

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**Sermon:** Rev Dr André Groenewald

**Readings:** Genesis 1:1-5, 26:2-3 Matthew 28:16-20

### Old Testament Reflection

If there is one question humans will always ponder about, it will be most definitely be: "Who is God?"

In all the previous centuries up till today many theologians', philosophers, children, men and woman, tried to answer this question because the Being of God is too great and yes to difficult to fully grasp.

Maybe that is why a theologian in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century said the only thing we can say of God is that He is totally different from human beings. However although He is so different from human beings, He still chose to have a relationship with the sinners. So who is God according to the Bible?

In our first reading from Genesis the author clearly wants to answer the question of who God is.

He says that God had no beginning unlike creation. In the beginning it was only God and His Spirit hovering above the waters of the uninhabited earth. But unlike the other gods of the other nations this God does not appear as a hero who fight against the elements of nature. Oh no – He is THE creator of all things.

It is also evident in Genesis 1 that the creator God is a god of order because the presentation of each creation day follows a predictable order namely:

- God said
- Then the command is given: "Let there be light,"
- Then the fact of creation is mentioned "and there was light"
- Then God's evaluation "God saw that the light was good"
- Then the boundaries of the created element is set up "and he separated the light from the darkness"
- Then the naming of the created element God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."
- Then the same verse appears after every creation namely "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day"

This emphasises the fact that God is the supreme overseer.

Genesis 1 verse 2 which mentions God's Spirit corresponds with Psalm 104 where the Psalmist also affirms the personal participation of God's Spirit in the transformation of the earth. The Hebrew word *ruahg* is also the same word for wind.

Genesis 2 from verse 4 is a different creation story. It brought biblical scholars to suspect that it was definitely written by someone else. In Genesis 2:4-24 the emphasis is on the earth and how man made it habitable. It would be no surprise if the author was either a gardener or a farmer, someone who loved nature. Genesis 1 on the other hand could have been written by a priest to whom it was important to stress that God is a God of order and that He reigns supreme.

I wonder how many of you recognised Psalm 8 as the source of our call to worship today. The Psalmist says that the majesty of God comes not only from his greatness/almightiness displayed in creation but also in His grace by crowning humanity with His majesty.

The beginning and ending of the Psalm bares the same exclamation of God's majestic name. It is interesting to note that the Psalmist uses the covenant name for God Jahweh followed by Adonai my Lord that was also used for "king". He emphasised with these titles that everything belongs to the Lord God and that everything in creation must obey God like people who would obey an earthly king. In this Psalm the author confesses how great God is. No-one can ignore the greatness of God the Creator. Even babies and young children realise it and sing of it. Even the enemies cannot do otherwise.

But the Psalmist also realises the frailty of human beings especially when he look at the sky and the moon and the stars which God set in their places.

He asks the question; what is man then? How is it possible that this great God can worry about sinful creatures? How is it possible that God trusted this frail human race with his creation?

Without giving an answer, the Psalmist concludes with a confession. God is the greater and mysteriously different from any human being. He even acts in a totally different manner because he is God. It is only God that can be so gracious to trust the human race.

And this became very true when God revealed Himself anew in Jesus Christ's mission, life, work, death, resurrection, and ascension. God made the ultimate gracious decision to save humanity from sin, death and hell...In the words of the Psalmist God was indeed "mindful" to the son of man.

### **New Testament Reflection**

In Matthew, Jesus by the authority of His Father in heaven, empowers the disciples to future mission, he commanded them to "make disciples" of all people and continue this action by involvement through baptism and teaching. He uses the clearest Trinitarian formula that we have in the Gospels when He said they must baptise the in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is as if Jesus here summarises his previous sayings and actions in the Gospel of Matthew.

He said to the people to pray to God the Father. He referred to himself frequently as the Son. He drove out demons through the power of the Spirit of God.

The God whom we meet in the Bible is thus the TRIUNE God who reveals Himself as the Father by creating and sustaining creation, who revealed Himself as the son Jesus Christ saving humanity from destruction and hell, who outpoured His Holy Spirit to create, maintain and sustain the faith of all the believers. The promises Jesus made in Matthew chapter 28 indeed became a living reality because God is indeed present through His Holy Spirit in every believer, even in their death.

In the Bible we read about a God:

- who loves His creation dearly,
- whose trust is beyond human reason,
- whose compassion stretches to the most sinful and marginalised,
- a God who went through death to save his children,
- a God that cares about the needs of others,
- a God who comforts the sick and the poor,
- a God in whom we can trust.

Although we as humans would never grasp or understand the nature of God, we surely know in faith

- that we have a Father who loves us more than any earthly father could,
- we have his forgiveness and grace in Jesus Christ ,
- we have an example in Jesus what love really means,
- we have his presence through His Holy Spirit everywhere we go.

May we be worthy through our deeds and words of His Holy Name Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen