We fill pages and pages, books and books, libraries and libraries with words describing our world and the space around it. And all those libraries and universities and cities and countries and this world in which they reside are not even visible in the 1972 “big blue marble” photograph of earth taken from 18,000 miles away.

We do believe, don’t we, that God who created this world in which we live also created all that vast expanse and everything beyond that which we can see or hear or theorize using our most powerful instruments? And brains?

All that?

Today’s collect dates from the seventh century. And we have been praying those words ever since, in some form or another.

“Almighty and everlasting” it begins. *All* mighty. *Ever* lasting. Pretty big concepts there: all power, all time (past and future). Our pronouns, as so many of us have said before, are problematic. We refer to this all-everything force first of all as a being. Something/someone that exists, that is, that has life. We talk to that force or energy or being in the same way we talk to each other. Until recently we’ve even said “he” to refer to that force/energy/being. Well, limitations of language, right? I mean “it” doesn’t sound right to our ears at all, especially since we believe this being, this Supreme Being, all-being is somehow personal, that is, relates to each of us as a person.

Still, “he”? The ancients didn’t have many problems with that idea, evidently, because the territory was too big for just one such being, and they were all either male or female. And the way society was arranged in those times, it made sense that it would be a man in charge of the rest of the deities, the lesser gods. But for us, and what we know about how we men have handled things, come on! It seems unlikely that it would be a guy. Not that women are much better. We all—male and female, and everything else in the gender mix these days—find ways to live our lives that are less than inspiring.

Still, a personal God seems to be good news/bad news. Good because we can relate to God as a friend. Bad because even our friends let us down at some point, even those we love the most. (I mean, if we’re being completely honest here. Nobody’s perfect.) So, that’s God, this prime mover behind below above within enveloping everything that is.

The collect makes or implies some pretty remarkable claims about God and about us, God’s people. God is ready to listen to our prayers before we’ve even formed them. God is ready to give us more than we want or deserve.

Here’s the way we picture that illimitable, un-understandble creative force: “he” made a couple of new beings, human, in one version of the story, and in today’s version it was first one, and then with some creative surgery, another. And then God talks to them. They listen. At least in the early stages. Actually, no. It doesn’t appear to be that God speaks to them first. It’s Adam (translation: *man*) who has the first word: good job, he says (or implies), because now this is someone I can relate to, because she’s just like me. Except for a couple of minor physical differences, it’s like I’m looking at myself. (And so, by the way, is how we depict God. Like us.)

Well, the psalmist and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews seem to hit the nail on the head: “what are human beings that you [God] should be mindful of them.” I don’t think we can answer that question any better than either of those writers could.

It might be the question of the day, though. The question of the millennium. Of all time. Why should it matter whether we live or die? But there do seem to be forces at work within this creation (or ***a*** force at work) that leans toward our survival and more than just survival. Maybe that’s evidence enough for us to posit a benign, even sympathetic, force behind everything. After all, we’re still here.

That huge, potent (*omni*-potent, all powerful) force, we believe, was uniquely present in the standard-issue human being named Jesus. We’ve talked before about the Greek term *kenosis* which we roughly translate as God’s self-emptying quality in order to become a human being. Let’s think about that for a moment in light of all the above. It’s not just a matter of setting aside all-knowingness or limiting means of transport to get from one place to another. It’s setting aside all that all-ness to become one particular example of that speck of creation known as a human being. All of the foregoing poured into one human-sized container. Walking around in the heat, with sand and mud between his toes, getting blisters and getting thirsty and hungry and worse. That is the specific deal we’re talking about here.

He’s a human being who is questioned about something so mundane as how to go about getting a divorce. And how you should treat each other in the process and afterwards.

Finally this Jesus simply says, “Look, it’s not like you’re going to understand all this. Better you should just be like a little kid, not pretending to understand at all. Instead, just looking in a wide-eyed way at the world and trusting that the songwriters got it right: “O Lord our Governor, how exalted is your Name in all the world.”

Back to the collect, where we began: We’ve been praying these words for at least 1,500 years, and probably a lot longer than that. With these words we tell ourselves and acknowledge to God that God knows what we’re about better than we do. God knows what we want better than we do. God—again, all that I said before, and more than that, *that* God—wants good things for us, forgives us for all the wrong we’ve done. And “more than we deserve” hardly tells the story. There’s no question of our deserving. We didn’t bring ourselves or all of this into being. We’re here only because we are part of the Creator’s creation.

No wonder we continue to pray that way. No wonder we trust that God (that word again) holds us in higher regard than we do ourselves. No wonder that we are grateful for all that. Actually, yes, wonder. Big wonder. All wonder. That in this world we continue to believe and pray and trust. And we say in our overly-familiar way, addressing this a*ll-*mighty, e*ver*-lasting being the only thing there is to say: “Thank you, God.”

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