

14 September 2025

Praise service - St Martin's, Lower Bourne

Second Sunday of Creationtide - John 1:6-18

Sermon – Linda Sharpin, Ordinand

Today we have three readings that show beautifully different interpretations of sin, forgiveness and grace from the three key perspectives of the Bible, the Old Testament, the Epistles and the Gospels. I am going to illustrate this through a word that weaves through all three passages - 'Dominion' - and how it relates to how God sees our role here on earth.

So let's start by clarifying what is meant by 'Dominion'. Dominion means power and control. It is often associated with absolute power.

Our first reading was about day six of the first story of creation in Genesis. On the sixth day, God created mankind. And, we are told that mankind had dominion over everything. He gave mankind the ability to know what to do, and the ability to do it, but he also gave him free choice. He made him appear like God on earth. This was all pretty straightforward until it was decided that things were getting a bit out of control.

God then sent his only Son, Jesus, you could say to re-orientate humankind back into perspective. John's Gospel doesn't use the word 'Dominion' but what it does is to remind us that it is not we who are in charge, but God. God is the creator of all and that we should do what God commands. Our job is to work out what that is, which is why he sent Jesus to help. Unfortunately, ever full of surprises, we are not told how we should treat the world as those given 'Dominion' over it. Instead, John tells us how we should behave towards God. He tells us to learn what to do from Jesus. When we have grasped this, we are expected to work out for ourselves what we should be doing on earth.

Whilst there is no straight forward explanation as to how to look after the world, John does give us something, not so much by way of help, but as succour. We are told what is really important is not that we get everything right, but that God loves us. So, what we need to do is to keep praying, asking God for help, to guide us as to what we should be doing, support this by studying the life of Christ and, when we get it wrong, say sorry. I like to think that God loves a trier.

Our third passage is from Paul. Jesus has sacrificed himself for our sins and returned to his father. With no physical presence of God on earth, Paul returns to the language of Genesis and speaks of thrones, dominions and powers. But understanding has moved on. We are now clearly in the language of the Christian faith. There is an understanding that we do not have supreme control over all. God remains in charge. Jesus has shown us how to behave, if not in specifics, then far more helpfully, if obliquely, by way of parables and his own actions, leaving principles, (for those with an interest in such matters, more befitting of the law of the EU, as opposed to rules, in the

manner of the law of the USA!) We are left with timeless wisdom, applicable to every tricky situation so far to befall mankind.

We also have the knowledge from both John's Gospel and Paul, that what we need to do is to turn to Christ. If we bring Him our troubles and machinations on our anguish over the world, whether it be what to do about the use of plastics, how to treat plants and animals, how to stop or reverse climate change, poverty or hunger, and listen to what he has to say, He will guide us.

So, in some ways nothing has changed since the days of Genesis. God did create us with dominion over all. With that came great responsibility which, over millennia, we have both knowingly and unknowingly abused. However, since the coming of Christ great wisdom, grace and mercy is at hand, sufficient to ensure that, those of us who believe in Him, keep on trying to do the right thing.

So what might we conclude?

What we should do is to take care of our planet and all that is in it, not just the creatures and the plants, but also our land, our seas, and each other.

How we are to do this is by turning to God for help. We cannot work out how to do this all by ourselves, it was never God's intention that we should.

We will get it wrong, we do get things wrong, even when we follow the science and pray in earnest. Over time our understanding changes, we become wiser. Christ understands this and it is not because of what we do right that He loves us. God always loves us. And, through His grace, freely given, when we turn to him and ask for forgiveness, He forgives us, day after day after day.

Amen.