

Sunday 10th January 2021

All material © Heather Whyte unless stated otherwise

God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
though separate let us worship together in God.

Suggested Hymn Morning has broken

Listen [here](#)

Prayer

Creator God we praise you, and in worship offer you thanks for the gifts of your creation.
For the gift of each new day with all its potential and possibilities, we give you thanks.
For the gift of food through plants and animals, and the balance of nature which gives us seasons, we give you thanks.
For the companionship, care and love of friends and families, neighbours and strangers, we give you thanks.
For the inspiration of your Spirit shared through the knowledge, wisdom and discoveries of teachers, scientists and adventurers, we give you thanks.
For the call to oneness discovered through the life and teaching of Jesus, the journey to wholeness discovered through prayer and meditation and the hope of eternal life shown in the resurrection of Jesus, we give your thanks.
For our journey together as people of faith, the encouragement we share through learning together and the love we share with each other, we give you thanks and join our voices in the prayer of the disciples saying,
Our father

Introduction

The first two chapters of Genesis contain two different accounts of creation, the first a poem and the second a piece of prose. Our first reading this morning comes from the poem and we are going to hear it read twice and I invite you to consider what might be the key theme of this reading?

Reading Genesis 1:1-10 (read twice)

Reflection

Most of you know I have an interest in Quantum Theology. During a sabbatical in 2013 I did a lot of research and began to write down some of my findings and thoughts. I never finished that writing but I would like to share a little with you this morning.

The first notion of separation in the world can be seen following the agricultural revolution, part of the Neolithic Revolution (8000 - 5000 BCE). The gradual transformation of Man the hunter and fisher into the farmer – was a decisive development in world history. With farming came settlements and later towns and cities, these needed defending and a sense of ownership developed and further separation from creation happened. New understandings and new tools led to new ambition and mighty structures were built, in 2600BCE we see the first pyramids being built in Egypt and at the same time the Avebury Circle was constructed in Wiltshire, some say the first temple in Britain; in the same time period the Epic tale of Gilgamesh is taking shape in Babylon and becoming the forerunner of other sacred texts. Around the world new discoveries are being shared, greater mobility and the ease of transporting goods is changing the way humanity views itself and at the same time different understandings of the relationship with creation are spawning a variety of religious beliefs which are products of our separation from creation.

The result is that all religion as we know it centres on the notion of separation from God and domination over creation. The creation poems of the Old Testament talk of separation, water and land, earth and the heavens etc. and the story of Adam and Eve gives us the separation of humanity from God. Separation is our reality and in the western world this separation has become focussed on individuality and independence and we live our lives in fear, paranoia and spend far too much time defending our independence! The heretical message of Jesus, in the eyes of the authorities, was a call for the opposite, metanoia - *repentance, a complete change of heart and mind, a turning away from power politics and individuality, a turning from separation and a move to oneness.*

Sam Keen in his book 'The Passionate Life' talks about repentance and the way its interpretation has encouraged dualistic thinking, 'us' and 'them'. He suggests we have become prisoners of the scapegoat system of thinking, seeing evil in others and ignoring the responsibility within ourselves. Quantum science is showing we can no longer divide the world between good and evil. The line between saints and sinners runs down the middle of everything and everyone. Changing our thinking is no easy shift, in the Western developed world we are programmed from an early age to see the individual as important. Individuality is safe guarded as are individual rights, even our Christian faith promotes the salvation of the individual. This way promotes paranoia, can be destructive and devious and ultimately is a real threat to human and earthly life. However, it is not always the case, in other cultures, particularly in the indigenous peoples and the developing world, relationships are seen as more important and children are taught the importance of relationships as they learn the basic skills of life. Rather than independence and the individual they learn of interdependence and oneness – individuation – and the individual's value and worth are relative to the person's role within and contribution to the common good. In individuation we lose nothing of our uniqueness and personal worth, instead we rediscover them as we realise our interdependence with everyone and everything and seek the best for the whole – the community - and learn to live as one.

For too long we have allowed governments, religion and other world systems to control us through our paranoia, but quantum science is showing us the illusion of our ways and offering a deeper understanding of self through our relationships with each other, creation and the source of all being.

*Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.
If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.
This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs
to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like
the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.
Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it.
Whatever he does to the web he does to himself.*

From Chief Seathl's Testament

Suggested hymn

Listen [here](#)

I heard the voice of Jesus say

Reading

Mark 1:4-11

Acts 19:1-7

Reflection

Here we are introduced to the idea of baptism, and note the dualistic reference, John offers the baptism of repentance whilst Jesus offers the baptism of the Spirit. Over the years the place of baptism in the church has moved and fluctuated. It was once more common for parents to have their babies baptised, seeing it as important that they were 'recognised' by God. Then came the move for adult baptism and Christian parents began to have a blessing on their babies and leave them to decide if they wished to be baptised, and sadly within the more evangelical circles of the church adult baptism became seen as more important, an opportunity to make a statement of faith. That this opportunity had always been there through confirmation of baptismal vows, often referred to as 'joining the church' in non-conformist denominations, was largely forgotten.

How would you describe baptism to someone? There is no straightforward answer, but it is a question at the heart of belief. I have been drawn to the idea that it is a gift from God, not something that we do but that God does, therefore I do not think it matters at what age we are baptised especially in the sense of understanding it. Now, I am less sure of even that belief and continue to explore what baptism means, however I am convinced it has little to do with joining the church after all the church as such did not exist at the time of John and Jesus. We are all children of creation, children of God, and we are all part of God's love. Within that I see little place for a rite of passage. Why did Jesus ask John for baptism? It has always puzzled me but these days I see it as something to do with belonging, or better acknowledging oneness. Paul draws the distinction between John's baptisms and Jesus' baptisms, although there is little scriptural evidence that Jesus himself baptised anyone. The distinction is the Spirit is given, rather than repentance being called for. However, as we

discovered earlier repentance, or metanoia is at the heart of the call of Jesus, changing the way we see ourselves and our world is key to the full experience of life.

We are who we are because of our connection with everything outside ourselves. Darwin spoke of the will to survive, Nietzsche spoke of the will to power, but quantum science is demonstrating our basic will is to connect. Our natural instinct is to merge with the other, to move away from separation and towards wholeness or holism.

Giving is at the centre of wholeness. Empathy, compassion and the need to help others at a cost to ourselves is not the exception to the rule but our natural state of being. Altruism comes naturally; selfishness is culturally conditioned and a sign of pathology. The same neural circuits which allow us to care allow us to respond to the suffering of others, even those we do not know. Contrary to Darwin and Dawkins animals often demonstrate their need to give when they set aside their most fundamental drive of all, the need to eat, and share food with weaker members of their group, sometimes even going without themselves.

Giving is inherent in our need for connection and being selfless is actually a self-serving action because it literally feels good to give. Thus, in groups where all have a perceived part to play the bonding is greater and the group more cohesive, when we feel we have something to give there is a greater sense of belonging. Working co-operatively with someone else is literally its own reward. It has been shown that church growth is greater when the most people are actively involved in the ‘business’ of church, have a role to play within the life of the church.

Love is at the root of altruism – when we love another we want the best for them no matter the cost to self – we become un-selfish, we form a bond and effectively become one. Maybe baptism is the first step on the path of acknowledging oneness, the first step on the road to life in all its fullness.

When we talk about forgiving maybe we should be thinking of our inherent need to give, we are made for-giving rather than for-getting. The Jesus way calls us to live as giving people, connected and aware of our responsibility to each other and to creation and there has never been a moment when the world needs that message more than now. We have a responsibility to each other and what we do affects others. Rather than fighting for our independence we should be encouraging our interdependence and demonstrating love by curtailing our actions to protect others, for we are one.

Suggested hymn

In the world, God's life declaring,
wisdom dances in delight;
all earth's hope and passion sharing
ways and truths beyond our sight.
In creation's heavenly glory,
all the power of love is shown;
in the telling of earth's story.
God's redeeming grace is known.

When we reach out to the stranger,
offering welcome and embrace;
then the Christ of cross and manger
shines in every human face.

In our hands outstretched in greeting,
all the strength of love is shown;
in the openness of meeting,
Christ's compassion is made known.

In our search for fairer giving,
we discern the Spirit's call;
in the struggle for Just living,
God demands no less than all.
In our speaking, in our doing,
all the hope of love is known;
in our dream of earth's renewing
Holy Wisdom shall be known.

© Jan Berry Used with permission

Tune Hyfrydol Listen [here](#)

Reflection on Psalm 29, through the lens of quantum science.

Praise to the creator, source of all being.

Lift up your voices to God
and sing with God a song of love.

Everything is in God,
winds and seas,
land and trees,
all animals;
nothing exists outside God.

Everything that happens
happens in God,
is known by God,
is a part of God;
when people hurt, God hurts,
when people laugh, God laughs,
when people celebrate, God celebrates.

Everyone is held in God,
can draw strength from God
and becomes the fullness of themselves in God.

Praise the creator, source of all being;
sing of our oneness in God
and live love, the eternal love of all creation,
in everything you do.

Prayers

Loving God in the oneness of your love we worship together and bring to you our concerns, and our commitment to discover all that it means to be fully human. May we recognise the things that divide us and work to overcome the barriers that create the reality of separation.

Creator God in all we say and do may we show your love and grow in oneness

As we enjoy the fellowship of church, we pray for the people who feel alone or lost, the people who have no sense of belonging and who dread each new day. In love may we reach out, discovering new ways of connecting and new ways of inclusion within the oneness of your love.

Creator God in all we say and do may we show your love and grow in oneness

As we travel through our daily life may we be more aware of the needs of others, recognising opportunities to give of ourselves and build connections. In our conversations may we listen lovingly and respond with compassion showing a different way of seeing things.

Creator God in all we say and do may we show your love and grow in oneness

When we watch the news and our hearts are heavy with the sights and sounds of injustice, may we draw strength from our oneness with you and inspiration from the example of others to draw a new route map of justice and love through our words and actions, shouting with the oppressed and walking with the hungry as we share together the bounty of the harvest.

Creator God in all we say and do may we show your love and grow in oneness

When we see and hear of intolerance and recognise the effects of racial prejudice, the separation of your people through race, colour or creed, may we have the courage to stand as one with our brothers and sisters, recognising diversity and the uniqueness of every person whilst celebrating the oneness of humanity. May we reject the narrowness of past understanding and embrace the wholeness of the way of Jesus.

Creator God in all we say and do may we show your love and grow in oneness

Loving God we praise you, creator and source of all being;

We sing of our oneness in you
and commit to live love, the eternal love of all creation.

Creator God in all we say and do may we show your love and grow in oneness

These prayers we offer in Jesus' name, **amen**.

Offertory

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Suggested hymn

Help us accept each other

Listen [here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.