

Creator God, may we discern your hand in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit and enable us to share our lives with Jesus. Amen.

- Listen to some verses again from today's readings and think about what emotions they convey for you.
- The first one is the longest, from our first reading, from the Book of Proverbs. I guess you may not know it very well, so listen and see what it says to you.
 - *²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker'.*
- What did you get out of that? I felt something of the enjoyment of God in his creative energy, great, broadbrush, sweeping strokes, drawing circles on the face of the deep, stabilizing the skies above, hemming in the seas to their limits.
 - The 'I' in the reading is Wisdom, often interpreted as Jesus, the Word of God, who crops up again in our Gospel reading in a minute. 'The master worker' with his colleague, his Son, Jesus Christ, intimately involved in the creation of the cosmos.
- Of course, I hope it doesn't need to be said, this is a story, a sort of dramatic play if you like, about how the world, humanity, all creation is divinely moulded. It doesn't pretend to be literal truth. It is not trying to be at odds with evolution or any scientific theory. It is a statement in beautiful, colourful, life-giving terms about how God, the Christian Trinitarian God, is at the beginning and the end of everything. Listen to it again and marvel!
 - *²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker'.*
- Our second extract is much shorter. Also, from Proverbs, it continues almost where the first one left off. What emotions do you pick up?
 - *³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.'*
- Well enjoyment is surely there again, amidst the rejoicing. If you look closely, you'll see that this is Wisdom, Jesus, the Word, rejoicing. To me it says something more than enjoyment however. In the delight he feels for humanity, there's a very definite undertone of dedicated love. The loving pride an artist feels for something he is really pleased with.
 - *³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.'*
 - My grandson ran into the kitchen to give Helen a birthday card he had made her last week. A card he was really really pleased with. A card he almost didn't know he could do. The smile on his face as he gave it to her, said it all. Rejoicing, pride, enjoyment and dedicated love.
- So this play in which we are some of the actors, has God, Father and Son and surely Spirit, as some of its key players. Does it speak to you of love, of enthusiastic enjoyment, of creative energy and of rejoicing in creation?
- Our third short extract will be much better known to you. It's from John chapter 1 verse 14. Our Gospel reading. Once again think about what emotions it conveys.
 - *'¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us'.*
- It's very well known. So well-known that it might lose some of its emotive power. There's the Word, Jesus; Wisdom according to the Book of Proverbs. God becoming a human, just like you. God, becoming part of his creation, like some sort of surreal film where the artist steps into his own painting. I don't know about you but that says something to me about community, God is now part of our human community and we have been elevated to his. Sharing. Communion and community. *'¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us'.*
- How does this divine play chime with your experience of reality? Is it something with which you can make daily connections? Sharing with God? Delight, community, and dedicated love? God's pride in his creation? Is it something that you reserve strictly for Sundays? That you compartmentalize for a box marked religion but that you don't find has much to say about daily life where you are concerned for your friend who has Covid and worried about whether your son's job will be safe?
- Does this divine play have anything to say that helps with the high levels of anxiety that have been around for the last months, or the tedium of a January lockdown or the hope of salvation coming through vaccines and falling infection rates?

- Does this divine drama, which speaks of God's love and delight in his creation, connect with the state of creation today with rising sea levels and temperatures, melting icecaps and permafrost, species extinction, rain forest reduction, air pollution, micro-plastics in the ocean, over-fishing, intensive farming, thoughtless use of pesticides and antibiotics, extreme weather, and communities forced off their land because of drought or flood or ethnic cleansing?
- And if God's creative story is a play, what sort of play is it A fairy story? ? A tragedy? A sort of dark comedy? A detective story?
- Given the parlous nature of life at the moment it's surely surprising that so many people think of God's drama as nothing more than a fairy story. Until they change their views, they will not have any reliable way to cope with the crisis. Is the problem that we think the main character in the play of life is ourselves, not God? He is not there, and it is down to us and we are not doing a very good job. The fairy story is really a tragedy!
- But people don't like to think of life as a tragedy, ending in disaster. Where the hope is extinguished. However, when we are faced with the writing on the wall in that long list of catastrophes that I cheerfully related just now it seems that is where we are heading.
 - We're beginning to make efforts to restore the balance. America has thankfully come back into the climate change treaty and you and I are becoming more aware about how our actions and decisions affect the future of the world we live in, but is it not going to be too little, too late?
 - Are we not heading towards unreturnable disaster, paying the price for spoiling God's creation? Death and destruction due to human sin?
- What we haven't mentioned so far is anything about an event which occurs somewhere deep in Act 4 of this play, known as the cross. But it is hinted at in the John reading today, for instance when he writes, *'But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God'*.
 - That's the power of the cross. The cross which gives the possibility of reconciliation and sharing with God once again for human beings like you and me who spend our time drifting away from God, the main actor in the drama, and off into the wings.
- You and I are children of God. After all, we have received him and believed in his name. Does that mean that we'll be ok whereas those who don't believe, won't? Is the play some sort of dark comedy which we watch with a wry smile as hosts of unbelievers plunge into destruction and the earth destroys itself whilst we are wafting in a heavenly new creation?
- I don't think that is what this morning's readings imply either. In fact I don't think that is what much of the bible implies when read prayerfully. The whole point of this morning's readings is about sharing and community. And an artist doesn't normally destroy something he cherishes. Love unites rather than divides. It heals rather than condemns. And God clearly loves the whole of creation, not just you and me!
- It is only God who can save his creation. The love and enjoyment which he shows, the delight he and his Son exhibit in their creative energy, is our guarantee that he will. And the seal of that promise is death and resurrection. The seal of love. The seal of power. The seal of hope. The seal of new life!
- So maybe the divine drama is more of a detective story, as we discern slowly just how much God is intimately involved in the nitty gritty of everyday life? And maybe we haven't got to the end of the play yet? We don't know how it will end. Like all good detective stories, there will be a satisfying ending. Because of the nature of God we have discerned today, we can rest assured it will be a good ending. But what we don't know is how we will get there or what it will be like.
 - But one thing is sure. The journey for us will be a lot smoother and will not contain nearly so many nasty shocks if we align ourselves with the values of God now rather than be forced into it later.
- And those values focus today on delight in creation; love for humanity; and sharing and community.
- So the message from the readings today if you want the next n years, where n is a natural number, to be part of the adventure, part of the detective story heading towards resolution, rather than a long worrying grind as the writing on the wall of climate change gets ever more obvious and frightening, ask yourself the following questions and challenge yourself about how you respond.
 1. How do you delight in creation and what effect does it have on the decisions you make in life?
 2. How do you express your love for all humanity rather than just the people close to you?
 3. What can you point to that demonstrates your shared community, not just with other human beings but with God the creator and his sharing Son?
- If you can point to some creative answers to these questions, then it is likely that you are beginning to understand your part in the play, and indeed, the ending might be not so much of a surprise! Amen.