



Highway



**You abundantly water the ploughed fields,
You settle
its furrows and soften the earth
with showers. You bless its growth. Ps 65:10**

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Free

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

Dear Friends

Every Cloud has a Silver Lining.

This phrase, which I'm sure you know well and have probably used, traces its origins back to none other than John Milton. Yes, him of *Paradise Lost*'s fame. He was writing a lot in the 17th century and it seems that this particular line belongs to a script that was written to be performed at Royal Court. These 'plays' were known as masques and were made popular by Elizabeth 1st. The particular one we are referencing is called *Comus*, or to give it its long title;

"A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634: on Michaelmasse night, before the Right Honorable, John Earle of Bridgewater, Viscount Brackly, Lord President of Wales, and one of His Majesties most honorable privie counsell."

The spelling is correct for the time. In 1634 they didn't beat around the bush, so to speak, and this story is of the character *Comus*, who is inspired by the god of debauchery, who discovers a lonely maiden lost in the woods. He tricks her and takes her to his pleasure palace. She resists his charm and is rescued

by her two brothers, the *Attendant Spirit* and the water nymph *Sabrina*. She and her brothers are reunited with their parents in a triumphal celebration. Milton is using this imagery to indicate the heavenly bliss that awaits the wayward souls who triumph over the temptations, trials and tribulations of life and was probably used, in a supportive way, for a family, the *Bridgewater's*, as they had been involved in an unpleasant scandal. Enough of the history lesson here is the actual line in context:

*I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme Good,
to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of
vengeance,
Would send a glistening guardian,
if need were
To keep my life and honour
unassailed.
Was I deceived,
or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining
on the night?
I did not err;
there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining
on the night,
And casts a gleam
over this tufted grove.*

As can be appreciated, from what I have already told you, these words would have been spoken by our stalwart maiden. It was not until the 19th century that the phrase or idiom reached its current form and this was done by the author Sarah Payton Parton in her essay 'Nil Desperandum';

'NO, NEVER! Every cloud has a silver lining; and He who wove it knows when to turn it out. So, after every night, however long or dark, there shall yet come a golden morning.'

This is thematic of the Easter story – the crucifixion followed by the resurrection, but it is also replicated each and every day. It is very much our attitude that will discern the silver lining. I suspect you would agree with me that the weather at present is shocking, however, the cold has preserved the daffodils in my garden in full bloom for a whole month. They wobble in the wind but they have

stayed as the bright yellow splash that I get to see every morning. The wet, cold weather has allowed this particular beauty to exist far longer than expected. I know I moan about the weather, but they make me smile every day!

It is too easy to get sucked into a negative spiral, it takes effort to be positive and to look for the positive in life but the Christian hope, especially revealed at the Resurrection, should enable each of us to be positive amidst the darkest of trials. I will leave the final words to our psalmist:

*Why are you so full of heaviness,
O my soul,
and why are you so
disquieted within me?
O put your trust in God;
for I will yet give him thanks,
who is the help of my countenance,
and my God.
(Psalm 42. 6-7)*

Have a great Eastertide.
Mark



Update on - where we are going?

from Rev'd Marc-Ashton Walford

By now I have made my way around most of the churches in this Ministry Area, sharing with you some of the problems we face, but also the exciting opportunities those problems give us as we move forward.

To those of you sitting there scratching your heads, either you missed church the week I was with you, in which case ask your vicar about this! Or you are a member of either All Saint's and Christchurch in which case, fear not, I will be with you on the 14th April.

As part of the process of discerning God's will for our Ministry Area, where we are looking to be reshaped into something new, sustainable, growth-enabling, life-giving, and God-forged, we will be holding our first round of workshops over the next month. This will be an opportunity for us to take time out of our busy schedules to listen, share, and imagine together. We would urge everyone in our churches to make the effort to come to one of these sessions. We will hold the same session on three occasions at different times and in different locations, to try and give everyone the best opportunity to make it. So, you only need to come to one, as the other two will be repeats of the same thing, but please do make the effort to come to one. Remember decisions are made by those who show up, and we need each of you to help us discern God's will for our churches together!

So please save the date that works best for you, and signup at the back of the church.

Saturday 13th April 9:30am – 12:30pm
(Bacon baps served part way through)
in Christ Church Cyfarthfa



Wednesday 24th April 6pm - 9pm
(Cakes served) Location TBC

Monday 29th April 11am – 2pm
(Soup lunch part way through)
Location TBC





St David's Baby Bank

We are very grateful to Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School for the generous donation of items for the Baby Bank. The students chose the Baby Bank as their charity for their Lenten challenge.

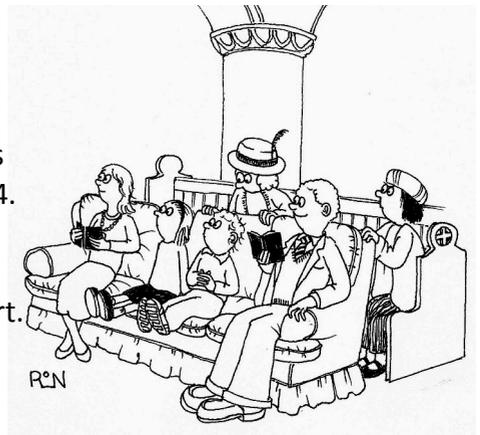


Friends of St David's Church

Thank you all for your kind donations to "Friends of St David's Church" 2024. To date we have raised £750.

Thank you once again for your support.

Lynda Price



Regular worshippers were upgraded to first class

Prayer Walking in our community



Prayer walking is just what it sounds like. You pray as you walk.

What is the point? Think of it as stepping out as God's children, to intercede for those who are living in your community. Be intentional about praying for God's blessings on what you see and feel.

Simply praying: "Your Kingdom come, your will be done..." is an excellent start.

Prayer walking is NOT about being seen to be praying, you are not doing it to 'show off'. It is about seeing your neighbourhood with compassion, and then praying for God's mercy and blessing to be upon it.

So, as you go along, you can pray quietly, or in silence. If you do want to pray out loud, take a friend along, so that it will seem merely as if you are chatting. In fact, when you do a prayer walk, it is best not to do it alone. Always try and go with someone else. After all, Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs.

On your prayer walk, try and be aware of what God is saying to you as you move around the community. As the former Archbishop of York, Lord Sentamu, once advised: "If any Bible verses pop into your head or if you have any pictures, visions or words of knowledge, turn these into prayer."

At the end of the prayer walk, share with others what you prayed for, and heard from God. Write any impressions down, so you can keep track of how you have prayed for your area.

Again, to quote Lord Sentamu, "If you feel that God has highlighted specific needs or challenges, think about how to take action. Could you or the church be part of God's solution practically, as well as prayerfully?"



World Autism Acceptance Week, 2nd – 8th April 2024



Autism is on the rise. Or at least, the recognition of it is. According to the website psychcentral.com, there was a 787% exponential increase in the number of people who were diagnosed with autism between 1998 and 2018 in the UK.

The National Autistic Society says that in the UK, more than one in every 100 people are now on the autism spectrum. It reckons that around 700,000 adults and children in the UK suffer with the condition to some degree.

All of which means that you probably know of someone who has autism, to some degree. And you may know that, as it says on the NHS website:

Autistic people may act in a different way to other people, ... and find it hard to understand how other people think or feel. They may find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful, or uncomfortable. They may get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events and take longer to understand information.

To help people with autism, you may wish to support this 'acceptance week', by going to the National Autistic Society's website, <https://www.autism.org.uk> and taking part in some way in their fundraising campaign.

Don't hesitate to use hearing aids

Here is something you didn't expect: using hearing aids if you are a bit deaf can be of great benefit to your overall health.

Crystal Rolfe, director of health at the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) said: "Hearing aids bring enormous benefits for people with hearing loss. Research shows that wearing hearing aids may reduce the risk of cognitive decline, and it is well known that they have positive effects on physical, social, emotional, and mental wellbeing."



According to hearing loss charity RNID, 12 million adults in the UK are deaf, have hearing loss or tinnitus and an estimated seven million people could benefit from hearing aids, but only about two million use them.

The researchers hope the findings, published in The Lancet Healthy Longevity journal, will encourage more people to wear hearing aids. As one doctor said: "If you have hearing loss, get hearing aids. The benefits could be limitless."

Genesis Creation Story final part.

Last month we looked at God's actions and began to unravel the concept of how God's actions and attributes are shown in the human male and female. We acknowledged that we are unique in God's creation and it is to this uniqueness that we now turn.

Without doubt all these ideas concerning the unique status of humanity bear looking into and all of them lead to a position far removed from many modern concepts of humanity which have led to confusion, despair, violence, and shame. Humanity was commissioned by God to "have dominion" (v. 26) and to "fill the earth and subdue it" (v. 28). Pascal said, "Man is neither angel nor beast." Far from being on a par with the beasts and yet, unlike the angels, stationed on earth, humanity stands under God, above creation, to order and direct it as God desires. From the very beginning of time God put humanity to work in the most responsible position imaginable.

To do this "God blessed them" (v. 28) and thereby added ability to status and equipped men and women to function as His agents on earth. The creation was a going concern with humanity at the helm.

Paul and Elizabeth Achtemeier captured the wonder of it all: *"A humans, as created by God, is a glorious creature, beautiful in form, Lordly in dominion over the earth,*

favoured in relationship to the creator. Far from being an insignificant speck lost in a vast universe, a human is the exalted and glorious high point of all God's good creation."

What a far cry from the sad, weary words of the Hollywood star who said, *"I spent so much time trying to figure out what life was all about, I still don't know. But now I don't give a damn."*

Another striking feature of Genesis 1 is the repetition of the phrase "Then God said" which introduces each new creational act. The significance of this is shown in the way that the biblical writers in both Testaments use these statements to underline the fact that God's creative word, stemming from His creative thought, was all that was

Far from being an insignificant speck lost in a vast universe, a human is the exalted and glorious high point of all God's good creation."

necessary to bring things into being out of non-being. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews wrote,

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:3)

and the psalmist wrote, *"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made For He spoke, and it was" (Ps. 33:6, 9).*

It is difficult to imagine a clearer expression of the sheer power of God demonstrated in creation. His sovereign control, His irresistible dynamic, and His irrefutable design for the universe are presented in language easily understood by children who have stood before their father's desk, recruits who have faced a drill sergeant's stare, or employees who have answered a boss's directive.

But the analogy is so inadequate, for Genesis speaks not of recruits and children but of nonexistence which hears the powerful enabling Word of God and in the command discovers the will and the means to exist. Here we have a supreme mystery but a glorious insight into the omnipotence of the One in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

God’s Affirmation

With great delight God surveyed His creation. Light was scrutinised and pronounced “good”; earth and seas lay under His all-knowing gaze and were found to be “good”; and grass, herb, and fruit were tested and affirmed as “good.” Turning His attention to the boundless expanse of space and the myriads of galaxies, He approved the immensity and it was “good.”

“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

So, it went on until finally humanity, male and female, stood before Him and heard the sweetest word—“good.” They basked in His satisfaction; they were all He wanted them to be. “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Some Practical Realities

God’s seal of approval on His creation is highly significant for those who honour Him and the things that He has made. There have been times in church history when this simple truth has been overlooked. For instance, it did not take long before the early Christians were engaged in furious debate about the person of Christ. The Greeks believed matter was evil

and that therefore a Holy God could not create matter. That would be indecent, and God could certainly not assume human flesh. Therefore, the first arguments about Jesus were not concerned with His deity but with the reality of His humanity!

The Docetists, for example, could not accept that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh; so, they propounded the theory that He was God but only seemed to be a man and did not really die for sin, for how could a phantom die?

This may seem to be far removed from modern concerns, but the goodness of God’s creation must always be of major interest. For example, those who believe that God created a good earth will be open to thoroughly enjoy all that He has given them. At

the same time they will be anxious to preserve it from the ravages of people who care nothing for what God has made and entrusted to humanity as His stewards.

Clearly this can have profound ramifications on people’s concerns about ecology and nuclear matters. Those who believe God created everything good certainly will not be indifferent to developments which may serve only to pollute and ruin, exterminate and defile all that He has made. I know of a writer whose wife has on her desk, a grotesque piece of pottery. It has a long nose, bulging eyes, and pale, swollen cheeks. It was made by one of their children in school. It has proved to be a great conversation piece over the years.

They often tell friends that it was made by one of their children and ask the friends, if they haven't done so before, to guess which one. Without exception the friends look at it, laugh, and without hesitation say, "Pete, of course!" This is because Dave is serious, Judy industrious, and Pete humorous. If you knew that, you would have no difficulty knowing who made the mug, because the created reflects something of the creator.

So, it is with men and women who know they are created; they long to reflect something of His glory through lives of obedience and faith. Created people are willing people.

They are people who have a sense of wonder, too. They cannot look dispassionately at either human or material, for they see something of the Creator's handiwork. No person is insignificant and no part of the created order is without meaning.

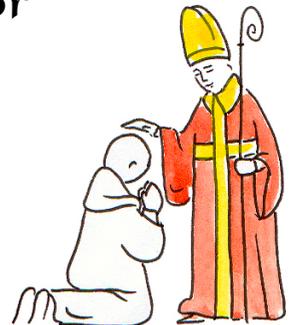
They might not write poetry like Wordsworth but they understand him when he writes:
*To me the meanest flower
that blows can give
Thoughts that do often
lie too deep for tears.*

This sense of wonder makes created people worshipers—not only in the limited sense of attending church or cathedral and singing praises, but also in the "daily round, the common task" where everything is done, however mundane, with the sense that it is being done with His materials, in His time, for His glory with the energy and skill His grace alone made available.

Hopefully these thoughts will hone our own appreciation of the creation we enjoy.



Please pray for
Revd David Thomas Morris
who is to be consecrated
Assistant Bishop of Bangor
at 2pm on
Saturday 11 May 2024
in Bangor Cathedral



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 Troedyrhiw

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 May 2024
by Sunday 28 April 2024. Preferably earlier.

Next issue is due out 5 May 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.