

## **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June**

### **“maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen”**

Psalm 104:1-13

Hebrews 1:1-4

Matt 6:26-33

We are continuing our summer sermon series looking at the Nicene Creed, the statement of faith that we use most Sundays and will use immediately after this sermon. Today we are thinking about the phrase “maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen”

And as we begin to think about God as Creator (the maker of heaven and earth) and the creation (of all that is, seen and unseen) we’ll begin by thinking about the vastness and complexity of creation. And to kick us off we’ll have a quote from the late, great Douglas Adams, in the Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy

*“Space is big. You just won't believe how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist's, but that's just peanuts to space.”*

And with that quote in mind we’ll continue our thoughts with a short quiz, so get your thinking caps on

### **(all A B C questions)**

Question 1

Approx how many stars in our Galaxy the Milky Way

A 100 thousand

B 100 million.

C **100 billion**

And that is just our Galaxy. Its thought there are 200 Billion galaxies. WOW!!!

But its not just space that’s amazing ...

Question 2

Approx. how many species of ant in the world?

A 5000,

B 10000,

C **15000 ?**

Why do we need so many different species?? Was God just saying I can so I will?

Question 3 –

Approx how many nerves are there in the human body

- A More than 1000;
- B more than 1million;
- C **more than 1 trillion (7 trillion)**

We might say that brings a whole new meaning to the phrase “You get on my nerves!” but it also says something about us being wonderful creatures, the crown of all creation!

So one thing is for sure - Creation is very big and varied and complex. And what we can see is just a small part of it. Even in the physical world we only see a small part of the whole creation; in terms of the physical universe what we actually see and experience is the tiniest fraction. And there is more than just the physical to creation.

The reading from Hebrews talks of angels – spiritual beings – a reminder that there is another dimension to creation., a spiritual side to life. Beyond space and time. And God has created this as well. All that is, seen and unseen. The more we ponder the more wonderful and unfathomable it all becomes.

Our Old Testament reading is the beautiful Psalm 104. – which in poetic words sings the praise of the creator God

*You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.*

We look at the world around us and it tells us something of the wonder of God.

If I asked you where you feel closest to God many – probably most – of you would say in creation. On the hills, at the coast, looking out over the sea, looking down from the mountains at the land stretched out before you, staring up at the stars on a clear night, marvelling at the Northern lights or maybe just pottering in your garden, tidying the churchyard or walking through Shirley Park.

The creation tells us something about the power and the wonder and the imagination and the creativity of God. A God who conceived all this – and remember this is just a tiny part of it. And a God who looked at what he had made, after he had created human beings in his image, “and it was very good”. A God of beauty, wonder and order. A God to be worshipped.

(which begs the question – if we feel close to God outside, why do we come into a building worship him? This is one of the reasons why we have Forest Church – next one on 30<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm outside at St Johns)

But I think the creation in all its wonder and goodness has two other things to teach us

First as its stewards we have a responsibility to care for it

And second as beings created in the image of the creator God we have built in creativity – it is part of that image

The story of creation in Genesis finishes with God’s command to humanity

*'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'*

The words subdue and have dominion might give an impression that the earth, the creation as we know it, is there for us and us alone to do with as we will. This is certainly the way it has been treated over the centuries. And this has resulted in the destruction of habitats, extinction of species, exploitation of resources, pollution of the environment and now the threats of climate change and its possible dire consequences for the very conditions we need for life itself.

But other translations of that verse in Genesis talk of humans being responsible for creation or ruling over it – which gives a very different perspective. Looking at it this way gives a sense of caring for and protecting the creation. The creation is God's creation. It is very good and it is given in trust to us to look after, to use but not abuse, to tend and nurture, but not to destroy. In the gospel reading Jesus talks of God himself caring for creation – the birds and the flowers - setting an example for us to follow.

I first came across what we now know as the Green or Eco movement about 50 years ago at the time of the first General Election of 1974. At our school, like many schools I suppose, we had a mock election. One of the students stood for the "only one earth" party, and spoke about the environmental issues that were topical back then. Interestingly the result of that mock election, which the Only One Earth candidate won, was featured on the BBC news, since the incumbent prime minister Ted Heath was our MP at the time, and the count was taking place in our school hall. Unfortunately the constituency as a whole were not quite so forward thinking and Ted Heath retained the seat easily and little progress was made on Green issues for many years!

The Green movement has grown and developed since then. There have been many positive changes in society – unleaded petrol, recycling, insulation of homes, clean air acts etc etc. But there has also been massive growth in air travel, industrial pollution, micro plastics, deforestation and many more species placed under threat of extinction because of loss of habitat. There is still the same battle to keep green issues high on the agenda.

In recent years a strong Christian Eco movement has developed, and in our Parish we are proud to be part of that. Helping in some small ways to reduce our carbon footprint and to raise the awareness of these issues. We are one of a fairly small number of parishes in Birmingham Diocese to have the Silver Eco Church Award – a reflection of what we do in and around our buildings, our churchyard, our worship and our individual lifestyles. Plans to replace our gas heating with electrical heating will only enhance this.

But sadly, eco issues and the quest for net zero (essential leaving no carbon footprint) are issues that have been marginalised at the upcoming general election. The constituency hustings in a week or so gives us the opportunity to ask the candidates for this consistency what kind of priority they give to caring for the creation – whether they see it as God's creation or not. Lets not ignore that opportunity. We may not be able to elect an Only One Earth candidate, but we can make sure the issues are talked about!

And in our own lives, we can take steps to reduce our carbon footprints, to tread lightly on the earth as we take our part in caring for God's wonderful, complex and diverse creation. If you're not sure how, our eco group would be glad to help you!

And a second thing to think about as we think of God as creator is our own creativity. We are made in God's image and part of that image is our own creativity. We are made to be creative. Human imagination and ingenuity come from God and reflect his creativity.

In the Old Testament there's a wonderful story about the Ark of the Covenant and how it was to be made. God says to Moses *"See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft."*

God himself gives gifts of creativity to be used for him. Creativity comes from God. Being creative is more than being good at arts and craft, and each of us has our own particular gifts from God.

But interestingly human creativity can also lead us to God. Think hymns, poetry, art, music, wonderful buildings. All things that can help us come into God's presence. God giving us wonderful gifts of creativity to help us worship the Creator.

But like anything, creativity can be used for ill as well as good. Technological developments have brought wonderful progress in healthcare and communications, for example, but have also contributed to weapons of mass destruction and pollution. God has given us the gift of creativity to use in caring for and nurturing creation, not in abusing and destroying.

So where have we come from and what does all this mean for us? We began today by thinking about the vastness and complexity of the creation; we have thought about ourselves, made in God's image, as the crown of creation. We have seen that creation points us to God; we have thought about our care for creation and have glimpsed at our own creativity and seen how that can be used for good or for ill, even to bring us into the presence of the Creator.

As we think of the phrase in the Creed - *We believe in God, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.* Let us pray

Creator God

We thank you for the wonder and variety of creation

We thank you that you made us – the crown of all creation – to love and care for it as you love and care for us

Forgive us when we have abused it or misused it or treated it as a mere plaything

Help us to use all the creativity you have given us to care for your creation and to point towards you

We ask this in Jesus name

Amen