



Sunday Message - 26th April 2020 Rev Kim Ratcliffe

Prayer

Lord as we come to worship you today
Let me be open to your word
And hear through the chaos that is happening
All around me.
You Lord overcame the storms of life in your life
You managed to bring beauty forth from chaos in the beginning.
We may feel no energy today to even enter into worship
But we come as we are.
Help us Lord to be still in your presence.
Open up your word to me, words that I have heard so often.
Even as a small seed is planted in the dryness of
the soil, it can use even its last bit of energy to burst through
its shell and reach down far enough to quench its thirst enough
for it to grow. Let us see you today in a new light a light that
will help us to enter back into the world around us

Bible Readings:

Genesis 1:1-19 New International Version (NIV)

The Beginning

- 1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
- 3** And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.
- 6** And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." **7** So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. **8** God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.
- 9** And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.
- 11** Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. **12** The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.
- 14** And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, **15** and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. **16** God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the

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stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

Jeremiah 4:22-28 New International Version (NIV)

²² "My people are fools;
they do not know me.
They are senseless children;
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil;
they know not how to do good."
²³ I looked at the earth,
and it was formless and empty;
and at the heavens,
and their light was gone.
²⁴ I looked at the mountains,
and they were quaking;
all the hills were swaying.
²⁵ I looked, and there were no people;
every bird in the sky had flown away.
²⁶ I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert;
all its towns lay in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.
²⁷ This is what the LORD says:
"The whole land will be ruined,
though I will not destroy it completely.
²⁸ Therefore the earth will mourn
and the heavens above grow dark,
because I have spoken and will not relent,
I have decided and will not turn back."

Still you speak - Listen at <https://youtu.be/flvfCnjDjpU>

*Still You speak
If only we would listen
Through the noise and chaos of our days
Lord give us time, to fix our minds on You
And hear what You would say*

*Still You speak
If only we would listen
Through the wars and conflicts of our time
Lord if each day, we'd kneel and pray to You
What wisdom we could find*

*Word of life, voice for every season
Song of love for all our days
Still You speak
If only we would listen
Listen and obey*



*Still You speak
If only we would listen
Through the creeds and doctrines that divide
Lord teach us still, to seek Your will and let
Your voice speak through our lives*

*Still You speak
If only we would listen
Through the years that come and go so fast
Lord may Your ways, shape all our days until
We see Your face at last
(Paul Field/Jonathan Veira 2003 Daybreak Music Ltd)*

When I read the beginning of Genesis I think of it as a hymn of praise. We have a mysterious God majestically creating the world that we live in today. He created it from a formless and empty thing and yet we can see it forming into something in scripture that makes us feel awesome and full of praise to our Creator God. We know that it isn't a hymn but many hymn writers have been inspired by words of scripture and have been able to write beautiful hymns that help us to praise God in our communal worship as well as personal devotions as we listen to them at home.

A hymn written by Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917) continues to be sung in worship today it is 'For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies.....*Gracious God, to you we raise this out sacrifice of praise*'. It helps us to sing our appreciation to our creator God for so many elements to creation. The whole of the Genesis reading today to me is gobsmackingly beautiful, full of wonder and of majesty. Perhaps the writer of Genesis, which is ascribed to Moses, perhaps even Moses was singing God's praises as he wrote it. He certainly wrote it with great beauty in the words.

We can also see mystery in what is written too. We cannot think of the beauty of creation without the many natural wonders of the world coming into our minds. As well as the sheer beauty of them if we take just a snapshot of any of these wonders there is also a simplicity to them too. They are each made up from different small particles of rock, of coral, of water, light. But by bringing these particles together in a natural way make them beautiful and wonderful things to look at. Even if you cannot actually be where they are, to touch and experience the atmosphere of physically being in their presence. There is so much about the world we that we do not and cannot understand. We aren't given an explanation of 'how' the world was created but Moses shares the wonders of it for us to see in what he writes. We have no idea as to how God 'did it' we are simply told the story and we will continue to read this passage over and over again until the day we die and still have questions that go unanswered.

It is good of course for us to ask questions and to try to gain as much knowledge as we can from the truth that we read in the Bible. As well as what we believe our faith imparts to us in a personal way. In Genesis we may, even during this time of empty churches and for some empty homes, we may have the opportunity to think and reflect upon our faith. Our faith should be something that we can hold on to when the world around us is so uncertain. It is our faith that God gives to us to hold onto when we have uncertainties in our lives. Faith

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is something that somehow gives us the strength to carry on regardless of what is happening. Just as God brought order out of chaos at the very beginning of time God still brings order into the chaos that we may be finding in our lives today.

When the rhythm of our lives is out of sync, we try desperately to bring rhythm back into it. The majority of us like to have some form of order in our lives. I believe that God will help us to bring order back into our lives during this time of uncertainty and when the lockdown has been completed. God also helps us to bring back order into our lives we have gone off track a little bit from time to time. In the natural world we have added to the pollution, we may have been unjust at some point in our lives to others, but when we look at Genesis we are reminded of the beauty of world that God created and perhaps if we read it more often it may help us to continue to be encouraged to make the world a better place maybe beginning right where you are today. Keep faith in our Creator God.

The book of Jeremiah was written for Judah but speaks to us today: In verse 22 we can see that Judah was skilled in doing evil and didn't know how to do good. Sin at some point comes into each of our lives we are a sinful people striving to live a life that is good and true to our faith. But our lives don't exist for us to be ducking and diving away from sin. Our lives are so much more than that. We have been given the gift of our lives from God to live and to live it to the full. Within our lives we need to make decisions, hopefully we will be aiming to make right decisions. I spoke about the rhythm of our lives, part of the rhythm we need is to have discipline in it too. I'm not trying to be the bearer of bad news here. We have been given freewill but if we choose to use the freewill to a level that doesn't keep in line with what our faith is directing us towards and taking advantage of freewill then we may very soon or over a long period of time find that our lives have become something that is the opposite of what we had hoped for. We can be our own worst enemy. In verse 23 of Jeremiah we are shown the same chaos that we saw in Genesis. We are reminded that yes, the earth was is chaos but then our God of Creation placed hands upon it and worked with it to the point that it was brought out of the chaotic condition it had been in. We can all see the world now and just know how wrong, upsetting and unbelievably out of its normal rhythm, for the time being. Even in creation God stood back and looked at his creation and saw that it was good. We don't want to be forced into the position that we have the time to look at our own lives and spot the areas that we too have gone wrong. But it would be a shame to not if only for a short time to reflect upon our lives. I am looking at my life and I'd like to, if I may, encourage you during this time to look at your lives and allow God in. Allow God into the areas of your lives that you would like to be different. Hand over to God the things that you would simply like to do when your rhythm of life gets back to some for of order. If you are afraid to do this then speak to God and ask for Him to work with you and embrace you with a newness that helps you to see life more clearly than you have before. We have a God of Creation. Allow God's creativity to come into your life. We may be sitting back and watching things happen in front of us. We may be feeling depressed, unhappy, grieving about our lives as they were up to a few weeks ago. The life that you had been creating with others either at home, at work or socially and that you had worked hard to build up. God knows this.

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I have three grandchildren, Loui, Archie and Little Hattie born on the 24th of March 3 days before my 60th birthday and as with my own children I love watching them play. You will have experienced this I am sure when you have seen a child who has spent absolutely ages building something up from Lego or stickle bricks you can see the determination on their faces. Their wee tongues come out, their eyes screw up and they are ever so careful about putting that last bit on. Then something happens that makes it collapse and there are tears and maybe even tantrums and a sense of hopelessness from that wee person's face. You don't leave the child in this state do you? You get on the floor with them and help them to rebuild that structure that they have made. Maybe it turns out slightly different than the original one but with your help there is a wee smile put back on that child's face. We can put a smile back on God's face by helping with the recreating of our world today. It won't happen overnight but it can be done. Go into the places and situations in our world today that we know are hurting. We may not physically be able to do so but with our prayers and even our thoughts of the people in those places and those being forced into situations they would choose not to be in. God worked on blank canvas and we too have a canvas to work upon. One that has already been formed in some way. Our world isn't empty and formless. We need to ask God in what way we can help and what we have to do. Remember the song, Jesus' hands were kind hands well our hands can be too. God loves you and so do I maybe from afar just now but God places into our hearts His love to share with others. Trust in God, have faith in God, love your God with all your heart and accept His love for you. God's blessings be with you today and always. Amen.

Go Peaceful (Paul Field) Listen at <https://youtu.be/MUr9-MkDqBU>

*Go peaceful, in gentleness
Through the violence of these days
Give freely, show tenderness
In all your ways*

*Through darkness, in troubled times
Let holiness be your aim
Seek wisdom, let faithfulness
Burn like a flame*

*God speed you, God lead you
And keep you wrapped around His heart
May you be known by love*

*Be righteous, speak truthfully
In a world of greed and lies
Show kindness, see everyone
Through Heaven's eyes*

*God hold you, enfold you
And keep you
Wrapped around His heart
May you be known by love.*

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