

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

If we had not been sadly interrupted in our Lent Course this Sunday and this week we would have been thinking about Day 4 in the story of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis. And on Day 4 God creates the sun, the moon and the stars and places them on the Firmament. That Firmament you may remember was the solid dome God had already created on Day 2 to separate the waters above and below. So in effect on the fourth day God gives us the Sun and the night sky and therefore the days and seasons and indeed the whole calendar.

The people who wrote this first chapter in Genesis did not of course have our telescopes or indeed any of the other instruments we do to study the skies and they had never seen the earth from space but they did have one big advantage that we usually lack today. That is they could see the night sky. They could see it properly without it being dimmed by all the artificial light we now have around us. To see it as they did you now have to go to very remote places and hope that the weather is kind and that there is not much cloud. If you are lucky enough to do this then the experience is unforgettable. To see the undimmed night sky in all its glory is truly awe inspiring. There are something like six thousand stars that can be seen with the naked eye and they stretch out above you encircling the earth so that in whichever direction you look you just see more and more stars in all directions. It is truly glorious and awe inspiring and it has been the inspiration behind some of our greatest monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury and also some of our greatest literature and music.

One might expect that such a stupendous view would make you feel tiny and almost irrelevant and insignificant. It might even be depressing. Such a thought seems to have struck the Psalmist for in Psalm 8 he asks "what is man that thou art mindful of him?" But I have to say that it has never struck me that way. It makes you feel humble, yes, and gives you a proper perspective but I have always found it somehow reassuring and indeed even exhilarating. There is so much about it that we still do not understand and yet it represents stability for it is the same night sky that we see night after night, year after year and century after century. We see today what the author of Genesis saw nearly three thousand years ago and our descendants will see the same in three thousand years ahead. And although we are tiny compared with the vastness of space yet there is an order and arrangement there that hints at something trustworthy.

The great medieval writer Mother Julian of Norwich had a similar feeling of reassurance when she beheld not something incredibly vast but something incredibly tiny - a hazel nut. In it she saw all that was ever made. For her it stood for all creation and it gained its significance because God loves it. And that really is the main thrust of our Lent course. The creation matters because God loves it. The proof of that is that He came about among us and took human flesh and lived with us and shared in all our perplexities and difficulties.

And so this is my reflection on this fourth Sunday in Lent. We are living through a moment of great difficulty and great perplexity and so now more than ever we need to remember and take comfort from these things and the perspective they give. And so at this time if you get a chance go out and look up at the night sky and even in Stamford you will see something of its grandeur. Remember that the God who created all of that holds it all in the palm of his hand just as Mother Julian held the Hazelnut in the palm of her hand. Then with her we can be reassured that All WILL be well and All manner of things WILL be well.

May God be with you all at this time. Amen.

David

A footnote.

I hope to be putting reflections on our website and not only on Sundays but you might like to note that many other churches are doing the same. So if you have access to the web you might like to visit other churches' websites and read their thoughts.