


St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups October 7th 2007

Harvest Festival

Genesis 2: 4-25

Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon



Look at the presence of God and of the water of life in Creation e.g. v.6: Water is a potent symbol in the Bible, and God's water flows out over the whole earth *before* humanity is created. We may be more used to the idea of God the Holy Spirit hovering over creation (Gen ch.1) but here is Jesus, the Water of Life, permeating all creation as it comes into being. God the Trinity loves His world, blessing it with His full presence even as He creates it. Our God is not a God who magicked the world in a fit of activity and then got fed-up and abandoned it, as some might have us believe.

God put humanity in a lovely place, the Garden of Eden, with plenty of water, with a companion and even precious minerals. What He created wasn't just *useful* stuff, but beautiful and full of variety, put there for us to enjoy.

After all the wonder of creation comes the giving of responsibilities: We are told to work the garden and take care of it from the outset; in doing so we are a vital element in God's plan for His world. It's God's world we were created for, not ours. How should we, as 21st century Christians in Dorking, work in God's world to share the gifts of creation? What is our individual responsibility? Clearly there is a message here about how we care for the environment and live "greenly."


Look at Verse 16: We are free to eat from any tree that God has put in our garden; here in the UK we enjoy a huge variety of foods. But are *all* peoples able to eat from their own gardens? Do we exploit the available resources when these resources are in *other people's* gardens? E.g. crops that people in parts of Africa or South America grow for *us* rather than for themselves, like tobacco and opium poppies instead of food, or cattle-corn instead of corn for their own bread. These are complex issues to which there is no simple solution, but nevertheless, these are issues which as Christians we should tackle.

There was a boundary given to these first human beings. Almost everything IS permitted, but look at v. 17. We may not know why God said this but we can be sure that He had His good reasons, although we don't always understand. God *is* often beyond our comprehension, and rightly so: humanity cannot know everything there is to know; much of God is mystery. The important thing is that He wants us to trust Him and obey Him.

Whilst some of us were praying recently, God showed me a picture of Dorking from a high point. As I looked down, the town was shrouded in Autumnal mist, with only the tops of the houses and the spire of St Martin's visible. This spoke to me of the hidden-ness of God from so many in our town, the lack of clarity among so many about the Christian hope to which we are called and to which we witness. The mist also spoke to me of how even mature Christians sometimes feel unworthy to step out and witness.

Read Gen 1:27. This tells us that our existence and meaning come directly from God: we are created *in His image*. If we look at each other we can see echoes of God. So we can have confidence that we are special, the pinnacle of creation, and God has a purpose for Creation and for each one of us.

Witness: Questions to discuss

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1. What difference does it make to the way we live if we believe that God loves the world He has created and has a plan for it?
 2. How should we personally respond to issues of living "greenly"? How can each of us help to promote the fair sharing of the world's resources so that everyone can eat from the trees in their own garden?
 3. What difference does it make to our view of a) ourselves and b) others if we believe that we were created in God's image? Do you think *all* people are still made in His image?
 4. How do you respond to the idea that Dorking is under a mist of not knowing about God's love?

Worship: Read aloud a Psalm (perhaps Ps 47) or find the John Keats' poem *Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness* and allow it to lead you into praise for our creator God. Or listen to the worship song, *I stand in Awe*, by Martyn Layzell (- it's on last year's Spring Harvest CD) or Rutter's version of *All Things Bright and Beautiful*.

Activity: Go for a walk in your small group or on you own. As you walk, quietly pray that God will use *all* your senses- sight, touch, smell and hearing- to speak to you.