

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn: 66. Great is thy faithfulness

Reading: James 1.17-19

Prayers:

Last week we heard James telling us that God does not tempt us or try to catch us out! He's not a God who's against us but the God who is entirely for us.

Today we hear James telling us the consequences of trusting in a God who desires our good. It is this:

“every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above.”

He's saying that there is nothing that is of worth, nothing that brings joy and delight, that is not ultimately God's gift to us.

Nor, he says, is this true just on an occasional basis.

The one he describes as ***“Father of lights”***, who gives us the sun and stars, is the God in whom ***“there is no variation or shadow due to change.”***

There aren't many verses in James which have inspired our hymn writers but this saying inspired Thomas Chisholm to write the hymn we read at the beginning of our service:

***Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with thee.”***

Of course, the question has to be, “Is this true?”

For someone who accepts Darwin's basic account of how change has come about through natural selection. I also have to listen to the many pundits who wish to claim that Darwin's insights toll the death of any belief in a Creator God. Others will ask, if this world is so good why is there so much that we experience as evil, as destructive of our human good?

Two quick responses!

First, most scientist accept that the universe has its origins because of factors which are beyond time and space. Now, time and space came into being when the universe began. The laws which govern the way this universe came into beginning existed before creation itself.

To speak of a God of wisdom and love who brought this universe into being through the laws he laid down and through his will does not seem to be unreasonable.

Secondly, I suspect it was impossible for God to create human beings who could make real choices about how they were to live in a different kind of world from the one in which we live. Alongside this, we notice that Jesus sees that which causes us harm as being opposed to what God wants. He, himself, brings healing, change and hope to the world.

Nor is this world intended to be the end of the story. The Bible says the end of our story lies in God, and in the eternity which exists beyond time and space. James hints at this when he speaks of how God

“in fulfilment of his purpose gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creation.”

It's interesting to note that though James describes God as “he” it is only the female who actually give birth to anything. It's a reminder that to describe God as either masculine or feminine is always dangerous!

That aside, James is saying that those who allow themselves to be caught up in God's love are born again (given new birth) into that life which eternal.....

Astonishingly, what God seems to desire is that all people should come to share in this new life. Eternal life is not for the few but for the many!

Here is a vision of life which, if true, is glorious in its range and scope

- a wisdom and love that brings all things into being
- a God who loves us and desires only our good
- a God who in Jesus gives us new birth into a life which is eternal, as we are caught up in the loving purposes of God for his creation.

But is it true and, if it is, how shall we respond?

AMEN