

**Sunday 7 February 2021 – St John's/All Saints/St James**  
**Proverbs 8: 1&22-31 and John 1: 1-14**

“In the beginning God created”. The opening words of our Bibles in Genesis chapter 1. God, like an artist, fashioned the whole universe and created the heavens and the earth. We didn't read from Genesis 1 just now but we did have a precis of God's creative work from the Book of Proverbs which very poetically told us something of God's attributes/ his nature, seen in Creation. 1<sup>st</sup>, Proverbs 8:1 Wisdom and reason – Wisdom is calling out, we read, reason is making herself heard. Then in v.30 - God the designer - “like an architect” planning and designing – nothing happened by chance. And the final verses expressed the joy, happiness and pleasure that God experienced. V31: God was happy with the world and pleased with the human race. A wonderful expression of feeling and relationship. Perhaps, with our human understanding, it's difficult to grasp the absolute awesome wonder and enormity of what God did in creation. His creative power.

Michelangelo painted Rome's famous Sistine Chapel to retell the story of creation – perhaps you've been there. Michelangelo's ceiling covered 6,000 square feet and anyone who's painted a ceiling with a paint roller knows that it's not the easiest of tasks. Well - Michelangelo started with 300 detailed drawings, and then for more than three years the 5'4” artist devoted all his working hours to the exhausting strain of painting the vast overhead space with his tiny brushes. Sometimes he painted standing on a huge scaffold, a paintbrush high over his head. Sometimes he sat, his nose inches from the ceiling. Sometimes he painted while lying on his back, shoulders, neck and arms cramped painfully. In the long days of summer, he had light to paint 17 hours a day, taking food and a chamber pot with him on to the 60-foot scaffold. For 30 days at a stretch he slept in his clothes, not even taking off his boots. Paint dribbled into his eyes, so that he could barely see. Freezing in the winter, sweating in the summer, he painted until at last the ceiling looked like a ceiling no more.

He'd transformed it into the creation drama, with creatures so real they seemed to breathe. His creative genius had been hard work but Michelangelo knew only too well that his

work – however splendid and beautiful – was still only a very poor image of what God had created. But one thing he did know for sure - creativity was extremely hard work!

Eugene Peterson, theologian, wrote: “The Bible begins with these words, ‘In the beginning God created,’ ... not that God sat majestic in the heavens’. Rather - God did something”. Right at the beginning God went to work! He was active – Genesis 1 shows us a creative, hardworking God who was bringing about the wonder of creation in all its splendour and majesty. Many might argue and debate about the process of creation – we know this is so, but the main truth is: God did it. His signature – the artist or the architect’s signature is on creation. None of us is here by accident. Every helium atom, every spiral galaxy, each living creature exists because God wants it to. We owe our very existence to God. We are his creation and God, who poured power and love into his creation, looked at everything he had made and saw that it was good.

Genesis also tells us that God was not alone in creation. God’s Spirit was there – His Spirit was upon the waters. And we’re also told that every deed of creation was accomplished by God’s creative Word. GOD SAID – Let there be – light and there was light; let there be a dome to divide the waters and so on. God’s will was spoken and the deed was done.

This fact, of course, brings us into our gospel reading for today from John chapter 1.

Where we read these words: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the very beginning. Through him all things were made, not one thing was made without him. And the Word brought life ...”. The whole of Creation bearing witness to God’s power and love, and his ability to sustain life. And then in v.14 we read: that the Word became flesh, he became human, and dwelt among us. That Word was Jesus - he became one of us.

Yes, in the beginning, God looked at everything he had made –in all its diversity and its interdependence - and he saw that it was good!

We live in a beautiful part of the country and of the world here in Somerset. There is plenty to marvel at in the Mendips and the Quantocks. And I expect many of us have travelled enough – both here and abroad - to have marvelled at parts of God’s creation so

spectacularly different to anything we've ever seen before – that it's almost too wonderful to be true. The sheer beauty and wonder of both the peaceful and the ferocious scenes of nature. On the other hand – maybe, we might not get quite so much pleasure or such positive feelings as we look at our fellow human beings - ourselves included – as we look around the world and closer to home. Yet human beings were the climax of all that God created, we were made in His image -so what about us? Our part in the creation story. We know God's perfect creation didn't stay perfect for long because sin came into the world and spoilt everything. It spoilt our relationship with God, it spoilt our relationship with one another, and it spoilt our relationship with the environment. It brought suffering – greed – injustice – I don't need to go on. We see evidence of it all on the news and in the media. 12 million children in The Yemen in danger from war, disease and hunger. 26 million refugees and a further 14 million displaced people who've lost everything – possessions, livelihoods and dignity as the result of war and unrest. And the gap between rich and poor in the world continues to grow. It is estimated that just 8 men own the same wealth as half the world's poorest 3.6 billion people. And we haven't even mentioned the destruction of the environment and the governments and leaders who ignore the facts of climate change and its effect on some of the world's poorest people as it causes all sorts of havoc to weather patterns. As poverty deepens, vulnerable children become even more vulnerable. God's heart must be sad when he looks and sees the state of his creation. But God isn't inactive.

Reading the OT we see God regularly acting by means of his Word. Psalm 33: we read - By the Word of the Lord, the heavens were made. In Isaiah 40:8, Grass withers and flowers fade but God's Word endures forever. Isaiah 55:10-11 – the Word that God speaks will not fail to do everything he sends it to do. It will bring life, healing and hope to (Israel and) all creation.

God had a plan – and this brings us back to John's Gospel where John tells us that God's Word became flesh –became a human being just like one of us – and his name was Jesus. Jesus the Word at the very beginning of time through whom all things were made and who brought life and light. As Tom Wright, the former bishop puts it: “The Word challenged

the darkness before creation and now the Word, that is Jesus, challenges the darkness that is found, tragically, now within creation itself. The Word is bringing into being the new creation, in which God says once more, ‘Let there be light’”. God is making all things new.

And if we read on in John’s gospel, we can discover how God invites each one of us to be part of his new creation. Invites us to be his new people – simply by accepting and believing in his Son Jesus. What John, in his gospel, talks about as being “born again” born into God’s family – becoming a child of God.

We know that sin is at the heart of damaged relationships and of a damaged environment, but on the cross there sprang hope for a new creation. God, in his love reached down to the world – he gave his Son Jesus, the Word made flesh, to take the punishment for the sin and defilement of the world for all time, so that as we come to him in repentance and faith, we can know not death but life – new life in Jesus. Life, healing and hope.

You know –

The wonderful thing about our creator God is that his work is never done! He is a God who never changes – he is the same yesterday, today and for ever – but he’s a God whose work in creation never ceases. He’s a God who makes all things new – a God of new beginnings whether we read in the Bible words like “sing a new song to the Lord” or in Revelation God saying “ See, I am making all things new!”. Or the apostle Paul writing: If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, everything old has passed away. See everything has become new! God’s creation wasn’t a once off event. It’s ongoing – God is continually creating his world and his people. Breathing into us new life and new hope. That’s true of the mountains, the rivers, the seas. And it’s equally true for his relationship with us. And God wants us – as his new creation - to work with him in reshaping and refashioning this world whether in our relationships – in our homes, our villages or communities – within the environment - working with him to bring about his kingdom on earth. In Jesus, we are a new creation - called to love and to serve him.

Let’s pray: Creator and creating God, We thank you that you don’t give up on us, That you’re constantly perfecting your image in us. Help us to work with you and to open our hearts to your Holy Spirit that, as your new creation, we are equipped and ready to work for your kingdom in our world today. Amen.