

Sermon

This is the first time that the Church of England has celebrated this Festival of Creation in Christ, which was established by General Synod in July this year, and we're joining many other Christian denominations in a truly ecumenical act of witness.

The service is based on John's account of Jesus as present in the act of creation. The other gospels tend to treat Jesus as separate from God and present mostly from his human birth onwards. John reminds us that he was there as Jesus-God from the moment of creation. There is a lovely line in the hymn *The Servant King*, which captures this moment perfectly: Hands that flung stars into space. A beautiful image.

Eastern Orthodox churches have celebrated this moment of creation for centuries. It is a way of allowing ourselves to remember God's work in creation in Christ, and to pray for the wellbeing of everything that he drew into loving existence out

of nothing. Before anything else, there is God – the trinitarian God as Father Son and Holy Spirit. It is this God who gives life to plants and creatures, setting the universe in motion and energising all things with purpose and meaning. The act of creation out of nothing is part of today's gospel reading. Before what we understand as creation, there was only the Word, which is both *with* God and *is* God, pointing to the trinity. It is through the Word that life is created.

Word is made up of breath moving out of the body across the vocal chords. Breath, spirit-like, as the creating energy. So we can say that God as trinity breathes us into existence. But I wonder what the Word was that he breathed? I like to think that that word was Love. That his creation is Love. That everything that is created is pure Love.

I think of the Garden of Eden, in which God wanted all creation to live. He created it as perfection, with no knowledge of good and evil given to its creatures: only love for one another. It is only when Satan, the snake, comes and tempts

humans to disobey God that God's world looks different - indeed *becomes* different. The serpent introduces evil, the opposite of love, into the world view of the humans. And look where that has got us now! Wars, greed, neighbour against neighbour. Being cast out of Eden.

But God didn't entirely give up on us. He tried once more to overcome the evil of the world with love. He sent us Jesus, the Son who had helped him create the universe of pure love. And Jesus loved us so much that he agreed to be the sacrifice for all the bad things we do. Rather than letting us take the punishment for our sins, Jesus took it for us. An act of pure love.

And still God breathes his spirit over us – that same spirit and word of love. We all breathe the air around us; we see plants and animals also breathing that air; rocks being changed by contact with air; water as containing that same breath that God uttered. His spirit breath is everywhere: all we have to do is take it in.

What a fabulous gift! One of love and therefore life. Given freely, for no other reason than that is what the trinitarian God wanted to do. And if we are so surrounded – created, bathed in and sustained - by God's love, it seems to me that the least we can do is to return it. To the extent that we can, at least. And today's service is one way of doing that. We put aside all our niggles, hatreds and annoyances and remember, through this service, what God created us for, and what he created for us. And the Love he breathed in order to do so.