

## Creator God

7 2 10

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children.

My text may be found in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 4:

‘the Lord God made the earth and the heavens’

One of the treasures of the Anglican Church is our liturgy in English. The great gift of the Reformation was to bring the worship of God to the people of God in the contemporary language of the people, a language the people spoke, the language that the people would in time be able to read for themselves. And one part of that treasure is our collection of prayers, the collects for the day: collects for each Sunday penned first by Archbishop Cranmer for the Book of Common Prayer and then revised and added to in order to embrace the range of special and saints days which make up the rich variety of liturgy embodied in our Common Worship.

Sometimes, when I read the passages from Scripture appointed for a given Sunday on which I'm called to preach, it is the collect which precedes them which best

expresses the overarching thrust of the Word of God. Today's collect for the Second Sunday before Lent is a case in point: I quote:

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children.

There is my sermon in brief: God has created the universe and us and we are encouraged to recognise him in his handiwork and in all people who are made like us in his Image.

The aim of any religion is to make God known to his people, to allow the people to appreciate something of the worth of God, inspiring them to worship him and through a living relationship with him freely to bind them back to him. This is what today's collect does; it makes two truth claims about God:

- i. That God is the creator
- ii. That God made us in his own image

The opening chapters of Genesis contain not one but two creation stories. The passage we heard read this morning from Genesis 2 is the second of them and from which my text is taken: 'the Lord God made the earth and the heavens'. It has a very different feel from the better known opening chapter of Genesis with its majestic passage of time and its ringing declaration that all that God did was good in his eyes. Here, the story is more intimate, a more anthropomorphic God who creates Man out of the dust blowing his spirit into his nostrils, who plants a

garden in the east for him and who brings the animals to him to be named and who creates a companion for him so that he might not be lonely, living alone.

So much for the first truth claim: God as creator of the universe but for the collect's second truth claim, we need to flip back to the first creation story where at its climax, we find this mysterious statement in Genesis 1 v27: 'God created Man in his image'. We believe Man is made in the image of God but what can this mean? First and foremost, I think it means we are conscious, awake, aware of the universe around us. Secondly, I think it means we are moral creatures with the capacity to distinguish right from wrong and that we have the free will to choose whether or not to act morally.

So we have a creator God who has made Man in his image and now the collect moves on from these two assumptions to provide two courses of action:

- i. that we discern God's handiwork in his creation
- ii. that we see God's likeness in all people

The first is to have our eyes open when we look around us. Here, in Dinard, we are blessed with a beautiful Breton coastline bordering the Channel. The seascape and the broad sweep of the sky which changes with the hour and with the day is inspirational and can inspire us to feel the wonder of the vast variety of what God has made. In looking at what God has made, we can see a reflection of the craftsman in his handiwork.

The second is to have our eyes open when we look at other people. It is to recognise in the faces and in the forms of the people around us that we share a common humanity, that we are all children of the same God. One of the good things about living here in France is to recognise what we have in common. We may be from across the sea but we are welcomed here despite our differences in background and language. What motivated Sainte Jeanne Jugon to act was the belief that the old on the margins of society had real worth as Children of God.

So today let us give thanks for the heritage of our collects which have succinctly collected Christian truth. May we reflect on the truth that God made the heavens and the earth and that God made us in his image. May we reflect too on the call to see God reflected in his creation and to recognise our common humanity by seeing his face in the face of other people.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's Dinard*

*7<sup>th</sup> February, 2010*

H: Sermon 21: Creator God

