

At first glance, it may seem a little strange that during the Season of Creation we celebrate humanity. But it is only strange when we persist in the idea that somehow we are separate from the rest of creation. When we shift our perception and realize that we are as dependent upon our environment as any other animal, we can see that we are just as much part of creation as a coyote, a Coopers hawk or a caterpillar. That perceptual shift is difficult to make because for thousands of years we have believed humanity to be the most important part of the universe, somehow separate from the rest. That was of course the belief of our ancestors who gave us the creation myths of Genesis.

In both stories, humanity is created last – not as an after thought but as the pinnacle of creation. God gave humans the task of naming all the creatures of the earth and gave us dominion over the other creatures. We have taken that part of the story very seriously and skipped over the next verse which gives us fruit, vegetables and seeds to eat – it wasn't until after the great flood that the animals of the earth become afraid of humans and we were given them for food.

Our ancestors saw the world very differently from us. They thought that the earth was flat and that the sun went down at night and came up again in the morning. They had no idea that we are just a very small spherical planet in an astonishing and ever-expanding universe.

Our contemporary understanding of the universe brings up important anthropological questions. Who are we? Are we the pinnacle of God's creation or just very small dots on a small and insignificant planet tucked away in a rather small galaxy?

In Psalm 8, the psalmist asks, "What is man that you are mindful of him? The son of man that you care for him?" and confidently replies, "You have made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him

with glory and honor. You have made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.” Ps 8:4-6

It is less easy for us to have the psalmist’s confidence, now we have been knocked off our self-given pedestal and realize that there is some very big stuff out there in creation which we don’t begin to understand. And yet our faith narrative tells us that “God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”(John 3:16) In this verse, the “world” is cosmos; God so loved the *cosmos* that he sent his only begotten Son... it is because of God’s love for the whole cosmos that he sent his son to incarnate, to become human.

And by so doing, God confirmed what he had said from the very beginning-that humanity *is* important. So important that God became human. Since we are participants in creation, God became part of God’s own creation. God sanctifies matter not just by making it and seeing that it is good and loving it, but by entering into it in a totally visceral way. God became human and experienced everything we experience, including betrayal, pain and suffering.

Some scientists suggest that there may be many parallel universes. We don’t know. Nor do we know whether Earth is the only planet in the universe with advanced life forms. And we certainly don’t know whether God has incarnated in other forms in other places. All we can do is look at things in the light of what *has* been revealed to us.

Almost as soon as humans became conscious and left the blissful garden of oneness with God and all beings, violence began. Adam and Eve’s son Cain the agriculturalist killed Abel the cattleman. Although God marked Cain so that no-one would kill him in return, within a few generations violence escalated and revenge was the norm. Then we are

told in Genesis 6 that God “saw how great humanity’s wickedness on earth had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made humanity on the earth and his heart was filled with pain.” (Gen 6: 5,6)

And so, our ancestors tell us, God sent the great flood but because his heart was filled with pain he provided a way out for Noah and his family and many animals. And after the flood, God gave the sign of the rainbow to show that he would never again wipe out humanity. Noah’s family had many descendants and the whole world had one language and a common speech which meant that they had the ability to easily cooperate together. But instead of using this ability to work the land and make a beautiful garden where they could once again walk with God in the cool of the evening, they decided to build a city using bricks and make a tower that reached to the heavens. (Gen 11:4)

This was hubris – it was the kind of pride that the Greeks described when they told the story of Icarus who made wings but flew too near to the sun – it was hubris because they thought that they could be like God who at that time resided in the heavens. And so God “came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand one another.” (Gen 11:5,6)

Which is how we developed more separation from one another.

I know that this is not science. This is not the narrative of evolution. It is the narrative of myth which answers different questions from those of science. Both are valid, both are important. This is the story passed down to us by our spiritual ancestors. It is important that we listen and

take it seriously as we look at our place in the world today and try to understand who we are spiritually in this newly unfolding cosmos.

As you know, once the Lord scattered the people over the face of the earth after the attempt to climb into heaven, the narrative turns to Abraham and his descendants and their specific journey. But by the time of third Isaiah there is a vision of all nations coming back together to worship God. “The Sovereign Lord declares – he who gathers the exiles of Israel, “I will gather still others to them, besides those already gathered.” (Is. 56:8) This vision is of all peoples living justly and turning to God.

I don't need to tell you that we haven't got there yet.

But in Jesus we have a new vision and not just a new vision but a new Creation. By his willing sacrifice of himself as a victim of the world's violence – a victim who was completely innocent – Jesus the Christ turned the stem of violence back on itself. And in his resurrection, God inaugurated the New Creation. Jesus is the first among many siblings. We are invited to enroll in the New Creation - to be participants in the Reign of God , in the Body of Christ.

In the expulsion from the Garden of Eden we see humanity becoming conscious, learning right from wrong and what it is to be naked and ashamed. In the scattering of the people after Babel, we see humanity becoming conscious of difference and cultures developing which are different from one another. On the day of Pentecost which is the day when God's Spirit was given to humanity in a whole new way, we overcame that language barrier – people heard the apostles speaking in their own languages.

The Reign of God is one where all beings are brought together without the fear and without the violence; where justice reigns and all are honored for their part in creation, their part in the ecosystem.

Today humanity is poised to write a new chapter in the mythic narrative. We have started the Great Warming. Just as in the time of Noah the Great Flood wiped out many creatures and many people, so we are facing the sixth mass extinction. Billions of populations of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians have already been lost all over the planet.¹ They have gone because of habitat loss and human overpopulation. The changing climate will make large parts of the world uninhabitable and so we can anticipate that the human population will also have to shrink because of loss of habitat.

How do we respond to this crisis? Yes, we respond with grief but also with hope.

For almost 100 years people have talked about the development of the *noosphere* – it has been called the Global Brain - the development of human consciousness to the point where we can once again work together in co-operation. Last year, the number of people using the internet passed the 50% point. More than half of all humans are now connected electronically. Seen mythically, this is a continuation of the day of Pentecost – now we can hear each other speaking in our own language.

Yesterday, I attended a training about human trafficking and learned how the internet is being used to recruit our children and teenagers. It was a sad and deeply concerning story. But it could be different.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/10/earths-sixth-mass-extinction-event-already-underway-scientists-warn>

Just as we get to guard our thoughts and our words so that we are building the Reign of God not tearing it down, so we get to guard our digital words and thoughts and build the Reign of God as we use electronic communication. We can influence the *noosphere* by our positive intentions and our loving, forgiving, generous attitude.

We build the Reign of God as we live like Jesus the Christ – in simplicity, service and spiritual practice. There is no real separation between these three principles: simplicity, service and spiritual practice. Reusing and recycling is part of living simply but it is also spiritual practice.

As the Great Warming starts we can make a small but real difference by living simply –reducing our carbon footprint, our water usage and our waste production. We can continue to build the New Creation as we serve one another and all God’s creatures, and as webring an attitude of grateful service to all we do. And we build the New Creation whenever we turn to God in silence, in sacrament or in prayer.

Why did God save Noah?” Because he was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time and he walked with God.” (Gen 6:9) Let us be the Noahs of our day and time. Let us live as if the New Creation is here already, let us live every moment in the Reign of God. Let us build the next chapter in the story of how humanity turned back to God and started to live justly and in cooperation with one another.