

## **A Divine Love Story**

Genesis 2  
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Before the beginning of time there was God, the one through whom time itself came to be. In this place of infinite timelessness God resided. The One whose purpose and essence is love, was alone with no one to love. So God created in the image of Godself a human. With the tenderness of a mother, God cupped the rich brown soil, a spectrum of chestnut, mahogany, cedar and coal. And with a word, "Love", God infused the soil with God's spirit. God's spirit moved and pulsed through the soil like a bolt of electricity and God's spirit rose up from the soil like dust, swirling and twirling, dancing to a divine melody, until it came together to form the subject of God's love – a human. With one more word, "Life," God breathed into the nostrils of the human and God's child came alive.

Like an infant who has just been delivered from the womb of its mother, this human opened its eyes to behold the source of its life, to see a reflection of itself, to be held in the gaze of love. Eventually the human's sight shifted from its creator to itself and it began to study with focused curiosity its silky brown skin, nobby toes and dangling fingers. This human child, created in the image of God, born of God's spirit, made for the purpose of being loved, had no gender. It was simply ha'adam - a genderless term in the Hebrew language, meaning neither male nor female, but "from the earth."

Like a young fawn with shaky legs and unsteady feet the golden-brown, genderless child of God crawled its way into an upright stance and its view shifted from the ground to the horizon, where it looked upon the barren plains of the desert land.

Like every parent, God desired to provide God's child with everything it needed to become its fullest and best self. Out of the barren plains and desert land God called forth life and a garden emerged. Where the earth child's horizon had been an endless sea of grays and tans ha'adam was now living in, surrounded by a rainbow of colors. The grainy texture of dirt had been replaced with a soft blanket of grass. A bouquet of wisteria, honeysuckle, and gardenia waltzed in the human's nose. And the nectar of grapes, oranges, and mangos dripped like honey from ha'adam's thick lips, coating its cocoa-brown fingers with a sticky, sweetness tempting one final lick. The garden was lovely. But it was not enough. God recognized that ha'adam needed more. Ha'adam needed a companion.

So out of the soil of the ground God brought forth more life. Like a geyser animals of all sorts flooded out of the ground and into the garden. There were tiny ones with long tails and little pink ears. Large ones with thick, furry collars and strong, muscular builds. Enormous ones with leathery skin and long, flexible snouts. They were covered in feathers and scales. They had stripes and spots. They had talons and paws. They barked, meowed, howled, chirped, and buzzed. And they were created for companionship – to love ha'adam and to be loved by ha'adam. They loved the human unconditionally. They curled at ha'adam's slumbering feet at night, nuzzled ha'adam awake in the morning, and entertained ha'adam with tree-top symphonies. They joined ha'adam on long walks through the forests and prairies, they dipped and darted through the sky as ha'adam studied the clouds, and they tickled the human's toes as ha'adam bathed and swam in the rivers and sea. They were constantly by the human's side; constantly loving the human. And yet, they were not enough.

The human was lonely. Ha'adam ached for something it could not name but which it knew it needed. And, God, who had once resided in solitary, infinite, timelessness, understood the human's need and God ached with God's child.

“What shall I do?” God thought. “Shall I pull the human closer to me? I have an abundance, an infinite amount of love to share.” But as God gazed at the human God recognized that while God’s love was the cure to ha’adam’s loneliness, this love needed to exist in a different form. It needed to be tangible. Ha’adam needed to see, smell, taste, touch, talk with, walk with, fall asleep in and awake to God’s love. Ha’adam needed a human companion. But not just companion. Ha’adam needed a partner.

Compelled by an unconditional, generous, selfless love, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the human and God remade ha’adam. Rather than creating a partner for ha’adam, God created partners out of ha’adam. From this one genderless human, came two people, *ish* and *ishish*, male and female. Through the removal of a side, not a rib, but a *tsela* which in Hebrew means an entire side. Through the removal of a side, ha’adam was broken into two, exposed and made vulnerable. In this state of broken vulnerability each of ha’adam’s sides were remade and transformed. One side became woman and the other side became man. Woman was not created after man but alongside man.

Through ha’adam the fully gendered humans were connected. They were born out of ha’adam’s need for partnership and shared in ha’adam’s brokenness and vulnerability. While they were each distinctly individual, they had within themselves a piece of the other. Having been created from the same human, from the same body, brain and spirit they shared an intimate physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual connection. Between them a partnership of equality, mutuality and reciprocity existed. A partnership which some might call a connection of the soul.

The spectrum of gender expressed in this ancient, African, creation story from the book of Genesis reflects the spectrum of gender found in the triune God. From the genderless creator came the genderless human. From the genderless human came male and female. Without ha’adam male and female would not exist. Without the genderless creator God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, masculine and feminine expressions of God, would also not exist. Within the triune God exists a spectrum of

gender, which includes male and female and everything in between. If we have been created in the image of God, then a spectrum of gender exists in each of us as well. Where we fall on this spectrum is part of what makes us unique.

When I speak about the maleness and femaleness of God, I am not referring to mainstream Western concepts of gender. I am referring to something far more whole, honest, authentic, and life-giving. Western concepts of gender are narrow and rigid and often role-based and they been informed, tragically, by interpretations of scripture which support ideologies of gender inequality and sublimate woman to helpmate rather than partner. In Western culture masculinity is often defined in opposition to femininity and vice versa. In God there is no gendered opposition or hierarchy. In God, to be masculine means to embrace the feminine and to be feminine means to embrace the masculine. We see this most clearly in the interdependent, symbiotic relationship of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. One cannot exist or be who it is called to be without the other. As children of the Triune God we also cannot be who we are called to be when we live with narrow definitions and a limited scope of gender. To be human means to embrace the spectrum of gender, including times, places and circumstances when gender does not matter.

We cannot speak about the spectrum of gender which exists in our God whose purpose is love without speaking about multitude of ways in which this love is felt and expressed. As the ancient, African, creation story from Genesis shows us, we were made for love – to love and to be loved. Love was so important to God that rather than pulling the lonely ha'adam to Godself, God recreated ha'adam so that ha'adam could experience the fullness of human love. So that ha'adam might see, smell, taste, touch, talk with, walk with, fall asleep in and awake to God's love in another human. Like ha'adam we all need love but like the spectrum of gender in our God we do not all love in the same way. We each offer and seek love in uniquely individual ways and through the unconditional, generous, and selfless love of God

we are gifted people, partners, our other halves, who are able to love us and receive love from us in precisely the ways we need.

Just as ha'adam was broken for the sake of human love, so too did Jesus Christ allow himself to be broken out love for humanity. And out of the brokenness of Christ we have been transformed and remade. In the cross we have been reconciled, made right with God through the love of God so that we might be freed and empowered to be reconciled, to be made right with others and with ourselves.

On this Reconciling in Christ Sunday and every day hereafter, may you find in the love of Christ power and courage to embrace the spectrum of human existence and to claim your place on that spectrum, to be who you truly are, to love whom you truly love, and to be loved in return.

Hear this: We were created out of love and remade for love, and you were redeemed by love so that you are freed to be exactly who God has created you to be and to love exactly as God has created you to love.

May you receive this truth and be blessed with courage, peace, hope and joy.

Amen.