

God's Imagination !

Genesis 2^{4-9,15-end}; Psalm 65; Revelation 4; Luke 8²²⁻²⁵

*Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?
[Luke 8²²]*

When I am out and about you might be amazed at how many people think that they proudly have to tell me, 'I don't believe in God'. I am not sure why they feel the need to tell me or what they imagine I am going to do about it. I always respond and ask them the question 'But what sort of God don't you believe in?'

What then follows ranges from the arrogance of saying that they don't need God, through to terrible tales of encounters with religious people who make the God they believe in negative and incredible.

Christians do know the God they believe in:

- ✘ God is the creator! The second creation story from Genesis moves from the creation of man, the shaping of the environment, the naming of the animals and the setting of boundaries – one rule: **of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.**

Then there is the creation of woman – **it is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner; therefore a man leaves his father and his other and clings to his wife, they become one flesh; they were both naked, and were not ashamed.** I am not sure if this is an expression of God's imagination or his sense of humour!

We learn about God who is the creator, wanting us to be happy and fulfilled, and the God who sets the rules and wants us to be safe.

- ✘ The psalm makes it clear that the God that we know through creation and the provision of food should be worshipped – such a positive and generous provision: **Praise is due to you, O God.**

- ✘ Then Revelation blows the fuses – a vision of power, majesty and universal and unchallengeable might. It ties back to creation when the voice of heaven is raised in singing, **You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and created.** The response to this God is to worship and know your place.

- ✘ Then Luke introduces Jesus, untroubled by the things that trouble us, yet willing to intervene when we need help. The problem so many have with faith is that they want a God that they can control, who will do what they want and make life easier for them. However, when Jesus stills the storm the response wasn't the smugness of getting ones' way, but that **they were afraid and amazed and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water and they obey him?'**

Luke has, in Chapters 7,8 and 9, been presenting Jesus as God – in miracles of healing, of raising the dead, of offering forgiveness and feeding a multitude from a packed lunch! In Jesus we don't find a God that can be tamed and controlled, but a God that challenges and changes.

Have you ever been in a small boat in a storm? As teenagers we used to hang around the harbour in the holidays, knowing that the fishing fleet set sail as soon as the Church clock struck midnight on a Sunday (perhaps more due to superstition than fear of God): we hoped that some kind crew would allow us to go with them for a few days fishing in the North Sea. One successful attempt saw my friend Norman and I setting sail on a trawler, about 100 feet long. At the beginning of the trip the weather was wonderful, but within hours a force 9 gale engulfed us. The waves towered over us and cresting the waves was as exciting as any attractions in any theme park. It was wild, wet, cold and frightening!

Life can be like that – and it is important to be honest about God and what we can accept in the storms of life. We can't cope on our own – that is what Baptism accepts (of the burial of our old life and the resurrection to God's new life). But be assured that any God worthy of trust can't be house-trained to suit our life-style and wish-list!

If we believe in and worship this God, whose solution to man's loneliness was a woman, you know that you can trust him to be creative when he has to be!