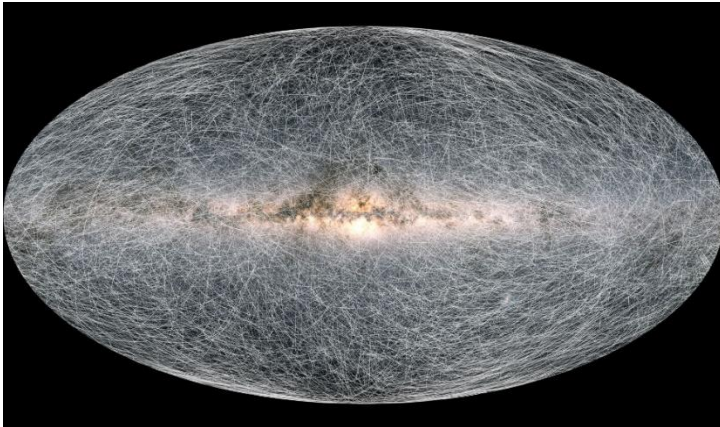


High St Uniting Church
Genesis 1: 1 - 5

In the beginning - light



Genesis is ground zero in the conflicts between science and faith, particularly with those who hold to a literal understanding of the Genesis story and those who hold to a dominant view of science. The scientists see the Creation story as ancient mythology that tries to explain the world when science does a much better job of that. And the Creationists reply that the account of creation talks of intention, purpose,

and builds understanding of who we are why we are here; issues that science doesn't even mention. And those who want to reclaim Genesis from the grip of mythology point to how much more logical and reasoned this account of God creating is than all the surrounding cultures with warring gods cutting each other in half or people being created to serve the gods, and how 'scientific' the order of creation is for a piece of writing 3000 years old. But there is so much more in the opening verses of Genesis than just how the world began, or fodder for a scientific argument. The ripples of 'in the beginning' and 'let there be light' flow right through scripture, and touch on our faith and understanding now.

When the discovery of the background remnant radiation offered evidence of the initial event of the universe – The Big Bang – people likened it to a bunch of scientists climbing a mountain only to find a bunch of theologians already at the top. Both were saying 'In the beginning'. And subsequent discoveries, right up to a few years ago with the hint of gravity waves from the dawn of time, build pictures of an expending universe like the one above. We agree with a start point for all that we see and know. But the difference in the start point is that we see purpose and intent in the beginning. Every Christmas we read John Chapter 1 – "In the beginning" – and we hear the echoes of Genesis. John says, "In the beginning was the word", and Genesis says, "God said, and it was" and we see Jesus with God in the beginning along with the Spirit hovering over the dark waters and that is why this passage is read on Trinity Sunday. More importantly, it's a part of the ripples of Genesis flowing through scripture.

We know that the light that surrounds us and illuminates our lives comes from the sun – the star at the centre of our solar system and one of millions in the galaxy we are a part of – and the separation of light and dark is because our world turns each day towards and away from the sun. But there is something subtle, but important, in this light that God spoke into the darkness, in these opening verses of Genesis, because the light here is created the day before the sun and the moon are created! This is divine light. The light that shines in our hearts with truth and inspiration, the light that exposes evil, the light that allows us to see the working of God. And the wonder of that insight is that God did not banish the darkness but separated it from the light. That understanding of light and darkness ripples through scripture and the revelation of God to the world. It shows in Jesus calling himself the light of the world. It is what inspires Paul to talk of the darkness ending and the light of the new day of Christ dawning. There is more light in the world than sunlight. And there is more darkness in the world than nighttime.

This is more than just spiritualising a text to avoid the issues of taking it literally, this is finding truth in a story. Truth that opens understanding and influence on our lives now. This world is more than random imbalances of energy that produced matter, it is the product of loving, divine intention. And that is not an easy answer – God did it – but a deep responsibility. If the world is the product of loving, divine intention, then so are we and so is everyone we meet, and so is all the life in the world. And the way the story unfolds proclaims that an important part of the divine intent is light. Not just sunlight, but divine light. And it can be inferred from the story that all of creation is a part of that divine light challenging darkness and chaos, right up to us. We can be a part of God's light shining in the world to challenge darkness and chaos. We can be the bearers of the light of justice shining for people whose lives feel dark. We can be the light of support and hospitality shining for people whose lives feel chaotic. We can be the light of purpose and hope shining for people who are lost in the world.

If you only follow the mass media news, the post-apocalyptic thrust of movies and TV, or the pessimistic outlook of protestors then you only see the darkness and chaos. But God said, "Let there be light"! Not just in good news stories, or fluffy comedies, or 'she'll be right', but the light of God's truth. This is God's world, created in love and reclaimed in the grace of the cross, and so there is hope in the world. And we are, and can be, bearers of light, and truth, and hope. In every situation we face, let there be light. For every person we meet, let there be light. In every conversation and prayer, let there be light. The divine light that shines in the darkness and chaos and the darkness and chaos has never extinguished it. Be a part of divine light shining in our world.