

The Beginning -
we are starting a series looking at God's history -
or at least, the history of God's involvement in our world.

A very short reading from Genesis
but it captures the essence of Creation.

There was nothing - and God spoke -
and there was something.

Or more plainly - there was not -
and God spoke - and there was.

The Physicists tell us that at the start of "the Big Bang"

*"God said 'Let there be Light -
and there was light' "*

time and space were created.
Yes, even time was created.

Never mind theology
Physics tells us that there was a beginning
and in this universe there was no "before"

Whatever caused this universe to come into being
was outside of creation - not of this world.

Science says that there is something - someone -
outside of our world -(in eternity)
who created and ordered
all that we see and experience around us.

2/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

There are some small-minded people
with a great faith in their own intellects
who believe that anything beyond
their own grasp and understanding
must be a fiction.

There are others - a growing number of more humble people
who are discovering - that the more they learn of this world
the more they realise
that the truths of the universe
go beyond what we can even dream of.

And part of that beyondness
beyond our reason - something we can't explain -
is the reality of a Creator Force
who is personal - and good.

He chooses to touch our lives
and our experience of him raises us to worship.

We call him "God" - he calls himself "Father"
and he loves us.

This is scientific fact.
Something - someone - beyond our understanding
outside of our physical universe
outside even of time - we call it eternity -
is responsible for, and involved in, our world today.
He loves us - he sustains our lives -
and he brings goodness into our experience of life.

3/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

It is like light shining in a dark place.

It is Genesis 1.

It is every day, every moment of our existence.

But the "history of God" reveals that he is not restricted to a background influence - there are times when he has intervened dramatically in what goes on, on our planet.

There is something special about Planet Earth.
There is something special about the human race.
God knows about, and cares for, individuals.

He has done stuff in the lives of individuals.

That is what God's history is about
that is the stuff of the Bible.
Stories of God doing things in the lives of people and nations.

And of course - the biggest story of all
which threads through from the beginning to the end
is God himself - coming to visit -
walking amongst us - as one of us -
to do what we cannot do without him.

We have become so oppressed, so imprisoned
by the things of this world -
that we have lost sight of the things of eternity.

4/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

Primitive man worships his creator
and sometimes in his infancy of thought
worships the creation by mistake
because he sees only the vehicle
by which the creator delivers his goodness to us.

But sophisticated man - humanity come of age -
worships only his own self.

And denies even the existence of God.

"Either I made it - or it just happens -
I don't owe anybody anything"

We are back in the dark.

And so God came himself - The Father sent the Son
to raise our vision - and to give us a hope of eternity.

How does John the Baptist put it?

I baptise you with water

He will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with Fire.

Jesus was a human being - born as a baby, like you and me.

But he was something else. He was the Son of God.

He was Light coming into a dark place.

He was the bearer of the Holy Spirit.

He was a New Beginning.

At that moment in time,
and during the next few precious years
God was about to do something
that would touch every human life
from Adam - through to the end of time.

5/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

Again - as John the Baptist sees it
*he saw heaven being torn open
and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*

Heaven being torn open - a pathway being restored
so that those earthed in this created world
might once again experience participation
in the things of eternity.

Not a message today to send us out
with a specific task or target for mission.

But an encouragement of eternal proportions
that in Jesus, God has embarked on a task
to expose veiled minds to the glories of heaven.

In Jesus God has embarked on a task
to restore fallen sinful man
to know and love his Creator.

In Jesus God has embarked on a task
to mend a broken universe
to enlighten a dark universe
to raise humanity to the heights of heaven.

And he calls you and me - and his church
to share in that task.

What a privilege, what a responsibility.

Don't just nod and say - "yes, that's great".

What are you going to do about it?

6/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

The task of God's mission
doesn't just happen around you.

People are not queuing up to come to church
or to attend Alpha courses
or to be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

They are not coming out of the towns and villages
as they did in John the Baptist's time
to seek repentance and salvation.

Even the ones who ask for baptism
are like the Pharisees that John turned away!

Come back

when you show fruit in keeping with repentance.

For this great task to be accomplished
for this New Beginning to reach an End, a purpose
you and I have to be involved in it.

If we do worship and discipleship
without mission and witness
the church will die.

Look at the church in this land in our lifetime.
What has happened to it? Where has it gone?

We inherited a church with little missionary purpose.
It's not our fault - you may say.

But we have done little to turn it round.

7/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

When we have held *Alpha* courses
we struggle to get two or three members.

But if we are to impact our community
we need tens, hundreds, thousands.

I can't reach thousands - I can reach perhaps fifty.

If we all were to reach fifty - we would touch thousands.

Are you praying for fifty?

Are you praying for five?

Are you praying for one?

Are you following your prayer through
with word and action?

Remember our message today
is an encouragement of eternal proportions

In Jesus, God has embarked on a task
to expose veiled minds to the glories of heaven.

Do you know people with veiled minds?

Challenge Satan for them. Do battle in prayer.

8/8 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

In Jesus, God has embarked on a task
to restore fallen sinful man
to know and love his Creator.

**Do you know people
who do not know and love their heavenly Father?**

Reach them and touch them with his love.

In Jesus God has embarked on a task
to mend a broken universe
to enlighten a dark universe
to raise humanity to the heights of heaven.

**Do you know broken places in this world
and broken people who live in despair and darkness?**

**Embark on a project
to bring joy into those dark places.**

In Jesus God has embarked on a task.
And he calls you and me - and his church
to share in that task.

**What are you going to do about it?
Will you make a new Beginning?**

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Setting the Scene

I wonder what you all got for Christmas?
I won't ask everybody
but there is one present I always get.
Who can guess what it is?

A Jig-saw. (It helps to keep me awake
during those long days after Christmas
of sitting around being polite)

I like Jig-saws - who else likes jig-saws?

How do you start your jig-saw?
Edges and corners?
Features of the picture?
Who starts with the blank bits like sky?

What is it about jig-saws that we like?

Making order out of chaos.

In the box it is a mess - but when you have finished
it looks correct - every piece in place.
Doesn't it look and feel good!
You don't want to take it apart.

That is what today's reading is about.

God made order out of chaos.

And each time he finished a bit
it looked and felt good.

S2/2 Holy Communion, 8th January 2012

So we are starting this new part of the year
here at the beginning.

God making something out of nothing.

Except it was not quite like a jig-saw.
God didn't have a box of pieces.
unless the pieces are sub-atomic particles.
And he made those as well.

No - he made it all
like the painter who first composed the picture
before it was cut up into the jig-saw.

Only God also made the scene
that the painter captured in his picture.

The sky and the clouds - the trees and the river
and all the animals and the people.

God made it all - and that is our theme today
the Beginning - a new start - God's creative work.

More later

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Birthdays and presentations

Testimony time

Collection