

How will it all end?

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor
Revd Linda Anchell
Advent Sunday, 27th November 2005

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; Mark 13:24-37

"The more I read the papers
the less I comprehend
The world and all its capers
and how it all will end."

(George Gershwin)

How it all will end —

All our readings today have some reference to the end, to "how it all will end"
Isaiah's community seeks the revelation of God; they are in such a calamitous
situation that they seek him even in earthquake and fire.

The psalm is a plea for God to come down, to restore them;

Paul writes to the Corinthians who are a community waiting for the second coming;
the "revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But it is in Mark that we have more than a human response to disaster.

This chapter in Mark has begun with prophecy of disaster
Jerusalem will be destroyed

(and it was)

The early Christian community will be beaten and brought to trial
(and they were)

But here in these later verses
an even greater prophecy

Darkened sun, falling stars

The Coming of the Son of Man.

Not a prophecy of Destruction, but a Promise of the End,
of the Completion, the bringing together of all things...

This ending concerns the Son,
the one for whom the Corinthians were waiting,
the one for whom this Advent, for whom we wait.

about this "second coming" Jesus says:

"Heaven and Earth will pass away
but my words will not pass away".

BUT

Last year, Christmas came.

Some 2,000 years ago Jesus was born.

What is it that happened?

"Heaven and earth" he said, "will pass away..."

We stand on the earth
and look to the heavens...

We have come from the ground beneath our feet,
intimately connected to this world in our very being.

Recently I read a description of prayer as being that which connects us to the world.
"prayer is the attitude in which one holds oneself toward the world. It is a radical
openness — the desire to form some sort of communion with all that surrounds me. It
is the willingness to love — the response to the challenge to step beyond the borders

and fears that constrain me. Prayer is without limit — it is all-embracing — ... It is synonymous with love. It is synonymous with life." (thank you Chris A.)

We are intimately connected to this earth.

What Christmas tells us is that God is intimately connected with this world, this earth, as well!

and not only earth, but the heavens also

It was Fred Hoyle who worked out that all the elements were forged in the stars; we are made of star stuff!

I heard him here at the ANU when he had accepted the Big Bang theory of the beginning of the Universe. I had always preferred his "Steady State" theory, it seemed better that the universe "always was and always will be..." but, it was wrong. and Fred Hoyle accepted the theory to which he had given the sarcastic name "Big Bang"... a universe with a beginning, and... with an end?

But his best work was published in 1946 when he worked out that all the elements came from stars. He and his team later produced details that fitted the whole periodic table of elements! Everything (that we know of) was made in the stars.

BUT to return to theology, away from cosmology:

There is a sense in which the day of the Lord has already come.

We are in it. At Christmas we speak of Emmanuel: God with us

God is with us,

and we are already a part of the new heaven and the new earth.

as we are a part of the old heaven and the old earth.

There will be wars and rumours of wars,

we are still human

We still have the human task of bringing justice

and healing the land

But we have the words; "my words" Jesus said,

that will never pass away...

What is it that the Christ Child brings into the world?

Rob used a word the other week: "Valorised".

In coming to be a part of the creation, the creator "Valorises" it;

God gives value to it.

In living his life, and teaching, and dying, Jesus brings something else something bigger into this earth, these heavens...

God gives value by being in it, incarnated in the creation...

On Wednesday the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a lecture to the Islamic University in Islamabad. He spoke about Christianity and part of what he said is:

"Jesus thus shows us what a human life is like when it is lived as it should be. But he does more. Because of his perfect obedience and goodness, he is able to offer himself to rejection and death, so that by his death there may be a restored relationship of love between God and humanity. Christians say that Jesus, as he goes to the cross, accepts all the suffering that is the consequence for human beings of their rebellion and weakness. ... Because he accepts this suffering as an act of love, he changes what is possible for human beings. They need no longer despair that they can never obey or love God.

... Jesus creates a new kind of fellowship, a relationship with himself that is going to be stronger than the deep currents pulling us towards sin and rebellion. St Paul says that this means there is a 'new creation'. We are able to start over again. In the life of

Jesus, the completeness of divine love breaks into a world in which human beings are not free and not in contact with that love. By approaching his death as an act of love for human beings, ...

he 'opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers',

to use the words of very old Christian hymn."

"In the life of Jesus, the completeness of divine love breaks into" the world...

Heaven and Earth will pass away BUT MY WORDS will never pass away."

these words are not just the scratches on a page, not just the breath coming through the throat,

its deeper than that, bigger...

the divine love, the love of god, the connectedness between everything, the coming together of everything,

and it is community, the community the Corinthians were experiencing

and it is a creation that is given value and knows its value..

so now, let us worship that god who comes to us,

and may we give to the whole of god's creation.

the value that is given to us,

Amen.

For more on Fred Hoyle: A recent ABC Science Show programme

Chris A's article on prayer.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's lecture at Islamabad.

Was it Fred Hoyle or George Gamow who coined the term "Big Bang"?

The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (ed Alan Bullock and Stephen Trombley) in an article by JDB (John Barrow) on "big bang theory" says the term was coined by Sir Fred Hoyle in a 1950 BBC radio broadcast. He is known most for his "dismissal of the Big Bang, (that's his derogatory term) and his espousal of the steady state theory." (see his biographer on the Science Show). But a New College Lecture about the Big Bang, available on the New College site, attributes the term to George Gamow. "In 1946 George Gamow (1904-1968), a Russian-born American physicist, proposed that the primeval fireball, the "Big Bang", was an intense concentration of pure energy." (Page updated 07/24/2011).