

# New Kilpatrick

Sermon

Job 38:1-15

27th October 2019

***Spirit... with all the words we use... and limit ourselves in using... may we find the gaps and silences... and there expand and grow beyond the limits... May we speak cautiously... and pause generously... in our search and seeking of you...***

During the summer... we were on holiday in Islay with our cousins and our parents... We always did that in the past... Then there were nine of us... living in a farmhouse that slept 6... Fabulous days... This year when we went we had 24... and *two* farmhouses... There were still more of us than beds... but once more they were fabulous days...

In the past... it could be quite noisy with 5 children and 4 adults... This year is was positively riotous with 15 adults... 8 children and 2 dogs... a couple of hot tubs and a bbq...

You will then perhaps appreciate the chance I took to go for a few walks... along the single track roads that are most of Islay... It was quiet...

And that was the one thing that really jumped out... creation... is quiet... Yes there is the buzzing of insects... yes there is the scurry of creatures in the undergrowth... yes there is the rolling of the waves... but that was all just soothing background... Generally... creation is quiet...

We tend to make a lot of noise... not just living... with all our technology... but we also make a lot of noise with our words... our arguments... our policies... our explanations... our creeds... and then a whole lot more noise as we disagree with those arguments, policies, explanations and creeds... No wonder we are the noisiest creatures on the planet...

And none of that helps us particularly... in living as spiritual beings... The noise of our words... and creeds... and debates... fill our faith too much... using those words not just to get the measure of our world... but power over people... as if in some way we can fully understand... and thus control it all...

But those who imagine such a scheme is worthwhile... really ought to read Job... because Job... and his comforters... are great with words... clever with explanations... noisily reasoning and trying to explain things...

But they fail...

And the size of that failure is seen at the end of the book... in the tremendous poetry given to God... who finally speaks... having been worn down by the loud explanations and noisy creeds of the comforters...

It goes on for four chapters... Have you ever been to where I keep the stores of hail... Have you ever walked on the floor of the ocean... Were you there when I shook the dawn into the day...

And Job... has no answer in response... but the point is not to see Job and his comforters fail... but to recognise... Job is our avatar... and the more noise we make in trying to explain... the more unlikely we are to find an explanation...

God... in response to Job's suffering... and his comforters arguments... responds with creation's poetry... God doesn't take each argument and answer it... God begins with the foundation of the earth... the morning stars... the command of the dawn... God begins where we do not understand... What is the start for God... is already way beyond what we will ever grasp... long explanations do no good... just hold silence...

And that's the point...

If we emphasis faith explores our spiritual sides... we ought to live more with the mystery... the wonder... broadening our experience... Words often simply replace the experience of living spiritually... and Job comes to recognise that... Where God begins is already beyond our grasp... live instead then with wonder... mystery... integrity...

But to live like that... makes us feel more vulnerable perhaps... living at the whim of a power we cannot grasp... be that nature or God or both...

Yet... in truth... living more spiritually... with wonder at the heart of things... might shape a safer place for us all... and our existence on the planet...

This week there was a report that by 2021... two years away... the destruction of the rainforest of the Amazon... will be so great... because of fires and Bolsonaro's populist policies... the great forest will not be able to generate enough rain to keep it going... And when that happens... a forest that produces half the oxygen we breath... the lungs of the planet... will no longer clean that air... CO2 will be released in ever greater quantities and global warming will be out of control... in two years time!...

Now many will argue against that two year date... that the amount of the amazon rainforest destroyed will not reach that level... not in two years... but perhaps in ten... or thirty years... It's just the timing people debate... not the pattern...

And perhaps because we live noisily arguing over policies and populism that gets us no where... and make a lot of noise about denial... imagining short term economic power is actually more important than long term climate stability... we are exactly where Job's comforters are... making a lot of noise failing to explain everything...

Where we need to be... is already facing the music with Job... silenced with our explanations... recognising... the invitation to live rather with wonder... find our capacity to be in awe of creation again...

For where God begins... we have already failed to get to... We lose the wonder by words and doctrine... If we live with the wonder... acknowledge the mystery... that changes how we respond to our world... for wonder is the beginning of respect... and respect... regard... consideration... kindness... attentiveness to creation... will save us...

And perhaps that can start right here at creation's table... where bread and wine... the grain and fruit of the earth... begins our journey into wonder...

This is our central story... and none of us can explain it... Many try... All fail... Even Jesus didn't explain it...

Bread and wine is a mystery... a sacrament... yet even here we've created too much noise about having to understanding... reciting creeds and repeating doctrine... contradicting each other... none of which can make sense...

How we approach this table... is exactly how we ought to approach our world... Treating both with wonder... for wonder is the beginning of respect... as Job begins to find out...

Come in wonder... There is no explanation big enough... no understanding thorough enough that we can grasp... It is a mystery... and letting the mystery live... is the beginning of respect... of attentiveness to each other...

Come to creation... not with noisy manifestos or economic theory or populist arguments... it is much bigger than any of these can offer... as Job now knows... Come in wonder... Wonder is the beginning of respect... kindness to creation...

Creation is quiet... compared to all the noise we make... in our arguing and incivility... The table is a place of peace... compared to all the arguing we do around it... and creation's table... furnished with grape and grain... waits for us... to still ourselves... and our world... and meet the mystery... the awe... wonder... for wonder is the beginning of respect... and wonder will save us...

So be it