

2 August 2020, 11am
Christ Church New Southgate
& Friern Barnet

Sermon: A call to care
Genesis 1.16-31

Rev Ruth Moriarty

One of the only things we could appreciate in lockdown was nature. For that precious hour back in April when we were allowed out to walk, to run and to exercise - three things happened. We got a bit fitter, we became massive fans of parks and found new ones that we never knew existed and we developed a whole new appreciation for nature.

Suddenly we saw more birds, more plants, more life around us in parks, gardens and balconies. We delighted in stories of fish flooding the canals in Venice and of the trade in endangered species halting with the virus. However today as I speak, it's hot - and it's been hotter and hotter in the UK for 12 years running. None of us can fail to see the changes in our environment and all of us want to do more for God's earth.

As a story of justice - the call to care for creation begins and the very beginning. The start of the bible is one of those parts of the bible that we all know well. Even if you're not a Christian, you are likely to know how the story starts ... in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It's page one of the bible and page one of the Christian faith.

This part of the bible was written around the 6th century BC and it was written to the people of God - the Israelites who were in exile or were forced into migration, at the hands of a heavy oppressive force in the land - the Babylonians. But this is a story - in the form of a poem - told way, way back, told at the fireside, on a mother's knee.

This story tells the people of God and us that God can be trusted because - 1/God has been around since before the beginning of the world and 2/God created the world. The poem goes through 5 stages of creation and winds up at the sixth where God creates humanity and the seventh when God rests. 7 of course is a number that means completeness in the old testament. This story is setting out to say - God can be completely trusted. And God even

knew what he was doing when on the sixth day - he created humanity, male and female.

So what does it mean to be made in the image of God? what is it about men and women that look a bit like God? What is it about you that looks divine?

In this story in Genesis, God creates. God creates all kinds of things - sea, land, plants, creatures - and God creates human beings.

When my first nephew was born, he looked just like my great grandfather. Of course, in reality he was nothing like him, my great-grandfather had one leg, smoked a pipe continuously and ate nothing apart from polo mints. But he looked a bit like him.

When a child is born, when new life comes into this world, this very act of creation reflects God's goodness. Just as a child sometimes looks a bit like one of its relatives so we too look a little like God because in every birth, in every new life, in every fresh start - God the creator is at work.

Likewise, our job and responsibility as humans is to take seriously being in charge or having dominion on the earth. the power God gives us is not something we can use just as we wish, that willy-nilly we can think chopping all the rainforests down is ok or that seeing the ice caps melt is fine. The power and responsibility we have been given - the rule we have been given is to care for, to steward, to shepherd the earth.

God's voice speaks creation into life and what God says is the overflow of his heart. His voice offers us a place within creation, of being in relationship just as he is father, son and spirit. This relationship requires our response and for us to respond to his call to follow, to obedience.

This story in genesis is about God's power - about God's strength and might - and what does this power do? It invites, evokes, creates.

When we relate together, when we live together as we all do in communities - the way we reflect the image of God is by showing a graceful not grasping power. The image of God is most seen in the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, here is a life of obedience, as Paul writes:

'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.' Philipians 2.4-6

When God created male and female, he created and evoked new life, he created a community where humans can sustain relationships with one another while about this job of caring for the earth.

While we know we need to care for others as God cares for us, today we also hear God speaking to us to also be obedience in his call to us to care for his creation.

May the image of God be seen in our acts of care for the world.

May the image of God be seen in our care of each other.

And may the image of God in others be a reminder to us of the God who graciously creates, loves and calls us to follow him.