

Iona Communion

11th September 2016

6.30

The Table Setting

Everything begins with dust
Everything begins with the stoor of the world
with what is left after creation
after the chaos becomes cosmos

Who knows what it was like
after that explosion of imagination
on that first day

Swirls of dust clouds,
flashes of light,
and once the dust settles
the soot of creation
lying there
resting
waiting
longing for what it seems to know will happen
where the creator
scoops it up
this dust
this left-over of creation's first day
and with holy breath
with breath filled with imagination
and intent
and desire
breathes
a love song

into the dust
a gentle chorus
as soft as the morning

and the motes spiral
and dance
and float
and rise into the air
in slow motion holiness
buoyed in this breath of creation

but they do not fall to where they started
as they roll
They circle round as the light catches them
that rebounds across them
and increases
and attracts
and they spin towards each other
beginning to take shape
and form,
and imagine...
a being
a being made of dust and breath
and filled with starlight

and there
in the creator's hand
stands
newly made
with brand new lungs
filling themselves
with the freshest air
and with eyes
filled with the light of something never before known

stands
the first,
the first love of God
and every atom of stardust still
dances
in the full knowledge
of that truth

Hymn 150 Sing to God with gladness, all creation

Dust and breath gathers us here
bread and wine
the grain and the fruit
of the land
of the soil
of the first dust of creation

yet each filled with the breath of the creation
each filled with the story of heaven
every morsel
holding all the light of grace
and redemption
and love

This is no ordinary table
though what lies here looks very ordinary
but it is not

These are elements of the dust
and full of the breath of God
for this is a sign of Jesus
among us
between us
God's own breath

in bread and wine

So let us go back to the beginning
and tell two stories tonight
the first of creation
and then the alpha and omega
of all creation

**Reading Genesis 2 from v4b
Communion (Luke 22 from v14)**

Prayer

This place has always been here
before building and stone
before church and institution
before Jesus walked the earth
this place has always been here
waiting for this night
and so we gather here in it O God
for all that time has shaped this space
through each age
and every story
and come now to break this bread
and pour this wine
this dust of the earth
and hear your breath O God
breathe into these broken pieces
grace and redemption

And we celebrate here
the truth
that you, the first of creation
hold this latest moment tonight

the whole length of creation
held in love
in grace
in giving of self for another
as the first human did then
a side, a rib
to the story tonight
of Jesus giving self in love

So this is creation's meal
and we give thanks for it
a meal of earthly dust and holy breath
of first and last
of giving and renewing
and we give back
our thanks

So be it
Amen

Hymn 177 O God of blessings (v1,2 & 5,6)

Normally we retell the story of the institution of the Lords Supper, retelling the story of Jesus at table. But the story is greater, bigger and older than that, for this story we repeat tonight began with the first breath in all creation.

It was the first day. The universe had just exploded into being, and as the dust settled, and the light got used to shining and the land lay bedded down, all was still... (pause)

Very still... (pause)

The sky was newly pink and blue, the ground red, the light bright and the world lay there for how long?... (pause)

And if you listened long enough, and there was plenty time to listen, you would hear a slow breathing. It would have been the first wind. The steady rhythmic repetitive breathing, of the creator's breath.

It had been quite a whirlwind so far, quite literally. The spirit had got out and was set free and from that primal chaos, she had jived and waltzed, hot-shoe shuffled and tangoed with it all and by some holy magic, pieces came together, carbon and silicon, hydrogen and oxygen, nitrogen and iron and as if they knew what they were doing, and had been waiting for this moment, they bound together and there, now in the stillness, stretched the universe.

And it was very still... (pause)

God was catching the holy breath so all you could hear was the in, out of breathing in the heavens.

And in the stillness everything waited... (pause)

...until God scooped up a handful of the dust that floated through the universe, and in the last gasp of the day, filled with imagination and hope, desire and longing, forgiveness and love, God breathed into the dust...

...and watched, not knowing what would happen, wondering what love would do now, the dust swirled, turned, and there filled with God's own breath, and imagination, overflowing with God's own love and desire, and brim full of hope and redemption, was a human,

and God saw that it was good...

and bad...

for in a flash of a second God saw the trouble this was going to be: the highs and the lows, the moments of wonder and the depth of despair, the love and the anger, the moments of marvel and the moment of pain.

And God knew, this was the beginning of a relationship that was going to pull and tear and struggle and grow, stretching the relationship God had with humanity, but would be the closest God would be to the creation.

And so it happened to come true, yet despite the highs and lows of this growing relationship, the love that was the breath of God, remained stronger than everything else through all creation...

even the day another God-breathed and God-filled human walked the earth and was betrayed...

even the night when the basics of that creation, bread and wine, were broken and poured and shared...

even the moment loved seemed to die...

yet love, remained, and was reborn and new holy breath was breathed into a holy cadaver, and the new Adam, the new gardener, the new creation was born

dust and breath
death and life
tombs and gardens

Gethsemane and Emmaus

So let us gather again round this dust of the earth and with God's holy breath bring life to these symbols that speak of such salvation and redemption and share the good news that transformation, renewal, redemption, resurrection still brings new life to the dry dust of living.

Come to the table of creation and share the breath of God...

Hymn 726 When we are living

It was that night
the betrayal night
when the darkness thought it had won over the day
when lies were told
and truths exaggerated
deals done
and love forgotten

The night when everyone thought more of self than others
except one
whose very words
still clung to the light
dim and faint though it seemed
the flame did not go out

And he cast a spell over the bread and wine
casting them in a new story
moving them from passover intent to heaven's new covenant
and before the words ran out
he spoke the last of their kind
generous,
hopeful

loving
for the night was riding in

“This bread
it is my body
a symbol of what is round the corner for all of us
My body broken
for you”

And somewhere beyond
there was a shudder
as the darkness heard these words of self-giving
and the light flared a penultimate time

and Jesus passed the bread
and the darkness made it's final efforts to extinguish the light

But under such pressure
Jesus found yet more words
more giving of self

“This wine, he said
This wine is my blood
a symbol of what is still wrapped up in hope
It is a new covenant
in this darkness,
a new covenant
that promises more than this”

And the effort had him
fall silent
more silent than ever before
but there was a crack in the darkness
a crack that could not be mended

but the darkness thought it was dark enough to cover it up
but the darkness never did sit right again
along that fissure

And the silence came
and the darkness scoffed
and Jesus left the disciples
with bitter wine on their lips
and unleavened bread scattered across the table

This was the messy birth
of the new covenant

Prayer

Here is everything:
the whole of creation
in dust and breath
the grain and grape
holding the holy story
of grace and redemption
the whole of creation
and we give thanks

and we hear
in these elements
hints of the promise
and echoes of eternity
in the song they hold
the angel song

holy, holy, holy
god of power and might

heaven and earth are full of your glory
hosanna in the highest
blessed is the one who comes in God's name
hosanna in the highest

So be it

Fraction

Peace

Hymn 674 Halleluya! We sing your praises

Blessing