

Talk – I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

While I was thinking about how to approach this talk I was listening to a CD with some of Handel's amazing choral music and was struck by the phrase 'Everlasting Father' in the reading from Isaiah – a reading that we invariably associate with the arrival of a tiny baby. Why would you call a baby 'Everlasting Father'? Even those who are most concerned about maintaining family lines or having grandchildren wouldn't think of a baby as a father!

But of course the child in question is a very unusual one, an essential part of God, the God we can know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Tonight we think about the first of these aspects of God – God the Father, we will be thinking about God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in coming weeks as we go through the creed which sets out our faith in a God who is 3 in 1, the holy trinity.

The Isaiah reading talks about some of the characteristics that mark our Everlasting Father- he is a wonderful counselor, prince of peace, he governs with justice and judgement – things that anyone who has parented small children, teenagers or even adult children will recognise as things to aspire to! Which of us who has had any contact with children would not want to be able to justly decide who is right so they can bring peace to a sibling quarrel or give wise counsel to the frustrated teenager?

When we talked about God as our Father while looking at the Lord's Prayer we noted that he can be thought of as a mother too, those who have or had difficult relationships with their earthly fathers might find the image of a mother hen tucking her chicks under her wings something they can relate to more easily, but even if that is tricky we can all know God as a caring and wise parent.

Not only does God our Father have all those wonderful characteristics, but he is the creator of heaven and earth. I don't know very much about heaven but I do know that if we believe in God and commit our lives to him then we will live in the 'kingdom of heaven' not just after we die but here on earth as we learn to live our lives in partnership with God and learn to do things his way – we looked last year at how Jesus called us to Walk with him, Work with him and Watch how he does things and that is where our journey to heaven starts.

God as creator of the earth we know more about, we can read in Genesis that after each stage of creating the world God saw that it was good - I have just finished reading a book where the being that created the world speaks of it as "a wayward and whimsical child. Behold how she doth adorn herself with spring and mantle her shoulders with the white gown of winter". I rather like this image of our creator God being Father to the earth as well as to humans. Whether we believe in a 6 day creation or something that took much, much longer – I think we can agree that our planet, is a good place to live and is somewhere we should strive to care for and treasure as a way of honouring its creator.

As we explore the creeds in coming weeks we will think about the other aspects of God – Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit, and I hope that through this we will all learn more about this caring, just, parent and grow closer to Him.