

Sunday 4th Feb 2024; 2nd Sunday before Lent; BCP Holy Communion, Stonegrave Minster

Our readings today take us back to the fundamentals of our faith and answer some of our most basic of questions, but all of which have the same answer - Jesus.

Let's begin; question one - 'What does God look like?' Our reading from Colossians says, "*Jesus is the image of the invisible God.*" and our Gospel says, '*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God*'. But what does that mean? It means that if we want to know what God is like, we look at Jesus. He's the one who makes the invisible God, visible. In His divinity he is man made perfect and, in his humanity, He is God the Son.

Where does the universe come from? John says, "*In the beginning was the Word*" and St Paul says, "*by Jesus all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*". This is telling us that Jesus created the entire universe and existed before the world was created and before time began, which means he's eternal, just like God the Father. Our Old Testament reading from Proverbs speaks of 'wisdom and understanding' much in the same way John speaks of the 'Word'. What we are being told is that before creation began, before anything had been created, before there was anything: there was God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God in three persons - Father Son and Holy Spirit. A perfect loving community existing outside of time because they hadn't decided to invent time yet. What is more, Jesus was there, "*Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*" (John 1:3)

Why does the universe exist? For Jesus. But this fact is tucked away at the end of v16 and it's easy to miss. "*All things were created by him and for him.*" So why did God make the world? For Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate meaning of creation. Which means he's also the ultimate meaning of our lives. We were made for Jesus. That means all those philosophers out there trying to make sense of life - no matter how clever or fanciful or profound their ideas: if they haven't got Jesus in the centre - they're missing the point. All of creation is for him so it follows that we are for him too. Because if all of creation exists for Jesus then how can we ever claim to know the purpose of our lives, if we don't know Jesus for ourselves?

Why does the church exist? The answer is of course, Jesus. As St Paul says, "*he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*" You know, we often talk about "my church" or "your church", don't we? But every church is Jesus' church because the church - God's family here on earth - belongs to Jesus. He is head over it. It's his spiritual body, his family.

Final question. What is the centre of your life?

The Colossians were tempted to seek spiritual nourishment from other sources, and they were putting those on the same level as Jesus. Now we might be tempted to similar things to open us up to spiritual realities, or to just allow something else to become the centre of our lives, or as St Paul puts it, "*he is the first born in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was please to reconcile to himself all things, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*"

This statement spells out clearly, the fact that to bring all things back together, God made peace with all things and us through the blood of Jesus. God came to us, was born in human form lived and died our death and rose again from the dead to bring salvation and allow us all to enter that relationship with him that has been the Trinity since before time or anything began.

All we need to do is to put Him at the centre of our lives and being.

Thanks be to God. Amen.