

Trinity Sunday 7 June 2020

Welcome to worship on this Sunday when together we would have celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Weoley Castle Community Church, if circumstances would have been different. However, while we cannot physically gather together, we can nevertheless be together in spirit and express our gratitude for the faithful community that is the Weoley Castle Community Church as well as for the Bournville and Weoley Hill congregations which together make up our joint pastorate. We thank the One who has called us into community, who has sustained us over the years and who is ever present with us. This is the God of mystery, hidden from our eyes, yet known to us in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

Hymn Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Prayer

God, immortal, invisible yet you touch our lives in so many ways
You raise us up when we feel down and discouraged
You ground us when we feel on edge or adrift
You inspire us when we lose a sense of who we are,
where we are going, and what we should do
Be with us in this time of worship
and remind us of your creative and sustaining presence
in our lives, in our churches and in the world. Amen.

Reading Genesis 1: 1 – 2: 4a

Reflection

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.....So the story goes that was written down some 2600 years ago when the people of Israel were living in exile in Babylon. They were far away from home....away from their land, their homes, their places of worship. "Why are we here," they are asking themselves. "What is the purpose of life?" "Where is God?" "Why is the world as it is?" "How did the world come to be?" "Why are we living on this earth which sometimes seems like paradise and sometimes so desolate and in despair?" "What hope do we have and who can bring some light in the darkness, some order in the chaos?" These were some of the questions the people were asking as

they were sitting down by the rivers of Babylon, overcome by feelings of loss and grief. And today, at this time, there are many among us who share similar sentiments of loss and grief.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...” With those words one of the priests of Israel, who in exile is also removed from the temple and its worship, begins to tell a story to comfort the people. “Let me tell you why the world has been created...for what purpose God has created the world, human beings and all living things” Let me try to give an answer to the basic question of life, the “why?” question of life. Not the “how?” question, for that is up to the scientists to discover.

“Let the scientists tell us how the world and life on earth might have developed from the *big bang* and *atoms* and *evolution* to the rich variety of *species*.....I am going to tell you about the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth”

“In the beginning or *Bereshit* (in Hebrew)...But before the priest can continue someone interrupts him. “What was there before the beginning?” “Look at the letter with which the story begins” replies the priest. “It is the letter Beth, not the first but the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.” This is how it looks: ב

“As we, in Hebrew, read from right to left the letter opens up to what is to come, rather than what lies behind. And so it is with the creation story. It is not concerned with what comes before God created “the heavens and the earth” but with God *when* God created and as God continues to create...until the end of time. The letter also looks like a house, a roof and a wall, and that is what it means too, that we are given a home with God who created us”

“But let me continue the story,” the priest says. “In the beginning God created....The earth was *tohoe wa boehoe*, desolate, in chaos, in total darkness. A bit like how we feel here in exile in Babylon,” the priest explains. “It was a bit like the situation we find ourselves in as a people, in despair and in desolation”

“But then” the priest continues “then in the midst of chaos and desolation God acted to bring life and light. The Spirit of God descended and moved over the raging waters. First there was chaos and then there was God’s presence in the Spirit.” The people of Israel are listening intently. It is as if they feel God’s Spirit moving in their midst, inspiring the priest in his telling of the creation story and also breathing new life and hope in their lives.

“And God said...and there was....light, a firmament, earth and sea, sun and moon, all living creatures and human beings. Each time God spoke another step was taken into bringing order out of disorder, fruitfulness out of desolation, life out of death. God’s Word is a creative word; God’s Word is a life-giving Word. Has that not been our experience all through our history? Have we not known God’s power to bring hope and life through His Word and to create a future for us where none seemed possible? Didn’t God lead us out of Egypt? Didn’t God part the sea to give us safe passage? Didn’t God make a covenant with us at Mt Sinai? Didn’t God journey with us to the promised land? Didn’t God.....?” and the people are reminded of all the stories of God’s love and faithfulness. “Yes” the people exclaim, “yes, that is the God we know! Yes, God will care for us, sustain us and give us new life!”

And so it is with us...We know God as Creator and Sustainer because of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Spirit....and we are grateful that even in challenging times we can take heart and be hopeful as we are reminded of the stories of God’s love and faithfulness. These stories, we will continue to tell them as Weoley Castle Church has done for 50 years.....and counting.....Thanks be to God.

Hymn O God our help in ages past

Prayer

God we thank you for your faithfulness from age to age and as your people called together we now join in prayer for those in need.....
We pray for people whose names the world knows, whose stories are told daily in the news....God in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**
We pray for people in places of suffering whose names only you and their friends and family know and whose lives you cherish.....God in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people whose names and lives we know, those who are in pain or distress and those who are carefree, those who are happy and those who are sad....God in your mercy....**hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves, God, you know each of us by name.....

We bring you ourselves and our prayers.

And we pray together....OUR FATHER

Blessing

God continues to guide us and attend to our stories....

God promises to bless us and encourage us on our journey....

Go with the peace and promise of God, the energy of the Spirit of Love, and the passion of Jesus. Amen.