. Read Genesis 1:1-2:3. What questions, if any, does this raise for you if it is to be taken as a literal and historic account of how the universe was created? How does your understanding of this account change when you see it as a way for God to

communicate theological truth as opposed to scientific truth? What are the theological claims in this passage? What does it teach us about God? About creation? About humankind?

**Wednesday, January 23** – Today we'll look at what is sometimes called the second creation account. Some scholars believe that Genesis 1 comes from one ancient tradition within Israel and that Genesis 2 comes from another. They use two different names for God (Genesis 1 – 2:3 uses the name Elohim exclusively, whereas Genesis 2:4 and following adds the name Yahweh to Elohim). They offer a different order of creation (vegetation is brought forth on the third day, and animals on the fifth and sixth days, before humankind was created in Genesis 1, but in Genesis 2 humans are created before vegetation and the animals). In Genesis 1 God speaks and the various aspects of creation appear, but Genesis 2 gives us a bit more detail, telling us that God formed Adam, and other living things, from the dust of the ground. These are not irreconcilable accounts, especially if the creation story is not seen as science, but theology – they actually complement one another. Read Genesis 2:4-25. What does this passage teach us about God? About humanity? About marriage? How does its teaching of humanity being created from the dust of the earth line up with what mainstream science tells us about the origins of life?

**Thursday, January 24** – Today we turn to one of the most beautiful of Psalms, which speaks of the Psalmist's marvel at God's presence with us, and at God's role in forming us. Read Psalm 139:1-24. What does the Psalmist teach about God? What role does God plan in forming us in our mother's wombs? What does this Psalm teach us about God's presence? The psalm takes an interesting turn in verses 19-22 – a section which seems to lack the lofty ideas of the rest of the Psalm. How does Jesus bring about a change in how we see our enemies in the New Testament? Can you relate to how the Psalmist felt about those who were his adversaries, who also spoke evil of God? Use verses 23-24 as the basis for your own time of prayer. How does the overall theme of this Psalm shape our views of evolution and creation?

**Friday, January 25** – What would life look like if human beings simply took evolution theory -- particularly the survival of the fittest – as a philosophy of life? We've learned that Christians through the ages have understood that there are two books of knowledge – two sources of understanding truth and ultimate reality – the book of nature which science reveals to us – it offers ideas as to the mechanics of creation – how things happen. But this knowledge is incomplete apart from the knowledge we have from the second book – the autobiography of God – God's word – this is both what we experience directly of God, but primarily through the Bible and through the person of Jesus. If evolution were all we knew about life, what would we conclude about the meaning and purpose of our lives? About being human? Let's read John's account of creation – it, along with Genesis and the rest of the scriptures, offers us the rest of the story of creation – the why of creation – its meaning, purpose and architect. Read John 1:1-13.