

All creation is under our control (2:8) but now we only see this in Jesus: he for a time humbled himself in becoming human, so that he might die for the sake of all. Jesus' exaltation ("crowned", 2:9) is a consequence of his death. Then 2:10: it was in accordance with God's plan to save all people that Jesus should complete God's action ("make ... perfect"); Jesus is the forerunner for all of us in being with God forever.

Mark 10:2-16

Jesus is now in Judea (or east of the Jordan, in Perea.) Mosaic law permitted a man to divorce his wife (but not a woman her husband) for cause, but the grounds were unclear. The Pharisees were divided re the legality of divorce as well as the grounds for it, so their question is a trap. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 says (in part) that a man may simply "write a certificate of dismissal" (v. 4), without legal proceedings. (That book was seen as Moses' teaching.) In vv. 5-8, Jesus says: Moses allowed divorce as a concession to human weakness, but God's original plan was that marriage be for life: man and wife are "one flesh"; my stance is God's plan, not Mosaic law. In this plan, remarriage is either literally "adultery" (vv. 11-12) or a deviation from God's ways. (Sometimes a wife, in effect, divorced her husband. Elsewhere Jesus accepts that a man may divorce an unfaithful wife.)

Vv. 13-16 tell about the kingdom of God and the kind of people who will be admitted to it. People wish Jesus to "touch" (v. 13) their children, to lay hands on them and bless them (v. 16). Jesus is "indignant" (v. 14) at the disciples' inability to understand him and the nature of the Kingdom. Children are receptive; a child has no status, makes no claim to power. Whoever is not receptive to God's gifts will not enter the kingdom. There is no place there for human status and power.

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~ Notices ~

Prayers - If you have any particular issue that you would like to be prayed for, do please email me on frkevinobrien@me.com or call me on 065 672 4721.

Readers – This is an invitation to join a rota to give a reading in church and/or in the online service. Please do let me know if you might like the opportunity to read in church – if you haven't before don't worry – I am happy to arrange a practice session – otherwise, just go for it!

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/clare.anglicans

Rector: Email: frkevinobrien@me.com Tel: 065 672 4721

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18th Sunday after Trinity (Year B) 2021

Readings and Hymns

Collect: Gracious God, teach us to be open to your truth and to trust in your love, that we may live each day with confidence in the salvation which is given through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Suggested Hymns: *In conjunction with the online service you might like to view these hymns on YouTube - with internet links and lyrics so that you can sing along:*

- 1) Christ triumphant, ever reigning
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ono7qOs4-0>
- 2) Immortal, invisible, God only wise
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spE-BE23qxA>
- 3) Of the Father's heart begotten
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kK4JLP9i7U>
- 4) Now thank we all our God
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s99dNPKYtHk>

Genesis 2:18-24

The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Psalms 8

1 O Lord our Governor, *
how exalted is your Name in all the world!
2 Out of the mouths of infants and children *
your majesty is praised above the heavens.
3 You have set up a stronghold against your
adversaries, *
to quell the enemy and the avenger.
4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your
fingers, *
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
5 What is man that you should be mindful of him? *
the son of man that you should seek him out?
6 You have made him but little lower than the angels; *
you adorn him with glory and honor;
7 You give him mastery over the works of your hands; *
you put all things under his feet:
8 All sheep and oxen, *
even the wild beasts of the field,
9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.
10 O Lord our Governor, *
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere,

"What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?
You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet."

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying,

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

Mark 10:2-16

Some Pharisees came, and to test Jesus they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Commentary

Genesis 2:15 - 24

Our reading is excerpts from an epic tale about the creation of humanity, beginning from after the creation of "the heavens and the earth" (2:4), a time when the earth was semi-arid. Ancient peoples thought that there were waters under the earth. Seepage of this water was insufficient for cultivation; as yet there was no rain and "no one to till the ground" (2:5). At that time, God formed human (Hebrew: adam) "from the dust of the ground" (2:7) and gave him his spirit of life. God put human (as yet androgynous) in Eden (2:8), his earthly

domain, to cultivate and care for it. God tells him he may eat the fruit of the trees there, except for two:

that of "the knowledge of good and evil" (2:17), of complete knowledge and understanding (or of moral choice); and that of "life" (2:9, 3:3), of eternal life, of becoming divine. If he does, he will "die", i.e. be separated from God. God provides human with an equal "partner" (2:18) of human's flesh. [In Genesis 2: 18, God is quoted as describing women by using a word that is most often used as a self-descriptor for God. So, when ezer is applied to the first woman, it should never be interpreted to support oppressive, traditional or cultural views of women's roles.

The Hebrew word ezer is most often used to describe God being an ezer to human beings. It has two roots: 'to rescue, to save,' and 'to be strong.' The word is most frequently used to describe how God is an ezer to humanity. The word that accompanies ezer is kenegdo, which means 'in front of him,' 'opposite as to him' or 'corresponding as to him'. The word kenegdo denotes the idea of equality, a mirror image of a man, but the opposite of him. We would never interpret this phrase in other places in the Bible to mean God plays 'second fiddle' to humanity. It is as absurd to read Genesis 2: 18 in a way that diminishes or marginalises women, treating women as 'second fiddle' to men.

Finally, this reading concludes with the advice that a man should leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and that they become one. In patriarchal societies, men were expected to remain in their father's homes, and become their heirs and successors, while women were expected to leave their own homes and make their homes within the patriarchal family structures. Patriarchal expectations and male prerogatives are not only turned on their heads, but are abolished in this reading. This reading has been used too often to oppress women and to reinforce patriarchy, when, in fact, it means the very opposite in every imaginable way. *Patrick Comerford*].

Psalms 8

This is a psalm of praise of God as creator and of man as head of creation. Because of the modest means God uses ("babes and infants", v. 2), his majesty is even more evident. The "foes" may be the powers of chaos, as in Genesis 1:1. In vv. 3-4, the psalmist contrasts God's majesty with "the work of ... [his] fingers", especially humans, for whom he cares. ("Mortals" is ben'adam, literally son of man.) Vv. 7-9 recall Genesis 1:26-28: we share in God's dignity for he has conferred on us mastery of, and responsibility for, the rest of creation.

Hebrews 1:1-4;2:5-12

The author contrasts the old and new ways of God: that of "long ago" and that "in these last days" (1:2), our era, the one between Christ's first and second coming. God spoke then to the ancestors of Israel, our spiritual ancestors; in this era he speaks to us; then he spoke through "prophets" (1:1, including Moses); now he speaks through "a Son" (1:2), the one who is Son. A priest mediated and purified. Christ shared in (and mediated) creation of the "worlds" (in Jewish cosmology, the earth and the heavens) and is "heir" of God. Jesus ("He", 1:3) shows us something of God's greatness, and is an exact image, icon, of God. He continues to sustain all that is created. Jesus purified us of our sins through his death; he was then exalted in returning to the Father. Since before time and now he is "much superior to angels" (1:4), to other heavenly beings, being God.

In Judaism, angels controlled the world (2:5), and priests were seen as angels. The quotation in 2:6-8 is Psalm 8:4-6; to the author, who wrote Psalms is immaterial (2:6): the psalm is the word of God. These verses say humans are superior to nature, but here they are used to refer to Jesus, possibly because "human beings" was translated son of man in the contemporary translation.