

The season of creation- 5 September 2021

This service is the first of our series on the Season of Creation.

BIBLE READINGS

Genesis 1:1-31

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. ...

... Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, '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.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:4b-9, 15

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ...

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.



MESSAGE

The theme of this year's Season of Creation is *A home for all? Renewing the oikos of God.*

Oikos is the Greek word for house or household and one of the key messages of the creation accounts is that God has created the earth as a house or dwelling place for all of creation. As we shall see shortly, God gave humans the special vocation of caring for and cultivating this *oikos* of God. Human induced climate change and the extinction of many species suggests that we are not doing so well at caring for creation. As some of the posters at the School Strike for Climate rallies point out, there is no Planet B.



Next week we will explore how humanity has handled the *oikonomia* of God's house, the **economy** of managing creation, both for good and for bad. The following week we will consider the *oikologia* of God's house, the **ecology** of how all living things are interconnected.

Our starting point is that there are in fact, **two creation accounts**, the first and better known account in Genesis chapter 1 that begins with the words, 'In the beginning, when God created ...'. We may be less familiar with the second account in Genesis chapter 2.

The first account is actually a poem that celebrates creation. As a poem it is not meant to be taken literally and does not provide a scientific explanation as to 'how' creation came about. Rather, the poem elegantly celebrates that God alone is the Creator, that creation in all its diversity and beauty is distinct from God and that all of creation is good.



In the first three 'days' God creates the building blocks of the earth – day and night, sky and earth, sea and land. In the following three 'days', God fills each of these spaces: the sun, moon and stars fill the heavens, birds and sea creatures fill the sky and the waters, and then animals and insects fill the land. So the heavens and the earth, the *oikos* of God, are created. On the sixth 'day', humanity is created **in the image of God** and given a specific **vocation**.

What does it mean to be created in the image of God? This point has been debated for centuries ... is it the ability to think and act rationally? the ability to have relationship with God (e.g. that humanity has a soul or spirit)? the moral wisdom to distinguish good from evil?



There is another intriguing possibility ... In a daring move, the writer of Genesis 1 imagined the whole earth as God's temple, with humanity as the living, breathing image of God. All of humanity, then, is given the authority and responsibility of ruling over the earth, not just earthly kings.

In Genesis 1, this **vocation** of humanity is described in terms of subduing and having dominion over the rest of creation. As God's representative, humanity is to exercise this power over creation modelled on God's gracious power in dealing with creation, providing food at the appropriate time and watering the earth (e.g. Psalm 104). So the vocation imagined is more akin to that of a **shepherd** caring for their flock rather than the widespread exploitation or destruction of habitat.

This vocation is also mentioned in the second creation account (that covers chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis). In verse 15 humanity is called to **care for and tend God's garden**, which is the earth. If the Genesis 1 vocation is similar to a shepherd, here the vocation of humanity is similar to a **gardener**.

So God has created a beautiful home for all living creatures and given humanity a particular role as steward or caretaker of the earth. Next week we'll see how we are faring. But let us now take time to ponder the words of this song.

[The earth is the Lord's \(tune St Denio Immortal, invisible\)](#)

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

Creation reminds us, O God, of your love.

By grace we are learning, as year leads to year,
we're called to be stewards, your caretakers here.

Your rainforests nurture the world that we share.

Your wetlands give animals shelter and care.

Your coral reefs cradle the life of the sea.

You've shown us, in love, what your good world can be.

Too often, O God, we abuse your good earth.

We fail to remember its beauty and worth.

We take from creation much more than we need,
we threaten your world through indifference and greed.

May we be good stewards of all that you give,
protecting creation wherever we live.

May we be a church that renews and restores
and lovingly cares for this earth that is yours.

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