

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 29)
20-10-2024
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Job 38:1-7 God answers Job – God questions him as to who is the creator.

Psalms 104:1-10,26 The Lord is the creator and the provider

Hebrews 5:1-10 Jesus the High Priest – In the order of Melchizedek

Mark 10:35-45 The Request of James and John
Jesus tells them that his and their role is to be servants.
First will be last and the last will be first.

Introduction

Today I would like us to look at two questions I believe the readings from Scripture this morning draw us into:-

1. How do we view God in the World?
2. What does this God call us into?

How do we view God in the World?

Firstly, let us explore the question – How do we view God in the World?

As Australians in the early part of the 21st century we probably have a very scientific view of the world in which we live. And this is a good thing.

But, many people believe that science and faith are not compatible.

To me this false belief, is one of the great myths of our time. I think it is the reason many young people in our schools think they can't believe in God. I think they believe the myth that religion is about being unscientific, and they wouldn't want to be associated with that.

The reality is that many of the world's most famous scientists in history were Christians. I had a friend who was the professor of Chemistry at James Cook University. He would often spend time in teaching in Europe and the US, and he was at the time, the head of the world body for inorganic chemistry, and he was a very committed Christian.

Science looks at what we can see and tries to understand it and explain it. The Christian faith goes beyond this and looks at bigger order questions. Christianity looks at what lies beyond what we can see and touch and feel, and it asks bigger questions of meaning and purpose.

In the Book of Job, we hear how Job is crying out to God, and complaining about how unjust it is that bad things have happened to him. When God replies in our reading today, he doesn't answer Job directly, but rather God answers Job by questioning him back:-

"I will question you, and you shall declare to me.
4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding."

Whilst we as human beings can learn more and more about the world in which we live, we can never fully understand everything about it. Although we have a clear sense of God when we look at the wonder of nature, God is beyond our comprehension.

In verse 2 of the Psalm today we hear the psalmist say of God:-

"You stretch out the heavens like a tent"

The readings from Job and the Psalm tell us of the Awesomeness of God. A God who created this world in which we live, and is above the created order. As mere human beings, we can't know all there is to know about God, but we can know about God. Christians down the ages have used some big words to describe how they have experienced God.

Omnipotent – All powerful
Omniscient – All Knowing
Omnipresent – Everywhere at once

In the letter to the Hebrews today we hear how we can know God through Jesus:-

"⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;
⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him "

Although God is ultimately beyond our human understanding, God provides a way for us to know Him.

In Jesus we can know the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God.

In the life death and resurrection of Jesus we can be assured we know God.

My father had a friend who would visit our family each week and share a meal. He was probably an atheist, but I think he called himself an agnostic. I think he had a sense that there might be a higher power out there somewhere, but how could we as mere human beings really know. I had

many discussions with Llyod, and in one sense I related to his views. In one sense it's a logical place to come to. I have spent lots of time thinking about the world in which we live. For me though, Jesus provides the evidence we need to accept God. The Christian faith is not blind trusting in fairy tales. The Christian faith acknowledges we can't know all there is to know about our world and about God, but it is grounded in history and in the person of Jesus, who claimed to be the way to God.

For me the Christian faith makes the most sense of the world in which we live, and gives us meaning, purpose, and hope for the future.

What does this God call us into?

So, if we can know God, what does this God call us into?

The God we hear in the bible calls us into relationship. Jesus didn't just tell those he met to believe in Him, he also told them to follow Him.

To be a follower of Jesus when he was alive 2000 years ago was radical thing to do. The followers of Jesus were countercultural.

That changed in the Roman world when Christianity became the religion of the state, but now 2000 years later, we are probably in more of a similar situation to the first century Christians.

What does our society think when we hear, someone is a Christian?

To some it is still positive, but to many it is not.

Maybe our society sees someone who's not real bright and believes in fantasies. Maybe our society sees someone like Ned Flanders off the tv show "The Simpsons" a friendly but ineffectual guy who will never amount to much.

As Christians today we are also called to be counter cultural.

Jesus points it out very clearly to James and John in today's Gospel.

They wanted to sit at his right and left hand. A very worldly request.

When the conversation went further and they were questioned could they drink his cup and be baptized in his baptism, They declared " We are Able" – Jesus said yes you will be able, but to sit at my right and left is not mine to grant.

Jesus rather called the twelve together and gave them gave them these words:-

"You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."

How do we serve one another? How do we serve our families? How do we serve our wives? How do we serve our husbands? How do we serve our community?

As the Church do we serve others or do we serve ourselves?

Yes, there are a whole lot of things we do as the Body of Christ in this particular place – St Cuthbert's – Tweed Heads – but one of the things we are called by God to do is to “serve others”.

Jesus called his disciples to follow him, and this is what he said about himself:-

“⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

If we are called to be followers of Jesus, and Jesus gave his life for others, then maybe this gives us a big indication of how we are supposed to live our lives. It sounds very hard doesn't it, and sometimes it may be, but it's God's will, and sometimes the rewards may be greater than we expect.

An add on tv, from a little while ago, encouraging volunteering in Australia features a popular Scientist in the Media, Dr Carl, who says about volunteering:- “It's good for you, and it feel's great”

The reality is that those who focus only on themselves are usually less happy than those who serve others.

It doesn't have to be big, but we can all serve others.

Conclusion

Today, we have looked at how we view God in the World.

If God is the Creator and the one in charge, how are we then to live?

As Christians we worship a God beyond our comprehension, yet this God loves us so much, that he took on our humanity in Jesus so that we can know him.

And God calls us to serve others.

As we go out from worship today, I encourage you to think and pray about what you are doing now to serve those around you, and also to ask God to give you guidance, on how you may be called to serve others into the future.