

Recreation – a Sermon for Sexagesima 2011

Genesis 1 v1 – 2v3 p3, Romans 8 vv 18-25 p1135, Matthew 6 vv 25-34 p971

Our first lesson today was the magnificent creation story from Genesis. Unfortunately this story causes some people some problems because they read it like science or history and then they dismiss it or worry about it because they can't see how it fits in with the science or history they know from other sources. This is missing the point. The Bible isn't trying to teach us the science or history of how the world began. It is telling us something much more important than that. It is pointing us in the direction of beginning to understand what the universe truly is. The universe is the creation of God. God is love. So the creation is good. God is love. So He gives creation the gift of freedom. And, being free to do so, the Creation rejects the love of God. So we see a world which is both very wonderful and very troubled. We see a creation which is essentially good, yet ravaged by sin.

In particular, the Bible places human beings at the centre of all this. We are made in the image of God. We are meant to be like God. We are meant to love. But, in His love, God has made us free and we have freely chosen to rebel against the love of God. Hence the troubles which tear apart this troubled world.

The second lesson from Romans is very hard to grasp. The basic point is that creation's rebellion is part of God's plan. God knows that making us free would lead to us rebelling against His love and to all the terrible consequences which follow from our rejection of God. It is still worth it, however. Free human beings, who can choose good or evil, are more worthwhile than robots programmed only ever to do good. God's plan includes our rejection of His love. God's plan is to win us back by a supreme act of love. Jesus, the Son of God, dies on the Cross for the redemption of the world. Creation is redeemed in Him. When we use our freedom to reject God, we enslave ourselves to sin, the world and the devil. Jesus, by His supreme act of love, by His yielding His life on the Cross for us, sets us free from sin, the world and the devil. He sets us free from death and the fear of death.

Creation is redeemed. There is a new creation. God's plan for the universe is fulfilled in rebirth. The plan God has devised in His love is that our present universe, bound as it is by time and space, ravaged as it is by sin, will be transformed, recreated into an eternity of love. Strangely enough this is even hinted at in the Genesis reading. God rests the seventh day and hallows it. He ceases from work on the sabbath day and invites, no commands, human beings to do likewise. A work free sabbath, a day of worship, friendship, fellowship and recreation, is a token of an eternity free from labour, pain, anxiety and sorrow, an eternity of love and joy and peace.

In the Gospel Jesus teaches us to live in the light of eternity. The destiny of this present world of time and space is that it will pass away to be replaced by an eternity of love. The wonders of this world are a poor shadow of the wonders to come. The worries and sins of this world will cease to be when all is redeemed in Christ. So Jesus teaches us not to worry too much about the concerns of this passing age, but to live in accordance with the eternal truth of the Kingdom of God.