

## 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – Easter Sunday

On Good Friday I heard Josephine Joordens, a Dutch marine biologist, speaking on the radio about markings on fossilised clam shells dating back around 500 thousand years, yes half a million years. They were found in Java and, and this is the point, they had been engraved, with some difficulty, by our ancestors, *Homo erectus*, using simple stone tools. It was a repeated 'W' pattern, but the experts concluded that only thinking humans could have made it. So for as long as half a million years our ancestors have been creating, and as argued on the radio programme, if creating, then communicating, speaking or singing and telling stories which explained the world to themselves and to each other. If they were doing that, were they also explaining their sense of God to themselves and to each other?

At some point in the last half million years that sense of God crystallised into the ancient words, and who knows how ancient they actually are, which we heard last night at the beginning of our Easter Vigil service. They are words in which we recognise that our world is the creation of God the creator.

'In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters and God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And the evening and the morning were the first day.'

In the beginning God spoke into chaos and emptiness and created order and light. And God would go on to create our precious, unique and beautiful earth. God also created time. The moment of creation was the beginning of time and God named it, 'The first day of the week.' I think most of us have a horror of chaos. Loss of order, control and beauty are associated with death and decay, by contrast the life God gives us is associated with order, symmetry and increasing complexity. It's no coincidence that the engraving on that shell and the inscription on a gold disc which NASA sent into space on the Voyager 1 spacecraft to communicate with other intelligent life in the universe, both show symmetry. They are a sign of order, creativity & intelligent thought, signs of life and of Godliness.

And then two and a half thousand years ago into a world's general sense of a creator God came rumours of a new thing God would do. We heard it in the reading from Isaiah. God's longing to rejoice in God's own people – in us. 'I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth,' God proclaimed. It was to be a place of fruitfulness and community and peace. But for 500 years there seemed little sign of it.

Until, early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, as dark it had been on the first day of creation when everything held its breath to see what God would do, on the first day of creation, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb.

And the tomb was empty.

This is the moment of God's new Creation. In the beginning, when the earth was without form and empty, God spoke light into the world. Now, on the first day of the week, where there had been betrayal, cruelty and suffering God spoke life into the world. The tomb was empty. On this first day of the new creation - today! - the torture

and the final of failure of death have been overcome by God's saving work of re-creation. Death has turned to life, and life to eternal life and both are loose in God's creation. Each year, we discover that the tomb is empty and that the Lord speaks our name to each of us as he did to Mary, bringing joy and hope. Joy and hope which we share with Mary and Peter and the beloved disciple and all those who have heard our Lord's voice over the past two thousand years.

Through two thousand years of warfare and poverty and famine, the knowledge that the tomb is empty - Christ is risen! - has brought hope and joy with it. Spend today in rejoicing and feasting (Easter eggs count!). Remember those who have little. And remember that the message for us today and those who come after us is this: God has created this marvellous and precious world and in Christ has recreated it, overcoming death and calling us to live in God's new creation in mutual love and joy and selflessness.

Happy Easter!