



Highway

Now these three continue . . .



Of these, the greatest is . . . 1 Cor 13:13

Number 390

Feb 2024

Free

<https://www.merthyrydfilmministryarea.co.uk>

Dear Friends

Last year the gardening was minimalistic to say the least. The asparagus bed practically looks after itself, neighbours gave me beans, tomatoes, a cucumber and a couple of courgette plants. These I chucked into the ground or into Growbags and then reaped a bountiful harvest – nature did all the work. The main reason was that I was taking two courses of my Master's Degree in Bangor in the same year and simply didn't have time to plant, tend and nurture seeds and plants. I confess I really missed it. I find something deeply fulfilling about watching seeds germinate and then grow into plants which either flower for pleasure or fruit for delight.

That meant that coming into this year I studied my catalogues and made my decisions, ordered my seeds and plants and two weeks ago planted the first seeds – it's always the geraniums. They have germinated and are now out of the propagator, freeing up space for the fruit and veg seeds to be planted. I'm still a little daunted by

the state of the garden, but if the weather continues mild for a few weeks now, I hope to have made some inroads into that especially with the lighter evenings beginning to happen.

The Bible uses this idea of planting and growing to remind us that we are not in control;

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord

assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages

according to the labour of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.”

(1 Cor 3.5-9 NRSV)

The fascination of seeds and plants is that you come face to face with your own limitations. I planted 8 geranium seeds of the same variety alongside each other – I only have 7 seedlings! Why?

I have absolutely no idea!



In this issue of Highway we start our Old Testament Bible Study. I have borrowed heavily from commentators as I can't improve on what they have written and so I do commend to you the Bible Study and suggest that you set aside a little time this month to actually read Genesis 1 and the Bible Study in Highway. Hopefully you will agree with me that as we study the Creation Story we learn or re-learn something about our God.

All this talk about planting and growing leads us to the parable of the sower. We are told by Jesus that the seed that fell on good soil produced thirty, sixty or a hundredfold. The seed being the word of God and us being the soil. All we can do, like the good gardener, is prepare the soil to the best of our ability. That is, prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. As we go into a very early Lent, we have a special time of preparation of ourselves to receive God's word in new and special ways so that we can grow and produce what we are able that will enhance God's Kingdom here on earth.

I hope you have a Learning Lent.
Mark

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8



On behalf of the Merthyr Cynon Foodbank Trustees, staff and volunteers, we wish you a very blessed New Year. Our heartfelt thanks to all our donors and volunteers for your generous donation of time, cash, food and toiletries.

722 people were fed in December and 5,820 people fed since April 2023 so far. We couldn't have fed so many people without your amazing generosity and help!

Although we are always so grateful for your wonderful support, it's not fair that so many are being forced to use food banks. As you know, our vision is to end the need for food banks in Merthyr and Cynon Valleys.

Will you please join our campaign, "Guarantee our essentials" to call on the UK Government to stop hunger in the UK? Find out more at trusselltrust.org/essentials

Another challenging year lies ahead of us. Let us hope and look to the Lord, our amazing God, who gives us his grace and compassion so we can continue to fight on behalf of those who are in crisis in our communities. Many thanks again for your generosity and commitment to this ministry.

We are still short of the following

Long life Milk Tinned fruit
Tinned meat Tinned tomatoes
Squashes Tinned carrots
Jars of jams

Thank you

**NEW COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
IN MERTHYR TYDFIL**

St David's Baby Bank

Supporting young families in the heart of our
community by helping clothe babies and toddlers

Do you need help?

Ask your doctor, midwife, health visitor or
other health professional to refer you to us

OR

Get in touch for more info

Tel: Dorothy Evans 07766 240585

Tel: Lynda Price 07858 487034

Email: stdavidsbabybank@gmail.com

Web: www.stdavidsbabybank.org.uk

**Clothes, Nappies, Toiletries, Blankets,
Bottles, Sterilisers, Changing mats,
Moses baskets, Baby baths, Baby slings
and more**

Patron - Dawn Bowden AM

Recipient of the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan Award

We rely on donations
from the community



KNIT & NATTER GROUP
ST DAVID'S CHURCH, MERTHYR TYDFIL



 Merthyr Tydfil
Ministry Area

St David's Baby Bank

It is 2 years since St David's Baby Bank was launched. In that time we have been able to help and support 235 families. We would like to thank everyone who has helped in any way at all either with donations and/or giving their time. This is a group effort and we wouldn't be able to be so effective without your help.

So a big thank you from Baby Bank.

THANK YOU

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have helped me in many different ways over the years that I have been a member of St David's Church, enabling me to carry on to the ripe old age of ninety.

My thanks to:-

The choir of St David's

The servers of St David's, The Quar and St Tydfil's

The Mothers' Union

The PCC that I was in, in the 1970s

The clergy and congregations, past and present. in the parish as it was.

Not forgetting personal friends, past and present.

My thanks to Fr. Mark for understanding my particular circumstance. I do not know how he has put up with me over the last few years.

Finally, thanks to all for the good wishes, the Christmas and birthday cards that I received over the festive season and my birthday. Thank you so much.

Diolch, Eric

RETIREMENT – SORT OF

Well, that's it. Seventy! Like clergy, Readers are obliged to retire when they hit three score years and ten. So that's me done, then. But you don't get rid of me that easily! Oh dear me, no. I now have what is called "Permission to Officiate" from the Bishop. So actually, it's still me wittering on every other Sunday. In practice, the only difference is "PtO" is renewed every three years after first checking to see if the person with permission hasn't gone dodderly.

Hmm. So far so good. What was I saying?

Oh yes! Thanks to lots of people for the birthday cards and messages and particularly to St Tydfil's Church for their generous gift card. I put it towards a new speaker for my telly. It's one that's optimised for people with poor hearing. As opposed to one that just blasts out louder bass notes. Much better.

Thank You

Ken Lewis, LLM Reader (Retired but still active)

ST TYDFIL'S NEW KITCHEN

The updated kitchen at St Tydfil's Church is finally in situ. Many thanks to Dan and his team for a brilliant job and Richard for laying the flooring it all looks fab and so big! Also thanks to church members who helped clear the room ready for fitting and for cleaning up ready for the Sunday service. It was quite a week!

Ash Wednesday

For you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.
Genesis 3:19

Service of Ashing
Christ Church Cyfarthfa
Wednesday 14th February
10:30am

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES
Wednesday 14th February

St David's Holy Eucharist
and Ashing 10.30am

St Tydfil's Holy Eucharist
and Ashing 7pm



A stylized illustration of an olive tree with green leaves and dark olives, serving as a background for the top section of the poster.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2024

FRIDAY 1 MARCH

A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE!

I beg you, bear with
one another in love



IN

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Pontmorlais CF47 8RG

10.30a.m. till 11.30a.m.

(Followed by refreshments)

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR SERVICE
TO CELEBRATE WORLD DAY OF
PRAYER.

A stylized illustration of a garden with green leaves, red flowers, and brown roots, serving as a background for the bottom section of the poster.

INFORMED PRAYER, PRAYERFUL ACTION

24-7 • 365 DAYS A YEAR • PRAYER MOVEMENT • ECUMENICAL INTERNATIONAL • WOMEN-LED

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Registered Charity Number 238242

Old Testament Bible Study for February: Genesis 1

'Let's start at the very beginning
A very good place to start
When you read
you begin with A-B-C
When you sing
you begin with do-re-mi'
(O. Hammerstein II,
Sound of Music)

And when you start with
Bible Study it's Genesis 1.

This is the creation story and Luther said of this book, "There is nothing more beautiful than the Book of Genesis, nothing more useful," and he regarded the opening verses as "certainly the foundation of the whole of Scripture." Needless to say, not everyone has approached the opening words of the Bible with such warm delight! Rather, the early verses of Genesis have become a veritable battleground where those who defend the faith have waged war with those who approach them with calculated skepticism or outright antagonism. Brief excerpts from Humanist Manifesto I and II will suffice to illustrate the point:

"Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. We begin with humans not God. We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."

It was in the nineteenth century that the struggle between those who accepted biblical views of creation and those who rejected them reached epic proportions. Bernard Ramm writes, *"This deep-moving secularism—life without God, philosophy without the Bible, community without the Church was an irresistible tide."*

The tide which was to sweep thinking into new channels flowed from rebellion against an authoritarian church, a newly found love affair with science, and an approach to Scripture which pitted reason against faith and insisted that reason won. The struggle continues to this day with profound consequences.

The love affair with science has produced inestimable benefits for humanity as anyone who has flown in a jet plane, visited a doctor, or used a telephone will agree. The problem is not with science as such, because where science discovers truth it can only be beneficial. The problem lies in the attitudes which exist between some scientists and some theologians. Where scientists worship their scientific approach to an extent that everything becomes verifiable only in terms of scientific evaluation, or where theologians distrust scientists so much that they automatically dismiss their findings when applied to Scripture, only conflict can arise. Sad to say, the theologians have not done too well in recent years.

The devastating result has been that the people in the street have tended to reject or ignore fundamental truths about themselves and their world.

It is important, in biblical study to remain open minded, to not want all the i's dotted and the t's crossed. It is possible to leave gaps and admit we don't know and it doesn't make sense. Often, when we acknowledge these things, God gets a chance to enlighten us. So, keeping an open mind ...

Some Powerful Revelations

"In the beginning God," the opening words of Scripture, promptly place the emphasis where it rightfully belongs—on God. The interest in Genesis chapter 1 as it relates to the cosmos, to humanity, and to the natural sciences has been such that this emphasis on God has often been overlooked. This chapter should be read primarily as a revelation of the God of creation rather than a statement about that which God created. While it raises many unanswered questions about how He created, it provides many answers to questions about who did the creating. Let's look at His attributes, and move onto His actions, and His affirmation next month.

1. His Attributes

Knowing God is at one and the same time the most noble and the most frustrating pursuit. Whenever humanity tries to figure out God, the result is God made in the image of human beings. When humanity is open to a divine initiative in which God reveals Himself, the result is rewarding in the extreme.

God has revealed:

a. His self-existence.

It was "in the beginning" that God created "the heavens and the earth" (v. 1). The concept of the beginning of the universe is mind boggling. We even have trouble thinking about the beginning of something as familiar as a house. When did my house originate? Was it when it was completed, or the first brick was laid, or the foundations were started, or the excavators came in with bulldozers, or the surveyors brought their instruments, or the architect drew his plans, or the developer had an idea, or some man somewhere had the first idea of a house? The answers to my rhetorical questions may not be important but, whatever the answers to similar questions about "the beginning," the unapologetic statement of Scripture is that whatever and whenever the beginning was, God was there, alive and well. In fact, what Genesis states implicitly the New Testament writers make explicit.

For example, John recorded Jesus' words, *"Father You loved Me before the foundation of the world"* (John 17:24). This immediately puts Him above and beyond the material world. It states that He is independent of all that everything else depends upon, that He is totally and utterly "other."

b. His self-sufficiency.

The expression "God created" is most interesting because the Hebrew uses a plural word for "God" (Elohîm) but a singular word for "created." Later in the chapter we read *"Then God said, 'Let Us make humankind in Our image, according to Our likeness' "* (v. 26).

Some commentators suggest that the plural words are used to give a sense of intensity and majesty to God (in much the same way that the King in his official pronouncements uses the "royal 'we' "). But a clear statement about the Trinity becomes apparent when the "Us" and "Our" and the plural "Elohîm " are considered alongside the statement about the "Spirit of God" (v. 2) being active in creation and the New Testament teaching about the pre-existence of "the Word" and His creative activity (see John 1:1–10).

The significance of the Trinity for us is that before there was a universe, there was a "wholeness" and a "completeness" about God in His "three person-relatedness" which made Him totally self-sufficient.

Any suggestion that God needed the universe to be fulfilled or that He was less than complete without humanity totally misses the point of the Trinity in whom love and communication were perfected.

c. His self-determination.

The idea to create was God's and His alone. It was God who repeatedly spoke the creative word to bring material things into being and it was He who, communing with Himself (not with the angels as some have suggested), brought forth humanity in His own image. Isaiah the prophet captured the significance of this when he asked rhetorically: *"Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counsellor has taught Him?"* (Is. 40:13). And the answer came loud and clear from John on Patmos: *"You are worthy, O Lord for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created"* (Rev. 4:11).

To be continued ...



St TYDFIL'S CHURCH, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist
6.00pm Healing Service (1st Sunday in the month only)

St DAVID'S CHURCH, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist
WEDNESDAY 10.30am Holy Eucharist

CHRIST CHURCH, Georgetown, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

ALL SAINTS CHURCH, Dowlais

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

CHRISTCHURCH, Pant

SUNDAY 10.00am Holy Eucharist
WEDNESDAY 10.30am Holy Eucharist

ONLINE

SUNDAY 11.00am Dowlais & Pant Facebook and YouTube Service

St JOHN'S Troedryhiw

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Communion

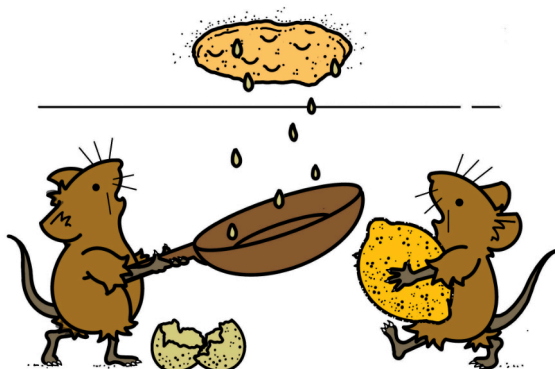
St MARY'S, Merthyr Vale

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Communion
WEDNESDAY 10.15am Holy Communion

All services may be changed or added to especially on Saints' Days.

Please see the Ministry Area website for details

<https://www.merthyrtydfilministryarea.co.uk>



MINISTRY AREA OFFICE

01685 388805

(10.00–13.00, Mon, Tue & Thur)

The office e mail address is:- TBA

The readings for next Sunday and church news sheets can be seen and downloaded from the St David's and St Tydfil's pages of the Ministry Area website at

<https://www.merthyrtydfilministryarea.co.uk/st-dauids-church>

<https://www.merthyrtydfilministryarea.co.uk/st-tydfils-church>



QR Code for the
Ministry Area Website

Next issue

Please let me have anything for March 2024
by Sunday 25 February 2024. Preferably earlier.

Next issue is due out 3 March 2024

Please e-mail your articles to

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All named articles are the work of that person. Publication does not imply agreement with the opinions expressed. Ken Lewis, Editor.