

Can you finish these sentences

Love is... easy, all around, in the air or what?

Marmite is.... terrible, good for you, disgusting, evil?

God is.....?

I wonder what you would say there? God is love? God is good? God is three in one? There may be many things we could say.

Over these last weeks we have been focussing upon sharing the good news of God's love in Jesus.

Now for the next four weeks I want to take us back as it were to the basics of what we believe as followers of Jesus Christ. We will look at God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and at the church.

So today we begin with God the Father and to the opening words of the Apostles Creed, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

I believe in God the Father who created the world.

Now most of us here would I hope say amen to that but what do we mean by it and what effect does it have on my life?

I can still remember being in a meeting of clergy in Oxford and a friend of mine was speaking. At the start of his talk he asked the question what does WWW stand for? I certainly had no idea and many of the others there didn't either. As he explained about this world wide web thing while I could begin to get a vague understanding of it, I certainly had no idea how it would affect my life.

In a similar way to acknowledge God as creator is one thing but to experience the implications of that is another and is infinitely more beneficial to us than to experience the benefits of the world wide web!

I want to draw our attention to three aspects of God as creator this morning and to see the implications for our lives as Christians.

### **1. God is creator of everything**

v1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". That is God created all that there is.

What we are faced with here is a statement about God. This shouldn't surprise us because the Bible is a book about God. He is there in the beginning. He is outside of time and separate from the world which he is about to make. As we read through these verses in Gen 1 we see how he made this world, the heavens and earth and everything that is on and in this world we live in.

Perhaps you have created something, a model, a painting, a jumper and that creative desire comes from God. However, God's act of creation was very different from ours. He didn't just create one or two things he created everything. For God there was no blueprint or plan for him to follow. God created not with existing materials but simply out of nothing. God created not by manufacture and

manipulation but, as we see over and over again in these verses, by his word – God spoke and it happened. Be it light or land or plants and trees they were created by the word of God.

How do we define God? How do we finish the sentence God is...? With the words the creator of all.

We see this is in the Psalms where that Psalmist says to the people, “Know that the Lord is God” (Ps 100:3). How did they know that? “Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us.”

Because God created everything he is God. Now I am very aware of the debate between science and the Bible, the search for the so called ‘God particle’ and the theory of evolution. However, I am convinced that we need to recognise that Bible and Science approach creation from different perspectives often asking different questions of why and how.

Gilbert Ryle the 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher pointed out that even if the day should come when physics has answered all the questions of physics concerning the creation of the world that not all the questions are question of physics. He illustrated his point with reference to a game of billiards which can be explained in terms of mechanical laws of force and motion. However, he pointed out, to explain it this way doesn’t satisfy us or give the full picture for we must also explain it in terms of the rules of billiards and the strategies or purposes of the players.

As we trace the story of creation through the Bible we see the purposes of God behind creation rather than the mechanical means by which the world was created.

The Bible leaves us in no doubt that God created the world and all that is in it.

We then have to ask how does this relate to you and I?

Well the Psalmist spells it out for us, “Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

Here is the statement that brings home the belief that God is creator. He made us and we are his.

As creator God is God and we are his and as such our lives should be submitted to his rule.

It is not sufficient for us to say God is creator unless we then say therefore he is my God who has the right through his word and his will to rule and direct my life. The Psalmist described us as the sheep of his pasture but perhaps a better analogy would be children of God. As his children are we living under his rule and in a way that brings him glory?

I remember as a child a number of times being on the edge of doing something and then thinking I don’t think my Dad will be pleased if I do that. As children of our heavenly Father, sons and daughters of the creator God our desire should be that our lives should bring him pleasure and honour.

So as you run the rule of God’s word over your life how does it look? Are you seeking to live day by day under his rule and according to his will? Did your life last week bring honour and pleasure to God

and if not what are we going to do about it this week? He is the creator of everything and as part of his creation we submit to his rule and will.

This rule of God as creator of course affects every part of creation.

## **2. God is Lord over creation**

A number of times down the years I have been asked what my world view is. A world view very simply is our understanding of how the world in which we live works. As a Christian my world view is that God made the world but humanity has spoiled that world and its relationship with the creator. However God has not given up on his world. He sent Jesus into the world that through his death on the cross humanity might be restored to God the father. One day Christ will return as God and King to bring to an end the history of the world and there will then be a new heaven and earth.

A big part of the Christian world view is as we have seen that God is ruler of the world and involved in that world which leads to this heading he is Lord over the nations.

If we follow the present tensions in Korea between North and South Korea or the ongoing battles in Syria we may well fear for the future of the world in which we live. Are we destined for a nuclear holocaust? Is our world out of control, eventually to destroy itself?

Well as with so many things we have no idea how eventually this world will come to an end but if we believe God is creator then we know it will not end except according to his will. He is Lord over creation and Lord of the nations.

In Jeremiah 18 God used the analogy of the potter to describe his rule over Israel and through that over every nation, ““O house of Israel can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand,”” (Jer 18:6). Then in Isaiah 40:21-23, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.”

It is God who is Lord over all the nations and over their rulers whether they acknowledge him or not and ultimately his will must be done. Yes we will see wars and rumours of wars. We will see fighting and bloodshed because humanity has turned its back on the creator God but along the way we also see amazing things which can only happen by the power and grace of God, the end or apartheid in South Africa, the disintegration of the communist block and so forth. However it will only be at the end of time that rulers will face not the War crimes tribunal in the Hague but come before the throne of God. In many senses humanity has acted to return the world to chaos but there is a God who is in control and who rules the nations.

## **3. God is involved with his creation**

What we have begun to see is that at the heart of God's creation is relationship. God made the world and everything in it and he is Lord over creation. This means he is not detached from it. We just thought of the analogy of the potter and perhaps you have been on one of those pottery making events where you have a go at making a pot of some sort. You end up with a slightly odd looking thing but even that you may have some attachment to. How much more does God have an attachment to the world he has made? The constant refrain through these verses as they were read was that "it was good". God looked at what he had made and he was pleased with it. It was as he intended. God was involved with his world. He is not the watch maker who makes the watch and then lets it go. God was involved with his creation. In Gen 3:8&9 we read, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" Here is God involved with his creation, relating to it personally.

God is involved in his creation in two specific ways.

Firstly he sustains creation and secondly, following the fall and man's sin, he is restoring creation.

#### **a. he sustains creation**

If we go back to v2, what we seem to have here is a move from nothingness to a world without form and void and from that chaos to order. Indeed that is, I would suggest, the pattern of these verses, moving from chaos to order. Where there was no form God created form. He created light and dark. He created sky and water. He created land and sea. He gave form to creation and imposed order that he has maintained since. Not only that but also he filled the void or emptiness, So to the empty sky he gave the lights of day and light and through them the ordered pattern of days and seasons. He caused the seas to teem with fish. On the land he placed plants and animals. See the move from the formless and empty to a creation separated out, given shape and limitations and also filled with every good thing. It is very easy as we read about global warming and other things to imagine that we mere humans are fighting incredible odds to preserve this planet. However, that is to miss the sustaining power of the creator. True the world is out of step with the creator. It does groan as Paul describes in Ro 8, yet also there continues to be seedtime and harvests. There continues to be the regular round of day and night and of the seasons. In ecological matters while there is no reason for complacency it would also appear that there is also no reason for despondency. God is at work in his world to sustain it. He is at work within creation and supremely of course he is at work in and through humanity. God is not detached from creation and that friends means that prayer is not meaningless.

I remember sometime back hearing the story of how there was a severe drought in the deep south of the USA. So a pastor called his congregation together for prayer. When they arrived the pastor looked round then asked them “Have you no faith? Not one of you has brought an umbrella.” Because God is involved sustain his creation we can come to him expectantly in prayer. If God was outside creation detached from it prayer would be meaningless and we would have no help but instead as the Psalmist puts it in Psalm 121:1-2, “I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” So let’s carry everything to God in prayer because he is our Father who is involved in his creation.

#### **b. he is restoring creation**

While in these verses we see that everything was good we know that now it is not. Human sin has made a mess of the creation, of our relationships with each other and our relationship with God our creator. If we go back to the pottery experience we might well when the pot goes wrong to throw our hands up in horror and give up. However God has not given up on creation or on humanity. To use another analogy we are his sheep but we have wandered off seeking greener pastures but God graciously seeks to draw us back. God is at work to restore his creation to him and especially humanity. He has done this supremely through Jesus. We saw that in the second reading we had from 2 Cor 4:6, “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

In creation when all was darkness and chaos God said, “let there be light” and there was light. Now to sinful people whose lives are, as it were, darkness and chaos, God through the gospel bring his light. That was the experience of Paul on the road to Damascus and it has been the experience of many of us here this morning. Through the gospel God brings his light so that those who are spiritually blind can see and be restored into a right relationship with God our creator and as we see further on in 2 Cor through that restoration we become part of the “new creation”, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation!” (2 Cor 5:17).

This is God’s continuing work in creation and a work we share as we share his work in caring for creation as we bring the message of the gospel to the world. We saw this just a few weeks ago from 2 Cor 5:18, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation”.

We are involved as followers of Christ in helping people to become in Christ part of the new creation. It is a great and a privileged ministry, as God seeks to restore and renew creation. So let us not give up on this. Rather let us continue praying for our contact people, talking with our contact people and inviting our contact people to our homes and to events such as the question and answer session coming up in 10 days.

So in a sense we have come full circle and are perhaps in a better situation to complete the sentences God is by saying, God is the creator, God is the Lord, God is the sustainer of our world and God is at work to restore and ultimately renew creation. This is our God.