

I'm doing things a little differently so a few words of context before the readings.

One of my strong contentions about our Christian spiritual formation is this.

When it comes to cultivating a spirit of awe, reverence and wonder in our hearts and imaginations, one of the most under-appreciated words in all of Holy scripture is the word ALL.

My contention is if we want to truly experience the creative life-giving presence of God in ALL aspects of our lives, then we have to fully understand the all-encompassing presence of God in ALL things. We cannot experience the FULLNESS God if we don't NOTICE the ALLNESS of God. That scripture gives us.

With this in mind I've picked a number of passages that show us just HOW dominant this truth is expressed in scripture. So listen carefully to just how BIG the God of the bible is. Appreciate the **All-ness** and the **Everything-ness** of God's all-pervading presence.

Can I suggest that as you hear these sacred words, note the words or phrases that most resonate with you, for whatever reason.

And do remember that when we say God, we are always talking about the Triune God our faith. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is no separation in the Trinity. One God in 3 Divine expressions.

SERMON – AWE AND WONDER – CREATION

Well, I'm one week back from our 16 days in Bali with all our family from the UK to celebrate our daughter Tamara's wedding. And to be honest, I'm still basking in the beauty of it.

I feel as if we had a glorious reminder of the profound truth we've just heard.

The life-giving presence of God who is **over all, through all, and in all**.

So, let's begin by immediately diving into these beautiful scripture pearls of wisdom so that we can let their profound truth really sink in. Let the full magnitude of how the ALL-NESS AND EVERYTHING-NESS of God's power and presence permeates and infuses ALL THINGS.

And let's start with the words Judy brought us from John 1.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him ... is life, and this life is the light of all people.

This is John echoing the big picture truth given in Genesis 1 right at the very beginning of the bible. The beautiful description of how God the Creator brings into being, ALL THINGS and declares them very good.

But John is now revealing that Christ the Word (as one part of the Holy Trinity) is also there at the beginning, with God, as the creator of ALL THINGS. And what has come into being through Him is **life and light**.

And if this concept of Christ as '**the Word**' there at the beginning of time ... feels a tad difficult to get your head round... just think of **Christ the Word** as simply this. The beautiful heart and mind at the source of **all** created reality.

Which means that in the nitty gritty of your life and mine – everything you and I experience that brings **life and light**- is created from this Trinitarian expression of God. As John says... **Not one thing, exists outside of this truth.**

And like St John, St Paul understood this deepest of all truths completely.

Verse of the Day **Colossians 1:16** "**For in him all things were created... and in him all things hold together**

And Paul engraves this truth onto our imaginations with these words in Ephesians 4:6. **There is One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**"

You simply cannot be more all-pervading than **over, through and in all things**. What Paul is telling us, is that God is present within the fabric of ALL creation. This is the God says Paul, '**who made the world and everything in it**'.

And I love how Paul tells us what this actually means for the reality of our life experience. Because none of these lofty thoughts mean anything if they don't transform our human experience. Acts 17:28: "**For in God we live and move and have our being.**"

So straight away doesn't this give you and I a very good reason for the spirit of awe and wonder to be our default mode of being? Because right at the very beginning of **all things**, God sets into motion a world that at its core carries the Divine imprint of all that brings LIFE and LIGHT. The true beautiful and good.

In a world that can be so full of the ugly and the inexplicable, you and I can live and move and have our being with the assurance that **goodness and light** is the original starting point.

Again, let's take a moment just to let this truth take root in our hearts.

That every experience you and I ever have in our entire lives - the joyful parts, the sad parts, the ordinary and everyday parts, all of these take place inside the reality of God's all-pervading divine presence. This easily the deepest truth you and I can possibly know.

And the Psalmist totally gets this truth. Psalm 139:7-8: "**Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you're there, if I make my bed in the depths, you're there.**" ... There is no physical or spiritual place where God is absent.

So let's ask the important questions that arise from all of this.

- What are the implications of this truth for every circumstance of your life and mine?
- If we truly grasp the enormity of what scripture is telling us, how should this shape our spiritual formation? How should it elevate and enliven our human experience in relationship with God.

What it should help us to do, is to wake up each morning enabled and empowered to live lives imbued with a spirit of Awe, Reverence and Wonder.

Which is why I love the response we hear from the psalmist in today's reading.

When he realises there's nowhere to go where God **isn't** present, he responds with one of my favourite scripture verses. **14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.**

Isn't this a beautiful realisation and declaration of '**astonished gratitude**'.

As a quick aside, I read this verse to someone recently and they flinched at the words '**fearfully made**'. They'd suffered as a child from bad Christian teaching that produced the spirit of fear in them and are still carrying the hurt.

Which is tragic, because what the psalmist is really saying ... is that you and I are created to be inspired by the sacredness and the miracle of ALL life. Not live in terror of Him. Created to feel **reverence, awe, and deep respect** for God's power. Created to delight in what God delights. To sing from our hearts and imaginations. **Your works are wonderful Lord, I know this full well.**

So what might this truth look like for you in the struggles and challenges of life?

We all know that this world that can grind us down and dull our spiritual imaginations.

As Jeremy said in the newsletter last week. Our eyes can grow dull and we can stop **noticing**.

And I believe it's this '**noticing**' that is crucial. **Noticing** the presence of God in all things and every circumstance of our lives.

As St. Augustine puts it. **"He who does not see God everywhere may not see God anywhere."**

And poet Gunilla Norris. **"When we pay attention, whatever we are doing becomes holy, because God is present in it."** –

As I said at the beginning, to experience the FULLNESS of God, we need to notice the ALLNESS of God. The more we pay attention and recognise the creative presence of God in **all things** the more we can cultivate a spirit of awe, reverence and wonder for our lives.

And on this Father Day, I want to share my own fathers experience of exactly this.

As I said, I'm one week back from our 16 days in Bali with all our family from the UK. The whole experience was a sacred one – but of course the high point was the wedding itself.

And I want to share a little of the ceremony itself with you, especially the moment of walking my daughter Tamara down the aisle.

Because I made a point of reminding myself to take the time to **'notice'**. And because I did, I could see so many threads of my life that God had woven into the tapestry of this one sacred moment.

As I mentioned last week the music Tam and Jack picked was a beautiful instrumental version of the Beatles ***Here Come the Sun***.

As Tamara, myself and the bridesmaids stood ready for our entrance, this music began. And the second it did I felt an incredible sense of God's holy presence. A sense of the transcendent just fell over all of us. I looked at Tamara, she was holding my arm and shaking a little - and she said to me, *"I'm nervous Dad."* And I said. *"Just savour it, Tam. Take in the moment and cherish it."*

The bridesmaids stepped out one by one, and then it was our turn. And as we started our walk towards the waiting people; I really did feel as if time was moving in slow motion. And just to give you a better sense of things I've put together a brief 30 second clip showing these key moments set to the entrance music.

This isn't about me showing you my wedding pics, it's about my recent **'lived experience'** of how **'when we pay attention, whatever we are doing becomes holy, because God is present in it.'**

SHOW VIDEO CLIP

Here's my takeaway from this precious moment that I still carry.

Because I took the time to notice and pay attention – God was showing me just how much his presence has been with me throughout my life. Over, all, through all and in all.

Because as I walked forward with Tamara, I saw my dear friend Rev Iain Gow waiting to marry Tam and Jack. This is the guy I met at our daughters nursery when Tamara was 3 years old and his son Matt was in the same class. And Matt was there at the wedding.

Many of you know the story but many don't

Iain and I were just 2 Dads at the school gate who got chatting. I found out he was a priest and he started pestering Kim and I to come to Alpha. We eventually succumbed to Iain's persistence (and the Spirit's chasing) and started our Christian journey at St Martins in Birmingham in 2000.

Very long story short Iain was married to a kiwi Linda (also at the wedding) and they came to Aotearoa NZ in 2006. Iain became the Vicar of this church in 2009 and invited us to consider coming here to do ministry. After many obstacles we felt the calling and eventually arrived.

In other words, the man marrying our daughter is the man who helped change the entire course of my life.

I wouldn't have come to faith at St Martins, and I wouldn't be here at St George's if not for Iain. And of course, God. Iain also the godfather of Tamara and he baptised her aged 7 just after we all came to faith.

And the only possible response to this movement of God in my life – is one of astonished gratitude and a deep sense of awe, reverence and wonder.

I also had the joy of sharing this moment with all of my 6 grown-up children and my grandchildren.

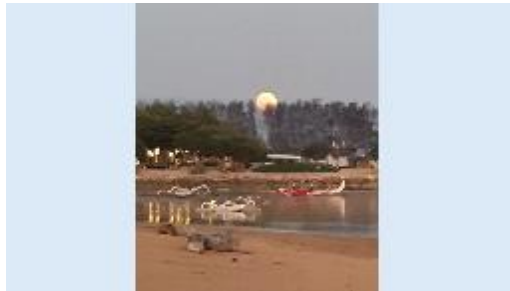
Again, many of you know, many don't, that I went through a very painful marriage break up over 40 years ago with all the hurt this inevitably brings. But we've always been incredibly close, and this day was a joyous reminder of just how much the healing presence of God has been present in all things. Even in the tears of things.

And I have to say how special it was to see my wife Kim dressed in an Indian lehenga, because it's her heritage and Tamara's.

And what can I say about the song *Here Comes the Sun*. I could do a whole talk about how this song has weaved its way through my life. The first album I ever owned was Abbey road with Here Comes the Sun on it - and this is the album that set me off on lifetime journey of musical discovery and joy.

Again, I see the work of God is all of this. And I like to think God is still at work in this gift **He** gave me.

Anyway, these are the meanderings of a happy father on Father's Day. And given the theme of today is Creation, here are 2 more holiday pics.



At 6am on the final day we watched the moon go down in the West and at 6.15 we watched the sun rise up in the east. It was a moment to thrill the soul with awe and wonder.

So what might it look like for you to notice the all-encompassing presence of God in your experiences this coming week and beyond?

I'm well aware that a wedding in Bali is not a daily happening, but the same spiritual truth is always at work. **"If we do not see God everywhere – we may not see God anywhere."**

As poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, so perfectly puts it - **The world is charged with the grandeur of God."**

What might it look like for you this week to spend time 'noticing' and cherishing this grandeur.

To be touched by the close presence of God as you live and move and have your being.

This includes the transcendent and the immanent. The seen and the unseen.

This means you and I can know Gods presence in the sunset and the sunrise.

The flowers and the creatures. In the presence and kindness of a stranger.

In the preciousness of close relationships and the love we give, receive and share.

We can know the close presence of God in the joy of things and the tears of things.

We can find God's presence In the beauty of music, art, poetry and dance.

In all forms of human creativity that celebrate our God given gifts.

In other words, in ALL of Creation. Over, all - through all - and in all.