

First Sunday in Lent 14 Feb 2016

Deuteronomy: 26: 1-11

Psalm 91

Romans: 10: 4-13

Luke 4: 1-15

[Lent 1C Feb 14 2016](#) Textweek

The scientific world is full of excitement with the discovery this week of 'gravitational waves'; and most of us are not yet aware of the importance of such a discovery; but every leap forward in our knowledge and understanding of the universe gives us a new worldview and that itself is an indication of our growing; it is a sign of change and a reminder that in every moment we have the capacity to evolve. We are reminded, and can more fully appreciate, that "I AM making all things new" **is** a lived reality, even when we are not fully aware of where we are going or into what are we growing and becoming.

On this first Sunday of Lent we might compare the excitement in the scientific world with the attitude and expectation of the Church as we begin our forty day journey of discovery toward Easter.

For well over two thousand years, since the first telling of the forty days in the wilderness much of the Church has, and will again, repeat a tradition that has reduced the biblical narrative to the giving up of chocolate and the eating of fish on Fridays.

However the narrative of Lent is as exciting as, and most probably even more exciting than, the story of gravitational waves, for it too is a narrative of discovery; it serves to bring into reality the new worldview that Jesus reveals to all.

The Old Testament reading speaks of Abraham and the New Testament reading makes reference to Moses; both of these iconic characters represent changes in the evolution of humanity, although in their traditional Hebraic setting they are used to describe the evolution of only the Jewish peoples.

Abraham represents the movement from a tribal existence of separate communities worshipping and sacrificing to local gods, and the dawn of consciousness that perceives only one God, one divine creator and sustainer of all peoples from every tribe. It is also an important evolution, as represented in the story of Abraham and Isaac, from the

primitive practices of sacrifice to the offering of first fruits in response to the abundance that we have all received.

In a similar fashion, Moses represents the movement from enslavement into empowerment and describes through the Exodus that evolution that brings us together into one place, into *"a land flowing with milk and honey"*.

Likewise, the narrative of Lent is another story of re-creation and discovery; it tells of Jesus discovering himself, becoming enlightened. This is the 'feet on the ground' reality that we encountered last week in the icon of the transfiguration.

Jesus discovered a new reality in his Lenten journey; a reality that saw an evolution beyond the traditional understanding of the Jewish worldview; he found in reality *"there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all"*.

In this realisation, the understanding of Abraham, of Moses and of the whole Hebrew tradition takes a leap forward into a new worldview. And yet, two thousand years on, the Hebrew people hold on to their primitive tradition, and the church tradition holds on to that same Hebraic tradition, the enlightenment of Lent is still to fully realised and appreciated.

And in holding on to those primitive understandings we see outcomes that bear no relation to the narratives that we purport to understand as 'the word of God'.

Binyamin Netanyahu has announced his intention to "surround all of Israel with a fence" to protect the country from infiltration by both Palestinians and the citizens of surrounding Arab states, whom he described as "wild beasts". [Guardian 10/02/16]
Is this the fulfilment of promise: *"The LORD brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey"*

And there are many other examples of holding on to primitive, unenlightened narratives, one from the USA:

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump called Monday for a "total and complete" ban on Muslims entering the United States [The Washington Post]

And a bit closer to home, we've all seen the news, it is described as 'the world's biggest refugee crisis since the second world war' more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015. Winter has not stemmed the flow of people - with 80,754 people reaching Europe by sea since the start of 2016.

Well here's a quote from a few weeks ago:

"We've done what it takes to *stop the boats*," says *Peter Dutton* our minister for immigration.

As we hear these narratives, we can so easily see that the enlightenment found in the wilderness of Lent is yet to be realised; "*there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all*"

And here we are on the first Sunday of Lent, ready to make our journey of discovery, and even with all the same fears and doubts associated with 'letting go' we do still seek to 'repent'; in our deepest integrity we actually desire that which Jesus has revealed.

The gospel today really marks the beginning of a new worldview; and came out of a time of self-reflection for Jesus, a wrestling with who he was, and so too a wrestling with who we are.

He knew the story of evolution from Abraham through Moses, he knew, like we know the orientation of God, the creation of life birthed in love; he trusted, in that which could not be seen and yet which somehow is able to be perceived, like Einstein, and like the writer of today's psalm..

And in a time of prayer, contemplation, a time in the wilderness, the landscape that lies between what is and what can be, he saw a new reality.

He did not see old age; rather he discovered the abundance of life.

He did not see that religious laws were the governing influence; rather he discovered "*that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes*".

And he did not see a world divided by selfishness; rather he discovered "*there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all*"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.⁶ And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

The vast and growing gap between rich and poor has been laid bare in a new Oxfam report showing that the 62 richest billionaires own as much wealth as the poorer half of the world's population.

The richest 1% now has as much wealth as the rest of the world combined, according to Oxfam.

It takes cash and assets worth \$68,800 to get into the top 10%, and \$760,000 to be in the 1%. That means that if you own an average house in Perth [London] without a mortgage, you are probably in the 1%.

Jesus reveals another leap forward in the evolution of humanity, a worldview discovered in that first Lent; just as scientists sought to prove the insight of Einstein, so we, in our claim to be Christians seek to prove the insight of Christ....

In our journey of discovery, let us be mindful of those who widen gaps, and those who build fences, and be mindful that we too share their fears... let us also seek the enlightenment of Christ and so become part of a new and enlightened reality.