

10.15 am HC

11 September 2022

Psalm 104; Job 38: 1-11, 16-18; Matthew 6: 24-33

Creation 1: The Creator

Next Sunday is our Harvest Festival, Harvest Thanksgiving.

This year we decided to build a mini-series of sermons around it for three weeks, of which this is the first. I'm very grateful to Mike Higton, who put the series together, helping us to read and consider what the Bible says about Creation,

So you may be surprised that we didn't have a reading from Genesis this morning- that's where the story of Creation comes, isn't it?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Well if you've been here the past two weeks you will know that the children are looking at that account for us and sharing a different stage of it every week. But one key aim of these sermons is to look wider than Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and see how Creation is threaded through the whole Bible, how it is there alongside the story of salvation, how Christ is, was and will be an integral part of the act and process of Creation...

But I'm getting ahead of myself - you will hear more from Mike and Alison in the coming weeks.

Today's passages teach us about Creation because they each reveal more about the Creator, God, and about how we should live as God's creatures.

In brief, today's readings show us **Creator God as King, Architect and Parent**. You might like to have your readings sheet to hand as we look a bit more closely at them now.

Firstly, Psalm 104, where the Creator is described as the **King over all**:

*O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honour and majesty,
² wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
³ you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,*

*⁴ you make the winds your messengers,
fire and flame your ministers. .*

Recent days have brought images of human royalty into our living rooms every day, with dignity and solemnity, celebration and colour. The widespread impact of the Queen's long life and reign has been unprecedented gratitude and respect, not least from the hundreds of thousands who are queueing day and night to see her body lying in state. Yet how much more worthy of praise and thanksgiving is our Creator King, whose realm is all creation and whose majesty and beauty are to be seen in all that has been made, from the vast tent of the heavens to the great depths of the seas.

*²⁴ O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*

The Creator God is King: we are God's people, subjects who know that all we have and all we need is ultimately given by God:

*These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
²⁸ when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things*

In our second reading we were in the book of Job, the powerful parable of one man's immense suffering, wrestling with issues which have beset human beings throughout history.

Job's honest and anguished questions do not go unheard by God, and here, towards the end of the book, we have God's answer – not reasons or explanations for what Job has suffered, but an astonishing revelation of who the Creator God is.

God speaks to Job almost like an apprentice, or pupil, challenging him to see, listen and learn.

Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you and you shall declare to me...

God's questions for Job show us the Creator as architect – designer and engineer of all that is made,

infinite intelligence behind the incomprehensible vastness and unimaginable beauty of creation, from the very beginning.

God the architect raises Job up to see all this and thus to know his place as God's creature, from the perspective of eternity. V 4:

⁴ *'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ *Who determined its measurements—surely you know!*

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ *On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone*

⁷ *when the morning stars sang together*

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

I spoke this week with a young civil engineer based in Chicago, whom I knew as a child in our church in London: he always needed to know how things worked, , and now he is specialising in bridges, those iconic, daring structures which can be breathtakingly beautiful too. Having studied hard for years, Tom now gets to maintain and repair bridges. But he also dreams one day of designing bridges himself.

As I listened to him talking passionately about his work, I was somehow reminded of this passage, Job's glimpses into the architecture and engineering of Creator God, the awe and wonder, yet also the desire to care for creation and to create himself.

Finally lets turn to today's gospel- a familiar passage perhaps but not often read as a window into creation. Here we see Creator God as Parent,

The loving parent who provides and feeds and creates beauty – even the fleeting beauty of wild flowers or the delicate fragility of a sparrow, all made to God's glory and to delight those who share creation with them. And all held and loved by him, so that not one sparrow, not one child in Pakistan, one innocent civilian in Ukraine, one felling grandmother in Japan is unnoticed by him. That's the incredible breadth and depth of God's love for his creation.

And Creator God has placed us within Creation to rejoice in it, to be gladdened by it, to stand in awe and wonder at the glimpses we catch of God's majesty

and glory, through all he has made.
And he views us not only as his people in his kingdom,
his apprentice in caring for creation,
but also as his children, whom he knows and loves and has saved and
redeemed through Jesus Christ.

As David Jenkins, the late Bishop of Durham once put it:

***God is no object of critical investigation. He is the subject of faith and hope,
of obedience, of love, of longing.***

To return as I close to the national events surrounding us at this time.

One queuer in the Great River of humanity winding through London to see the
Queen, said this:

*I feel a real sense of loss,
because she's not only the Queen, she's my personal queen...*

So too, Creator God is not only the Creator, but our God, whom we know and
love and serve and who is alive, with us today.

So, with all God's creatures we lift up our voices to sing: Alleluia!

Alleluia!

