

God is not enough?

The following text is Jonathan Green's speaking notes from the gathering held at The Sanctuary Westminster on 30th November 2006.

Introduction

Today we are completing act 1 of the Story we find ourselves in— the story of origins, a picture of normality – the way God made things and called good. We have come a long way over these past couple of months

- Before the beginning
- Being becomes creator
- Looked at the nature of the kind of writing that Genesis 1 and 2 are. Argument clothed in poetry.
- Last time we met together Benedicta spoke eloquently about creation and our call to work the land and care for creation and I spoke briefly about walking with God in relationship.

But

‘There is one other surprising thing that the second creation story in Genesis suggests... it is something shocking, maybe put best when it's put in a way that borders on heresy: *God is not enough*, the story says. That has nothing to do with any deficiency in God; it has to do with the storyline God had in mind for us. God doesn't want to be the only reality in our lives, the only relationship in our network, the only message on our screen.

In the story we find ourselves in, God wants us to name the giraffe, and laugh as it reaches the tall, tall branches; name the zebra, and smile as it gallops across the plain; name the fruit bat and name the dragonfly, and wonder as they fly above us -and enjoy them all... noticing and naming and enjoying our fellow creatures, as we're doing today, is part of why we're here.¹

The naming of the animals is a scene which portrays man as monarch of all he surveys, poignantly reveals him as a social being, made for fellowship, not power: he will live until he loves, giving himself away to another on his own level. So the woman is presented wholly as his partner and counterpart; nothing is yet said of her as childbearer. She is valued for herself alone.

... the story tells us that the creator wants man and woman to find each other, as a lost part of themselves. And so in the story we have the man and the women, naked, together, both innocent and passionate, not ashamed to see and be seen, to know and be known, to need and be needed, to want and enjoy another being, given by God.

Genesis 1 and 2 convey something incredible... we are incomplete by God's design. And he saw that it was very good.

It's a wonderful thought is it not!

Conversation: led by Felicity Green

Fully human is about connecting on many levels

‘In Genesis 1, humans are made ‘male and female’. A gender distinction is built into creation so that God's image bearers are always male and female, man or woman. That is, we always stand in relationship to one another, as well as in relationship to God. None of us can be fully human on our own: we are always in a variety of relationships.

¹ Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 36-37

Humans are made for God. Genesis 2 focuses more closely on this and the other relationships in which humans live out their lives by virtue of the way God has made the world.²

The story tells us that we were designed to be incomplete and unfulfilled in ourselves as nomads - as isolated individuals. We feel an ache in our side, like some part of us is missing... And this speaks powerfully into our contemporary society – loneliness is not part of the plan and yet people speak about being isolated, afraid alone and God saw that it was not good!

Regarding the union of Adam and Eve we something of the kind of relationship God makes... The union of the two... is to be an exclusive, permanent, God sealed bond; for God himself, like a father of the bride, leads the woman to the man. Again, where relationships and commitment are being redefined in our time this story speaks powerfully. And in that relationship there is perfect ease between them, no greed, distrust, dishonor... it sounds good... very good! So we see clearly in Genesis that these opening chapters are about the formation of relationships...

Once more we see that to be human is to be in relationship in some way to creation, as those who work within it, explore its potential and care for it. We are made for God. We are also made for one another. And we are made for the creation, to care for it and to be at work within it.

The world as God's kingdom

‘Though Christianity has often been accused of being otherworldly, it should be clear by now that the beginning of the biblical story does not encourage anyone to feel detached from, or somehow superior to, this world of space and time and matter. The Bible depicts this created, material world as the very theatre of God's glory, the kingdom over which he reigns.’³

We see that these early chapters are very positive about the world! We too should look for the goodness within creation which is everywhere to see if only we are willing to look.

Yet the image of God in humankind has become horribly tarnished by sin until it is hardly to be recognized. There is no living human being who truly reflects God's image in the way that Genesis suggests should be normal – except one. For that one, we must look ahead in the drama of scripture to see God's image restored at last, in Jesus...

By being like Jesus, we can become more and more what God the Creator always intended us to be, living in fellowship with God, in harmony with the creation, fulfilled and happy in our calling to understand and enjoy and develop this good earth - normal, at last.

Conclusion

So, I really hope that during these last few sessions a robust and fairly complete picture of creation and what normal is has been conveyed. As we move on into act 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 we need to be mindful of this story of origins...

² Bartholemew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 16

³ *Drama*, 17