

2nd Sunday before Lent Sunday 07 February 2021

The greeting and the reflection this week are accompanied (hopefully!) by a Benefice zoom service so I hope that I may actually see many of you face-to-face as it were! The collect, the readings from Colossians and the gospel of John, and the reflection will be used during the service and there will of be an additional confession, creed and prayers as in our usual services

Collect

Almighty God,
Give us reverence for all creation and respect for every person
That we may mirror your likeness in Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Readings

Prov 8: 1, 22-31

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

Col 1: 15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reflection (as preached at Benefice zoom service 7th February 2021)

- I wonder how we are all getting along in lockdown?
- I was so impressed by how creative everyone was in the first lockdown – stories everywhere of what people were making, or baking, or sewing or painting
- We heard lots of things too of how thankful people were to those that helped them – in the NHS, in the supermarkets, in their communities, among their friends
- I don't know about you but those thoughts of creativeness and thankfulness do not seem quite so apparent this time around
- Perhaps we are all a bit more tired, a bit more exhausted and fed up to either be thankful or to be the one that helps out those in need
- I have been reminded again in the last few weeks of the need to be thankful for the things we have – and I have also been challenged by the need to get creative!
- Let me tell you how!
- Our wonderful church school in Radnage is, like all other schools in the country, having to provide education face to face for key worker children and also on line lessons
- They, and other school staff everywhere, are under pressure like so many other groups, and so they reached out to the community to ask if anyone could help by making short videos of any talents that they had
- I don't really have a very strong creative side but I did volunteer to do a few 'RE lesson' type videos and some worksheets to go with them, and also to attend some of the 'zoom' collective worship that they have every week
- It was quite a challenge for me – especially all the technical parts of joining together phone video clips into one movie and then getting it uploaded in a format everyone could see. And then I discovered that zoom worship on a Thursday at school is called 'Thankful Thursday', and I was reminded of the importance of saying thank you every day for so many things big and small
- Our readings today talk about creation – how God was there in the beginning and created everything, including us
- In that well known reading from John, that we hear every year at Christmas, which starts – in the beginning was the word.... We can read....
- "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." (John 1:3)
- This reading is much loved by traditionalists at Christmas and expresses the great creative power of God
- Our reading from Colossians also reminds us that God created everything - including Christ – 'for in him all things in heaven and earth were created, visible and invisible..' And God

invites us to share in the delight of his creation every single day (as I was reminded of by the children at school)

- Sunrise and sunset, trees and fields, gardens, a smile, our families
- Bird song and animal tracks in crisp white snow, laughter, food
- So many things we have to say thank you for, whatever our situation
- Of course we all know that there is a lot of bad stuff to deal with too – COVID may be the one uppermost in our minds, but there are also many other tragedies taking place every minute across the world
- the dark, cold months of January and February are not always easy to get through, it can be difficult at this time of year sometimes to remain cheerful even in a good year!
- Our reading has something to say about that too – the true light has come into the world – it shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it
- Here, in God's creation of life and peace for all, we are offered another way of managing when things are tough
- If you are in darkness and weighed down so you have no spare hand or heart to carry the light – someone else can carry it!
- That is what church, community, companionship and Christianity is all about
- We carry the light to those who are in darkness, we offer to share the load with those who are weighed down or simply weary
- And when we are in darkness ourselves (and most of us do have our periods of 'darkness') we can pray that someone else will hold the light aloft for us
- Things are no longer as they were at the beginning, unspoiled, but the Gospel message is that even in our battered world the light of life and beauty still shines – the darkness has not and will not overcome it
- Perhaps this is a time to ask ourselves if we have lost the sense that God delights and rejoices in us, the human race, his creation.
- Perhaps this is a time to reflect on how we might respond to a God whose love for us is so strong that he chooses to come and live among us to restore us and heal us.
- And the word became flesh and lived among us – and we have seen his glory...
- Make sure you remember to delight in God's creation, to say thank you for each and every one of your blessings, to rest and relax in the love of God – certain he delights in you.....