

Year A Second Before Lent 27-02-11

Given that one could spend a lifetime writing on the just the first four or five words we've a great deal to get through before lunch! So, I propose to simply say something about each day of the Genesis week. Before I do I would just like to reassure you all. However it happened, I understand that a great big God, not luck, is at the heart of created order. So big it seems that if we look for God deep in our selves we can expect to find nothing but either a God shaped hole or a delusion. What is more you, and you, and you, and you; in fact each and everyone of us is that great big God's most treasured creation. Oh and one more thing: we all get a day off at the end!

Day one: The Trinity.

I am not a scholar - though I aspire to be a gentleman! - so you'll need to test what I'm about to say. I would argue that here on day one, in verse one, we see God in three persons blessed trinity. 'In the beginning God'. That's surely quite straight forward. God - the I Am. God - the ever present present tense. God known to Jesus as daddy or papa.

Then we've got 'while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters'. Yes, God's got wind! I'd argue that this is not a reference either to flatulence or to an element of weather. I would like to see it hyphenated 'wind-from-God'. A number of English translations use the word spirit not wind to translate the Hebrew 'Ruach' which can also be rendered 'breath'. God the Holy Spirit.

Finally for day one, God the Father speaks the words 'Let there be light'. Later, Jesus reportedly called himself the light of the world.

You may be thinking that I have made too much of a distinction amongst the Godhead playing into the hands of the Jews and Muslims who say we do not believe in one God, as they do, but many. Well, let me bring them together again by saying that to speak a word, God needs the breath, the mouth and the creativity: spirit son and father.

Day two: order from chaos

Your life may be in muddle. For the largely land based Jew, water represented horrific Godless muddle. Perhaps that is why the Jewish writer of Revelations describes heaven as being without sea. Happily, here God brings order. First separating chaos into a body of water above and below the sky then by separating that below further discovering land - a firm foundation. Later in scripture we find God's first people 'Israel' being rescued by being brought out of slavery through water and moving into the promise through water. Later still we find members of the second Israel 'Church' moving into baptismal covenant through water. It is as if we have been buried - laying our lives down in the water - signifying preparedness to be as it were dead to personal ambition and desires.

Day three: diverse and productive fullness

Notice that God does not make seed in this account. As a diversity of plants and then trees colonise the virgin land the presence of seed and fruitfulness is emphasised. Maturity is created. Incidentally, trees do follow after plants when nature is allowed to run its course on fallow land. By our fruits we shall be known. God considers our diversity and productivity to be good!

#### Day four: lights

Interestingly, greater and lesser lights and stars are made separately from the idea of light itself. Perhaps this is to prove the transcendence of Adonai over the lights deified by the surrounding gentiles. The lights are not even honoured by a name in this account. Instead, their purpose is to be signs of the seasons, that days and years may be reckoned. Isn't this a slightly quirky way of speaking of the calendar? Just as 'evening and morning the fourth day' is a quirky way of speaking of a day... unless you are a priest of course! Hallowe'en and Christmas eve are just well known examples of the common Church practise - carrying on the Jewish temple tradition - of starting special occasions the night before. The lights rule but only day and night, being merely the means of their separation.

#### Day five: fins and feathers

After a time, first sea creatures appear and then move into the air. Again diversity is seen to be good. Despite being unclean and non-kosher these animals are the first of creation to receive a blessing. They are told to multiply.

#### Day six: domestic, wild and human creatures

Here food and non-food animals are made and deemed good. Then Elohim, the trinity, is said to say to themselves 'let us make humanity in our image, male and female God created them'. God may legitimately be referred to generically as male, in my view, to assist legal or adoptive interpretation. Jesus is, of course, male but 'the father' and the 'spirit' are not; at least as we biologically understand the word. In fact, the father reportedly says elsewhere 'as a hen gathers her chicks so I long to gather my people'. Further, it is not uncommon, especially in the beautiful wisdom literature, for the spirit to be referred to in female terms. Her name there is Sophia or knowledge. The Orthodox church is very much in love with her! We find male and female both being made by God in the same way at the same time and in likeness of God's male and female attributes. Male and female are then both given responsibility over all the other creatures and plants for food. Both are blessed with fruitful multiplication as only the unclean animals were before. By implication both have soul, body and spirit. The latter, I understand, properly comes alive in response to God and is where such interaction happens. The fruits of the spirit, it seems to me are like organs in this part of us and can grow or atrophy accordingly.

#### Day seven: Sabbath

For the pious Hebrew, and especially the pious Hebrew priest, the day of rest was sacrosanct. This seventh-day entry gives a very good argument for its observance. Until now the God we've been hearing about has been portrayed as super-massive and extra-powerful: God speaks and stuff happens! However, at this point God rests - so that is why we rest. It hints at a future passage where God is described as being so feeble as to be unable to find the only two humans in the garden. Maybe God doesn't rest because of weakness. Maybe it is because of strength: there is nothing to prove. Of course for us Jesus crucified and glorified - not the eighth, or first, day, Sunday - is our Sabbath. As a result of what he has done for us like God we need not strive. We don't need to work all hours God sends, neither scrimp and save all we've got, crop all land every year, attend all services every day or what ever it might be. Shalom - God will provide.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves - who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. Therefore, as we draw near to share our love feast at the table of the servant-king, may we remember his obedient sacrificial atonement until he comes. Let us strive first for the kingdom of God that all these things will be given to us as well. Amen!