

## MORNING SERVICE

25 January 2009, Kilcalmonell, Killean & Kilchenzie

*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Christmas*

*preacher: Rev. Martin Grashoff*

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### Welcome & Intimations

**Opening Hymn** : 'Every new morning'

**Children's Talk**

**Children's Hymn** : 'All things bright and beautiful'

### Prayer & Lord's Prayer

**Readings** : Genesis 1:1-5 & John 1:1-5

We will read the first verses of the Book of Genesis and the first verses of the Gospel according to John. You can find these on page 4 of the Old Testament and page 116 of the New Testament. However, to make these well-known words sound fresh, we will hear a new English translation based on the Dutch *Naardense bijbel*, which tries to keep as close as possible to the original Hebrew and Greek.

Listen now for the Word of God.

- 1 From the beginning God is creator, –  
of the heavens and the earth.
- 2 The earth  
has been waste and without form,  
with darkness over the face  
of the deep, –  
but a breath of God already  
swirled upon the waters.
- 3 Then God says: Let light be there! –  
and light *is* there.
- 4 God looks at the light: yes, it is good!  
Thus God separates  
the light from the darkness.
- 5 God calls the light 'day'  
and the darkness he has called 'night';  
there is evening and there is morning:  
one day.

(...)

- 1 From the beginning  
the Word is there;  
the Word is close to God,  
yes, God *is* the Word;
- 2 it is there from the beginning,  
so close to God;
- 3 all things happen through it  
and outwith it  
not one thing happens  
that did happen.
- 4 Through it there is life,  
and that life is  
the light of human beings;
- 5 the light shines in the darkness:  
the darkness did not catch it.

For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us –  
thanks be to God.

**Hymn** : 'Longing for light' (CH 543)

### **Sermon**

There is a whole a lot of jokes about creation. Just one for now. It is a cartoon I saw, in which God is sitting in his throne in the clouds and complains to Charles Darwin: 'They've removed my story of creation from the schoolbooks!' Says Darwin: 'Well, that's probably a part of evolution too.'

The cartoon made me smile. It refers to discussions that are still going on, but are actually out of date. The story of creation is not at conflict with the view of evolution – both simply tell a totally different story about the universe as we know it. And both are true.

Evolution tries to explain in rational words how it all came to be as it is. It's the language of science and as long as the hypothesis can not be falsified, we will have to accept it is correct. Actually, I really think it is an amazing story in which I feel very small as a human being, like one flake in a cosmic storm.

But only creation explains me who I am in all that and why I am here. That is a story that goes beyond our scientific thinking. The story of creation is not about

nature, or laws of nature, but it is about humankind and the place of humans among all which they are part of.

Evolution uses our reason to understand reality, and it is a very important and also successful approach. Creation comprehends reality in terms that actually surpass that same reality. Reason tells us that the cosmos is huge, always extending and without boundaries. Faith reassures us that God is even bigger – and yet totally close at hand. Two different stories, both true.

For the record: creation is not a one-off event, either 5,769 years ago – if you are an orthodox Jew – or 4.5 billion years ago – if you accept the outcomes of science. That is how people often think about it: creation happened long, long ago... But the bible wants us to know that God is, always was and always will be the Creator of all and everything. Creation is not something from the past, it is reality right now, and every day again. And creation is not just about nature, but it includes every part of the world we live in. *From the beginning God is creator* – then, now, always.

And God involves us in this creative work. Creating the world means: putting things in the right order, replacing the chaos. Creating is to find meaning instead of randomness. The bible wants us to know that behind, around and in all created things there is a *breath of God*. God is the ground of being, God is the fresh air of new life, God is the will to make this world a good place for all. And because we are children of God, created in God's image, we share in that.

Together we can create a ground to build our lives on by supporting and sustaining each other – as a family, as friends, as colleagues, as members of a community. Everyone has his or her creativity, the ability to think of something new, something good. And we all have the will to make something beautiful of our lives and our world. Of course, we are only human, so miracles are happening only every now and then, and we regularly miss the target. But in and through all our efforts we *are* God's partners in creation. In our words and deeds God is among us. God needs us every day to make creation really work.

When John wants to tell the story of Jesus's life he starts at the very beginning: with creation. John is juggling with words his people knew very well from their Hebrew bible. *Word, life, light*. While Genesis tells us that God starts creation by making the light, John says the same: *the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not catch it*.

About the creation of light there is a very old story in Jewish mysticism. It is not in the bible, nor in the official books of the rabbis, but it tries to explain the beginning of creation. When God was about to create the light, the story goes,

the light was kept in huge earthenware vessels. But by accident one of the vessels fell and broke, and the light in it sparkled all over creation. Because of that cosmic accident, the story ends, each and every created being or thing has a spark of that divine light hidden inside. Now what we have to do is to find our own spark of light and make it shine for others. And we have to look with compassion for the sparks of light hidden in all and everything. Isn't that a beautiful way of bringing the great story of creation straight into daily life?

Today in Kintyre we together start a new chapter. Let us start at the beginning. Let us listen to the great story of creation and the great story of John. Both are about the light that God sends us each day. Let us also listen to that Jewish teaching about the spark of light we have to find and foster in ourselves and others.

Let me be clear: to be God's partners in creation is in the first place about the things we do or don't do, say or don't say in our every day life. It is about working on the farm and living in our house, about gardening or going to school, about doing a good job and having a good time, about caring and sharing. That is working on creation.

I hope we dare to make this new start together. Each with his or her own gifts, and together as a community. As creative, compassionate and committed people we will benefit the fruits of our labour and enjoy them: the simple bread and the fruitcake, the milk and the wine, the work and the love. Let us be a living community, working with God as co-creators, following Jesus as the one who already went all the way.

Amen.

**Hymn** : 'Praise the Lord, you heavens'

**Offering brought forward**

**Prayer of Intercession**

**Closing Hymn** : 'Let all creation dance'

**Blessing**