

Creation Spirituality 4 October 2020

Micah 6:6-8 and Luke 12:22-34

There's a time each summer when my garden becomes full of young sparrows, chasing each other through the hedges, onto the trees, up into the gutters and perching on the fence. It's surprisingly noisy, immensely cheerful and a wonderful display of aerial acrobatics that brings joy just to watch. And a little bit of envy at the ability to fly.

So many of Jesus' words give us examples from nature, rooted in the goodness of creation. And today's gospel reading does just that. We are treated to birds and to the glorious flowers that grow in the rich Galilean soil. Lilies are a generic term for flowers like autumn crocus, anemones and gladioli. Where does this beauty all come from? It's not shop bought, not even created out of the imagination of human beings. It just is. Just as God made it.

Jesus invites us to look at the created world more carefully. To see the beauty in each plant, each bird. To be a person of wonder. So often it's those people who walk more slowly, or children who are people of wonder. We can all become that. To sense the sun on our foreheads, to let the pouring rain seep through our hair, to smile at a rainbow, to startle at a clap of thunder, to marvel at the beauty and variety of each fallen leaf. To take time, to be reminded anew of God's provision.

For the created universe all holds together. The whole ecology of this planet is held in a way that we don't fully understand, and so often we, humanity, undermines rather than enhances. Martin Gainsborough reflecting on part of Ruth Valerio's book 'Saying Yes to Life' asked us to consider whether nature is better at looking after itself, than we are at looking after it. Our life on this earth depends on the activity of so many other organisms – ants are crucial for decomposition, aerating soil, recycling nutrients and transporting seeds, as do worms, bats and birds. Bees pollinate more than any other creature. We have become very aware this year of our dependence on good and bad bacteria. Bacteria that enable us to properly digest our food, and our blood to properly clot when we need it to. We live in constant connection with ecology. Sam Wells says that the amazing thing is not that we suffer, or struggle or die, but that we exist at all.

We are surrounded and supported by an incredible orchestra, but we, human kind, like to see ourselves as a lone instrument.

Jesus invites us to join the orchestra, to develop a creation spirituality, when he asks us to 'strive for the kingdom'. For God's kingdom is the here and now, to live in the present, not to worry about the future. He isn't saying we shouldn't plant crops, shouldn't weave material for clothing – or whatever the modern equivalent is – but we should do it with joy, not with fear. There's truth in the phrase: Don't worry, be happy.

We are blessed today to be able to welcome Frankie, with her parents Nicola and Tom. Frankie is starting out on her life as a person of wonder. And she herself is a gift from God. I'm sure Nicola and Tom have spent much time marvelling at the beauty of their gift.

New life is a reminder to us that God created us to care for his creation.

The prophet Micah asks what we should do to honour the God who created us.

He concludes that we should do justice, love kindness (often translated as love mercy) and walk humbly with our God.

I listened this week to a wonderful conversation that Andrew Marr had with the novelist Marilynne Robinson and with Rowan Williams on Start the Week. Titled Faith in the Modern World, it explored the loss of civilisation, changes in democracy, selfishness, the Benedictine Rule of Life. The last was summed by Andrew Marr as 'be nice to people you don't like and do the washing up'. Rowan Williams agreed with him to a point, but added that we have to add in the grace of God – to look for the grace of God and to let it carry us forward.

The grace of God is what enables us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.

The grace of God enables us to look beyond our own needs to see the needs of others. To see the ways in which we need to change our approach to the world He created for us to live in.

The grace of God enables us to see that our response to the climate emergency needs to be a generous one. Generous to give up things we have held dear. To look to care for our common home. My travel this year has been so constrained. I have put petrol in the car only twice in six months. I haven't been on a train or a bus in all that time. I've worn out a pair of shoes instead.

The grace of God enables a servant like approach to care, care for the vulnerable, to do all the things our short video clips made in Creationtide have shown – use recycled products, to support the Loaves and Fishes Project and Traidcraft, to plant gardens that encourage wildlife, to use water wisely – and to be in for the long haul. This year's enforced change of lifestyle has brought significant environmental gains. But they to continue and to grow.

We've been given a fantastic gift of life. Created to live in community, with each other, with the created world and with God. May we learn to be people of wonder, and respond by doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly.

Amen

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