

## Reflection during Creationtide. Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September [Let there be lights in the sky!](#)

Psalm 148, Genesis 1 v 14-19, Luke 21 v 25-28 and Acts 2 v 20-21



Milky Way as seen from Sand Beach NPS Photo/Sardius Stalker

Have you ever stayed or lived in a place where there is no electricity or light pollution with the result being that you could view the beauty of the night sky?

In the Genesis story, God had already, on day one, separated light from darkness and light was declared to be good. Here on day four, God declares both darkness and light to be good. I wonder what you find helpful about the dark, the night: the beauty of the universe, the 400 billion stars in the Milky Way, the moon 240,000 miles away from earth, the light that set off from galaxies 13.4 billion years ago, the chance to rest?!

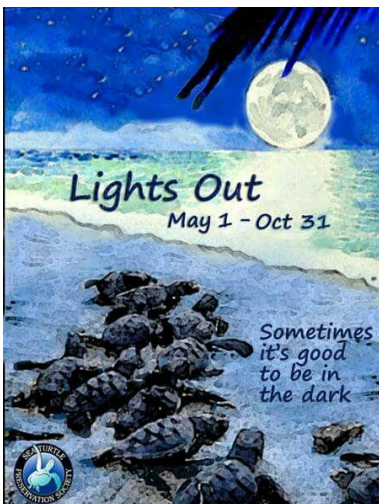
**Our heavenly Father, as we look up to you in the vastness of the skies, The sun that you have made opens our eyes to the world lit in colour and clarity,**

**The moon and stars remind us of your faithfulness and steadfast presence amidst the seasons of darkness and our community's moments of uncertainty.**

**Lord Jesus, you have shown us how from the beginning to end was the light of love, that as endless as the heavens above so is the grace that sustains all things.**

**So with faith that the Spirit has wrought in us, we seek the care every creature is to have as we dream, hope, labour for a future wrapped in the fullness of joy that your new creation brings.**

Rei Manuel Crizakdo, Philippines.



Problems of light pollution affect our natural world. Thousands of baby Turtles die every year. They hatch at night. Their inbuilt orientation away from the dark dunes is fooled. They are attracted to the artificial lights on shore instead of the moon reflected on and over the sea. Amphibians are also in decline due to habitat destruction, chemical pollution and artificial lighting that changes their natural behaviours. Similarly night lighting has been shown to affect bird's migratory patterns and reproductive patterns. Are artificial night lights truly essential?

For Israel's ancient neighbours the stars were ruled by deities that were thought to control people's destinies? Sound familiar?! The sun was also worshipped! Sound familiar?! Genesis proclaims that this is not the case- God is the supreme deity who calls them into being; the light (sun) and the lesser light (moon). They are not named because naming them would use the names of foreign deities that corresponded with them. The authors of Genesis were making a statement: God made these. Our lives are not determined by the demi gods of the sun, moon, stars

or planets and astrological movements. They are not to be worshipped. Our lives are determined well only if we live our lives in communion with God. Creation of our world comes from the word of God. Our own re-creation comes from abiding in the living word of God. In fact, the Living Word Jesus' birth is announced by a star. Baukman describes this as 'a song of solar glory', a moment of true illumination.

In Luke's Gospel, there are metaphorical descriptions of the end of the age - the sun turned to darkness and the moon to blood. Luke uses this imagery in the Acts of the Apostles. What do these passages mean? There is a strong tradition in Jewish literature of apocalyptic writing- someone being given a vision of the future or another dimension. The aim of this type of writing is not so much as to answer questions but to speak to the people about their current situations of exile or hardship or persecution and to lift their eyes above these hardships. If we told one of our friends that our world had collapsed, they would know it is a metaphorical description of lost hope or

disaster. Scholar Tom Wright believes that Jesus is describing his own journey to the cross and resurrection, and the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem that took place in AD70 and not necessarily future times.

However, what we believe about tomorrow does affect our today. If we believe that the world will be destroyed in judgement, what is the point of looking after it now? St Paul affirms that God's redemption is for all things, even creation. In 2 Peter chapter 3 v 10 many scholars now understand that the world will not be burnt up – this is a mistranslated word- the world will be 'found' as in a Eureka moment. The new will shine through. The terms *new* heaven and a *new* earth have also been misunderstood due to connotations in our English language. The world will be transformed or renewed and not replaced. There will be a continuity and restoration of both human relationships and the world's relationship with God.

*Every action we choose to take that looks after our world shows our wish to live in anticipation of the future that Jesus death and resurrection and the presence of the Holy Spirit guarantees and we move towards the future glory that God will reveal through his creation. Revd Becky based on Ruth Valerio Saying Yes to Life chapter 4.*

#### Hymn reflection by MS

After four weeks of rather complicated histories, we now have a straightforward "reflection" on what must surely be one of the top twenty hymns in the English Language. It is based on Psalm 19, which is comparable with today's Psalm 148. Here we have resounding words on a galactic scale, written by one of the 18th-century's great men of letters. It is notable that modern editors have not messed about with these words at-all. And a little-known composer called John Sheeles, who was a harpsichordist at the Haymarket Theatre, made a pretty good fist at writing an adequate tune (*London* or *Addison's*) to match, with several hints at the idea of "revolving". Some people say they have sung the words to other tunes, but no alternative tune should even be considered.

Verse 1 is mostly about the sun; verse 2 about the moon, "the lesser light to rule the night" which "takes up the wondrous tale", reflecting the light of the sun. A book by Kelly Hayes goes on to say this symbolizes how we should reflect the light of Christ, though that isn't in the hymn. This is a grand hymn. No two hymns should ever be sung (or played!) the same. This one should be sung standing up straight, breathing deeply. The spaciousness and dignity are enhanced by adding a slight *rallentando* (slowing) and pause at the end of the sixth and eighth lines, as suggested by Vaughan Williams in *Songs of Praise*, and by making sure the quavers are given full weight. It really makes a difference.

No more from me. Let Joseph Addison and all Creation speak for themselves.

**The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim.  
The unwearied sun from day to day  
Does his Creator's power display,  
And publishes to every land  
The works of an almighty hand (repeat).**

**Soon as the evening shades prevail  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth;  
Whilst all the stars that round her burn  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Proclaim the tidings, as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole (repeat).**

**What though in solemn silence all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;  
What though nor real voice nor sound  
Amid their radiant orbs be found;  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice;  
For ever singing as they shine,  
"The hand that made us is divine" (repeat).**



*Ancient Orbs from the  
Hubble Telescope...*