

Sunday 6 September – Festival of Creation in Christ

Sermon by Christine Newmarch

An audio recording of the sermon from St Luke's will be available after the service at [Sermons \(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk\)](http://Sermons(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk)

At this summer's General Synod meeting the Church of England authorised two new festivals to be added to the Common Worship calendar.

Today we are celebrating one of those for the very first time. It is called The Festival of Creation in Christ.

A second new Festival, the Commemoration of the Twenty-one Martyrs of Libya will be held on 15th February, and we shall learn more about that in due course.

The Church of England has published new seasonal material including readings and prayers for these Festivals, and we shall be using those for Creation in Christ today.

As the Festival of Creation in Christ will always fall on the first Sunday of September, when we have a Family Communion service at St Luke's, today's worship will be a blend of both liturgies so that we respect and honour the new festival while maintaining our local tradition. We shall also be using this at All Saints' Great Braxted.

The new Festival is one of the fruits of a growing ecumenical movement across churches worldwide and offers an opportunity for Christians to give thanks for God's creation and redemption of the world, reflect on humanity's responsibility to care for the natural world and pray for its renewal.

The Church has placed this new celebration at the start of Creationtide, which runs from now until the Feast of St Francis on 4th October, and leads us towards Harvest Festival celebrations. Today though is about recognising Christ's role in creation, and how he was revealed as creator in scripture.

The festival title 'Creation in Christ' emphasises that creation should be understood through the person and work of Jesus Christ: everything was and is created through him, sustained in him and destined for renewal in him.

Maybe we should talk about Christ in creation a lot more.

We often tend to think of God the Father as creator, which of course He is, but the Bible, and the creeds which we say in every service, tell us that this was done through Jesus.

John's gospel tells us that Christ, whom he calls the 'Word' was there from the very beginning and that all things came into being through him (John 1:1-3). There is no higher understanding of Jesus in the NT than John's description: 'The Word was God.'

Our reading from the letter to the Colossians this morning also places Jesus at the very centre of creation. 'for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible...all things have been created through him and for him.'

Jesus is the Word through whom everything that has ever been created exists. Nothing came into being without Jesus' creative hand. Everything in heaven and earth, everything visible and invisible came into being through Jesus.

This means that Jesus existed in harmony with God the Father long before the world began. It is called his pre-existence, the life of Jesus with the Father long before he became one of us as a baby at Bethlehem. The Father chose to redeem the world through the Son: and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things... by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Science can only tell us so much about how different parts of creation have come to be how they are. It cannot explain how everything came into being, how creation was created from nothing. It is beyond our rational abilities.

Psalms 33 tells us that 'he spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth' (Ps. 33,9).

God created the world. God himself is not part of creation.

God need not have created the world, but did so, through Jesus, out of love. All things are the fruit of his love.

Matthew's account of Jesus calming the storm is one of nine miracles which Matthew records, all pointing to Jesus' divinity, his divine authority, his relationship with his Father.

Jesus' healing miracles took place within the context of faith, the faith of the sick person, or in the case of the man carried to Jesus by his friends, by

their faith. The calming of the sea is different. It took place by his command in response the disciples cry for help, Lord save!

The calming of the sea shows Jesus' identity as Lord of all, having authority over his creation. Jesus is Lord of all, and the one who saves.

Through our baptism we become part of God's family, brought within his saving love. It means that we are united with Jesus through faith. 2 Corinthians 5.17 tells us that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

How remarkable. Christ in Creation is not a mere descriptor of what took place long ago when the world was made, but Christ is constantly active in creation always looking for new opportunities for fresh creation. Yes, he is Lord of all, but it is our calling as members of his body on earth to share his love and teaching with others day by day.

Jacqui Parkins's current exhibition at Chelmsford Cathedral 'Threads through Creation.' She has used embroidery and other techniques to create a spectacular sequence of 12 huge textile panels. Jaqui has previously used her gifts to create textile works giving her insights into the Book of Revelation and other books of the Bible. If you have a chance to go along, please do, and I am sure you will find Creation in Christ afresh before you.

Amen.