

God the Creator
“Maker of Heaven and Earth, of all that is, seen and unseen”

Morning Worship, St John’s and Christ the King: 16th June 2024

Psalm 104:1-13

Hebrews 1:1-4

Matt 6:26-33

Reminder of sermon-series, of what was covered last week, and today’s title above.

I wonder - if you had a choice – a free weekend, unlimited budget, no ties – would you prefer a countryside escape or a city break?

No right or wrong – and both have their attractions – but for me, I’d pretty much always go with countryside escape. And to be honest, I’d be after pretty remote countryside with a sparse human population.

This could be because I’m an anti-social old so-and-so who can’t be bothered to be nice to people – or (and this is the narrative I prefer) because, out in the wilds of nature is where I experience the greatest sense of the presence and majesty of God. About 30 years ago, when I was in Australia with my family, we returned home quite late, passing through a (very dark) national park on the way. No people. No houses. And no light pollution. The stars were so bright we just stopped the car and got out and looked at them. And that’s the closest thing to infinity that I’ve ever seen.

And God made it all...

The Bible – and particularly the OT - is full of allusions to the majesty and splendour of the Creator God as revealed through all he has made. Genesis, Job, Isaiah - and especially the Psalms, including this morning’s reading – all try to grasp in poetic language the power and glory of the Creator God. I’m sure you have your favourite readings – perhaps because of what I was just telling you about I am particularly moved by some verses from Isaiah

“To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.

But, as the Creed and the NT reading remind us, not only is the Creator God the designer and architect of all things we see and experience with our five senses, but also of things which we don’t.

Angels and other heavenly beings move in and out of focus throughout the pages of the Bible. They don't sit easily with our 'rational' culture, based as it is on principles of measurement and repeatable experiment. And of course, in some passages, 'demons' are used as an explanation of what we now understand as symptoms of ill-health, for which medical help can (and should) be sought. So it's not straight-forward.

And yet – many people will speak of “otherness” and peace in places of prayer. And some will tell of the opposite sense in other locations. Just because we cannot measure something, does not mean it does not exist. Maybe Shakespeare was on to something when he wrote the lines for Hamlet

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

It's a complex area, light on Scriptural information, heavy on sensationalism, and full of pitfalls and caveats, and over the centuries some Christians have got themselves into a muddle over it all – which is why it's here in the Creed in the first place.

For now, what we need to take away and remember, is that God created, and is way superior to, angels or any other heavenly beings, and that we should neither worship nor fear them. The focus for *our* belief and worship is the One True God.

In this morning's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of God caring and providing for all he has made - birds and lilies just as much as human beings. We are all cared for by God – and that includes each one of us, no matter how small, unimportant or insignificant we might feel.

And yet it also reminds us that we have a special role and task in God's creation

In his grace and mercy God asks us to join with him, to partner with him in his great work of Creation. In the Adam and Eve story he appoints them as stewards over Creation, to tend and care for it. To enable it to flourish and grow – to 'be fruitful and multiply.'

And that is still our calling as human beings today.

Like gardeners, to care for, and steward the planet – all its inhabitants, and all its resources.

And, God knows, we are not covering ourselves with glory on that one. From climate breakdown, to plastic pollution, to species extinction, to reckless use of resources, and beyond, we are not so much caring for the planet as ravaging it.

And yet participating in the on-going work of Creation is more than just physically caring for the planet...

It's about growing communities which reflect God's self-giving love, which extend God's welcome, which ensure that no-one is left behind...

It's about creativity and ingenuity. About taking something and using it to make something else which will enhance or delight or heal...

It's about being curious. Why? Why not? Could I? Could we? Thinking. Imagining. Shaping words. Making music, *as we just sang in Angel Voices*. Revealing truth...

As human beings we have immense capacity for goodness and beauty. To make God-centred choices which will enable 'the earth and all that is in it' to flourish and grow...

And we have similar capacity for negativity. We can use our understanding of the nature of the atom to enable diagnostics and treatments for dreadful diseases. Or to create nuclear weapons.

We can use the internet to enable amazing things, to educate, to communicate, to navigate safely. Or to misinform, to persecute, to rob or steal or hold to ransom.

We can share the world's resources, or some can hoard them for comfortable lives, whilst others suffer for want of basic necessities.

The list of humanity's failures is endless. It can leave us feeling demoralised, negative, hopeless.

And yet – our God is the God of Hope. The God who created everything from nothing. And we are made in God's image.

God *chose* to create Creation – and he gave us that gift of choice too. In a sense the whole of the Bible story is about choice. It's about what we choose to do.

And we can choose to make choices which are positive, life-enhancing, God-centred. Choices flowing out of the question "What would Jesus do?"

Or we can choose otherwise.

These choices are available to us every single day. Some of them multiple times per day

But over the next two and a half weeks' we have a particular opportunity – a particular responsibility – to make the really important choice of where to cast our vote.

But how to make this choice? In all the buzz and the noise of the campaign, of our own histories, of our personal preferences, of the influence of powerful personalities, of the complicated nature of political promises? Where in all this might we find a stable place from which to ask that question "What would Jesus do?"

We must each answer for ourselves as to where we might look, but as followers of Christ, I think we have a responsibility to include God's view, as revealed in the Bible.

And for those of us who are not sure quite how to go about that (and this definitely includes me) I'd strongly recommend using the 'Pray your Part' prayers and readings which have been produced by the CofE to help us to do just that. There are booklets – or you can sign up to get a daily email. It may be challenging – God's view is almost always challenging! – but it's not directive.

For choice - whether it's city or countryside for a special weekend, partnering with God in the on-going work of creation, or how we cast our vote - is only truly *choice* when we make it freely.

As God freely made the choice to create, makes the choice to sustain, and will always make the choice to love all that he has made.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and Earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen”

As part of my preparation for this sermon I came across a prayer from the Iona Community, which I'd like to share as part of our time of reflection this morning. If you would like to make it your prayer too, please join in with Amen at the end.

Eternal God
out of your great generosity
you brought the world into being
and gave it life.

Then you gave it yourself,
on the cross of human suffering.

Such priceless, painful, giving!
Did you invite us here to show us that?
Then show it to us once more, O God!

Show us a different kind of world,
a different cost of living,
where the pain will not be eased
by the money we spend on ourselves,
but by the way we spend ourselves for others,
and the way we value life.

Eternal God,
out of your great generosity,
make us generous; bring *us* into being.
Amen

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Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow, p.156. www.ionabooks.com*