

Reflection delivered at Gisborne, 25 September 2022

Lord, open our hearts and minds with the power of your Holy Spirit so that we may hear your Word with joy. Amen.

Colossians 1:15-20

It's been nearly a week since the state funeral service for Queen Elizabeth II was held at Westminster Abbey. When the Queen was still alive, we may have known her only partially because her life was still actively moving and changing. Once her time came to a full stop, we were able to pause and begin to see the Queen, her reign, and her life as a whole from fresh perspectives. From biblical perspectives, this kind of reflection and memorials are part of the process of re-creation/new creation. God has been doing such work from the beginning on the cosmic level as the creation is still being renewed and regenerated.

Today we are celebrating spring as well as the cosmos, which is part of God's creation through the reading from Colossians. It is especially about 'the Supremacy of Christ,' who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.¹ The word 'firstborn' (*prototokos*) can be understood in two ways: first, Jesus is the *prototokos* of all creation. Jesus, as the bearer of God's image, lived faithfully to that image. In this way, Christ is integral to the creation of the world when the world came into being through the Word. As such, our human experiences as a whole cannot be alienated from the life of God because of Christ's human experiences. Second, Jesus is the *prototokos* of the dead,² which is a simple statement of the resurrection. Resurrection means both that of Jesus and the promised resurrection of the believer in Christ. Since Jesus is both firstborn of the creation and the dead, we – believers are also partaking in Jesus' firstborn experiences. The word 'firstborn' means something new which didn't exist before. As the partakers of Jesus' life, who was the image of God who is invisible, we experience something new every day. As such, the promise of resurrection is essentially an act of re-creation or new creation. We experience such new creation in this life plainly through the changes of seasons and nature, as well as the changes in our lives. Today we are celebrating spring and cosmos in creation in this service. Spring comes every year, but we may have a different spring each year. Despite the climate changes, we trust that spring will come next year and the year after. As if the Queen's entire life is amicably remembered by us and continually inspires us, Christ is alive and actively works in us. Therefore we, as the faithful bearers of God's image, will be able to regenerate our lives individually that will extend to the

¹ Colossians 1:15

² Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5

entire human community, nature, and creation. It is how we fulfil the task that God commissioned and the way to live as the unique being created according to God's image.