

## Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA)

### New Year's Meditations 2023

#### Gen. 16v13: "You are the God who sees me." Watchword for 2023

#### Theme: What a wonderful world! 'And God saw that it was good.'

**Introduction:** What do you admire and enjoy the most about God's creation? God created and it was good. And what did we do with it? Is it still good? Let us **look** at our world again and enjoy every day what God has produced so beautifully. What a wonderful world! What a beautiful world.

Yet we are fighting daily to prevent the destruction of this beauty that God created! Pollution! Pornography! Earth warming! Corruption! Gender Based Violence! What do you **see** around you that do not fit into this beautiful picture of God's Creation? Have we really destroyed so much of God's beautiful world that we look past it as if is natural?

We can concur, thinking of our theme for this Year 2023 that we are accompanied every day by a God who sees us; a God who is interested in us; by a God who trusts us! The things that we do not see are in his sight. Let us not forget this! He has given us oversight of his Creation and sees how we are handling it. This pertains to our total Creation and to our total being.

Do you think it will help us if we more consciously focus our awareness on this ever present God? 2023 will demand this of us. If we see and hear of the destruction of all God's creation we as his children can do no other than to sharpen our vision, our focus and interest on this God who **sees me!** No, it does not come from a God threatening us with extinction or damnation, but from the loving heart of the Father who loves his children as much as we are part of this whole Creation of which He could ever day look back over it and see that it was a job well done.

Will we be able to do the same at the end of this New Year i.e. be able to **look back**, to evaluate, and be thankful for what you've done, achieved? May it be a year through which you will not try to hide from God, but rather walk boldly in his presence! Will it be a year in which you try harder to do things for Him so that He at the end of the Year will say: "Well done!"

Louis Armstrong reminds us of the beauty of this Wonderful World in his celebrated song. (The text could be made available to all. The song could be (learnt) sung by all.

#### What a wonderful World, by

#### Louis Armstrong

I see trees of green

Red roses too

I see them bloom

For me and you

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue

And clouds of white

The bright blessed day

The dark sacred night

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow

So pretty in the sky

Are also on the faces

Of people going by

I see friends shaking hands

Saying how do you do

They're really saying

I love you

I hear babies cry

I watch them grow

They'll learn much more

Than I'll ever know

And I think to myself

What a wonderful world

Yes, I think to myself

What a wonderful world

Ooh, yes

**Day One:** "God called the light 'day' and the darkness 'night'." Gen. 1v3-5

## Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:3-5: The First Day: The Creation of Light



Dear brothers and sisters, God has made everything beautiful in its time. (Ecclesiastes 3:110). After the creation of the universe, the most significant feature of day one is the creation of light. Verse 3 says that day one was created by an order from God. Then God said, “Let there be light, and there was light...” (v.3a); and in verse 5 we are told, “God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.” Thus the rhythm of days and nights began. Take note dear brothers and sisters: God, not man, named the light and darkness (v.5). God is the Lord of both day and night. God is able to take care of us in the day, as well as at night. We can live knowing that God is looking after us with a watchful eye during the day and night. (Indeed comforting words to all of us at the beginning of the New Year).

“God saw that the light was good...”. Light and darkness are both part of God’s creation and both are good; both have their purpose and function in God’s creation. (v.4a). The word good refers to the value, the purpose, and the function of something. What is the purpose of the light? Light makes things grow; it gives heat and warmth. Light gives colour and beauty to things; it enables us (and animals) to see how to carry on our work. Yes, light was created so that we can live and walk upon earth and in so doing, to fulfil our purpose.

Dear brothers and sisters: the creation of both day and night challenges us on important lessons. We are to serve God whether it is day, or whether it is night. We are not to abuse either the day or the night - we are to use them the way God wants us to. God created everything on earth for his glory and for a purpose. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him (Col 1:16).

We are to work for God by day. Jesus, who is the Light of the world, says in John 9:4, “All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me, because there is little time left before the night falls and all work comes to an end”. The word must means compulsion and necessity; the works must be done and the time for work is limited. In other words, we don’t have forever to do the work. It has to be done now or the opportunity will be lost (Read: Rom.13:11-14).

Do we have the same urgency as Jesus did to go about our Father’s business in this life, in whatever our sphere of influence is? Many Scriptures speak of the temporal nature of our lives. “Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered — how fleeting my life is.” (Psalm 39:4 NLT). We stand at the beginning of a new year; let’s be diligent and actively seek opportunities to do good while it is still day. Let’s do what God wants while we have the health, the time and opportunity to do so. The time is NOW **to make** a difference, **to make** this world a **better place!**

**Work, for the night is coming; Work through the sunny noon;  
Fill the bright hours with labour; Rest comes sure and soon.  
Give every flying minute, Something to keep in store;  
Work, for the night is coming, When man works no more. (Anna Louisa Coghill)**

**Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, that You created day and night, darkness and light for Your purposes. Help

us to be mindful of the daylight that You give us, to do what You are telling us to do while we can. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

### **Day Two: “God called the space ‘sky’.” Gen. 1v6-8**

Genesis 1:6-8, Isaiah 43:6-7; Psalm 24:1-2

God said, “Let there be a huge space between the waters. Let it separate water from water”. And that’s exactly what happened. God made the huge space between the waters. He separated the water under the space from the water above it. God called the huge space: “sky”. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day two.” Gen 1:6-8 NIRV.

This meditation, as part of the series of meditations to mark the start of the New Year, speaks directly to the whole notion of the integrity of creation. Integrity of creation acknowledges that we, human beings, are within the community of creation and that we are intimately interrelated with every dimension of creation. This acknowledgement then places both unique and huge responsibility on our shoulders as the pinnacle of God’s handiwork to do everything in our power to preserve it. The said human responsibility is derived from this verse: “And God said to them, “...have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth”. Gen 1:26 & 28

Theologically speaking, creation especially human beings, is for God’s glory, according to (Isaiah 43:6-7) and therefore its creation, of any kind or form, is a sin against God. Regrettably the very same man/woman who is expected to take special care of the rest of creation is the one at the centre of its degradation and destruction.

All is not lost though because there is growing awareness among some car manufacturers, among other polluters, of the dangers of air pollution. To this end, chemical solutions such as Adblue have been manufactured. Adblue is a diesel exhaust fluid used in vehicles with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology to reduce harmful gases being released into the atmosphere.

Covid 19 brought to the fore the harmful effects of the pollution of the sky to the detriment of human beings especially in highly industrialised countries such as Italy which was on the highly industrialised countries hardest hit by the deadly pandemic as her citizens proved to have poor lungs due to exposure to the harmful emissions from their huge factories and therefore became soft targets for the deadly virus.

Prayer: Lord of Creation, thank you for the precious gift of the creation you bestowed on us. Father we derive so much joy from the different aspects of your creation such as the adorable animals some of whom we keep as pets, among others. We confess before you, dear God, our dismal failure to preserve your creation not to mention our own folly in doing so as we are the ones on the receiving end of air and sky pollution which is harmful for our own health. Help us to do more as individuals to take better care of your beautiful creation. Amen

### **Day Three: “God called the dry ground ‘land’ and the waters ‘seas’.” Gen. 1v9-13**

Land and sea has been the source of many a dispute throughout the ages. We hear of colonial and other eras in which wars and terrible crimes against humanity were perpetrated and all on the basis of ownership and distribution, but also because of greed of land. And to this day land and sea is the

cause of many a dispute among the nations of this world. Our own country has gone through different crises involving esp. issues around land, but also of the sea. Recent processes saw farmers and other owners of land fearing the terrible pictures that ruined the image of our neighbouring country of Zimbabwe, but also of others around our beautiful continent of Africa. Do you think **God is unaware** of all this and much more? Do you think God does **not see** the injustices perpetrated on issues of land and the violent ignorance of the rights and privileges of underprivileged people groups around us?

God's people Israel felt overwhelmed and threatened as they trekked for so many years to what they were taught is their flight to the Promised Land. **God saw** their plight by day and night as He accompanied them in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. (Ex. 13v21) He never left them alone. He appointed their leadership **to see to** it that they do as expected. He stepped in when **He saw it necessary** and will continue to do so whenever **He sees it** necessary.

His creation story tells us of the seriousness with which he prepared the land and sea so that we all can enjoy it. Our hearts cherish the gift of land and the joys the ocean brings to all who enjoyed the summery weather or the wonderful meals we may have from its produce. So our thoughts and hearts are also with the fishermen complaining about fairness in the distribution of quotas and fishing rights so that all can make a living out of it. Much has been overcome regarding fairness in our beautiful country so that land and sea can be shared equally by all, but much more needs to be done to avoid God's wrath on his people.

We need to remind ourselves and teach all those after us that **God sees us** in our neglect and destruction of his beautiful creation. We all have to play our roles and **God sees** it. **He sees** when we discriminate against others. **He sees** the terrible pollution of land and sea – when we throw our rubbish in places that destroy the beauty of land and sea.

And so we can continue lamenting on our inability to responsibly enjoy the beauty of his creation. May 2023 help us to paint a different story of responsible living.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, give us continuous gentle reminders of our responsibility in our caring for you creation. Instil in us the awareness, the love, and the responsibility, to live accountable lifestyles so that many may enjoy what you have created for us. Look over us so that we do not lose it in enjoying your creation. Look into us so that we may have and develop the life skills that will help us to be accountable to You. Increase our vision for a bright future, for a healthy world, for quality care and oversight. Amen.

#### **Day Four: Genesis 1 v 14-19: “God set these lights in the sky to light the earth.”**

Science has always struggled to explain all the stars and planets that exist in the universe. How could so much have evolved out of nothing?

Genesis 1 gives a simple answer: **God made them all. He spoke them into existence.** Their vastness, their complexity, their beauty, and their sheer number all reveal the glory and the wisdom of an all –powerful Creator. And they remind us how amazing it is that such a great Creator would lavish His grace and favor on the human race. After all, from the perspective of size, our whole world constitutes only a minute speck in the vastness of all He created.

David thought of this and he expressed it by saying “When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers— the moon and the stars you have set in place— what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us?” (Psalm 8:3-4, NLT)

Everything from day four on is finishing work, as God fills and populates that which was once formless and void. And the first thing to be filled is the vast expanse of heaven. There is no process. That which He creates comes into being instantly by His Word alone. Creation is not a process God initiated; it is something God completed. He literally **spoke it into existence**.

In other words, what God made did not evolve. He gave the order, and it came into existence complete and fully functioning. As we saw on day one, God had already created light and separated the light from the darkness. Where did that original light come from and what form was it in? We do not know because Scripture does not say.

But on day four, God created the sun and moon to be permanent heavenly luminaries. The source and creator of the light was still God, but from now on there would be light-bearing bodies that would perpetually shine their light on the earth at the proper intervals and seasons.

#### **God’s Word created and distributed light upon the earth (v.14-15).**

God is not creating light—day and night—throughout the universe. Light had already been created when “God said, ‘Let there be light’ ” (Genesis 1:3).

What then is God creating on this fourth day of creation? These two verses tell us: God is creating and distributing light upon earth. He is not dealing with light throughout the universe; He is dealing with light upon earth. The earth had been covered with a thick layer of clouds and dense fog. But now, on this fourth day of creation, God causes the full blast of light to be distributed upon the earth. The clouds encircling the earth are made to evaporate so that the sun, moon, and stars become visible to the earth.

#### **What then is the work & functions, of the sun, moon, and stars?**

The sun divides the day from the night; it provides a period of light and of darkness (Genesis 1:14, 18). When a part of the earth rotates and faces the sun, the light from the sun gives man a time for work. When a part of the earth rotates and faces away from sun, the darkness gives man a time for rest.

#### **God has created the heavenly bodies just right to sustain life, to give light, seasons, days, and years.**

The sun’s rising and setting determines day and night; its movement toward the axis of the earth determines summer and winter, the seasons of the earth. God created a purpose for every movement of the sun and of the earth. So it is with man. God created man and created him with purpose. His every movement should, therefore, have purpose.

“God is light,” John reminds us, “and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5–7).

God saw that His creation was “good”—fulfilled its function (v.18b-19)

“God saw that it was good... the evening and the morning were the first day...” (v.18-19).

Light upon the earth fulfilled its function.

**Day Five: “God said: Let the waters swarm with fish... Let the sky be filled with birds.” Gen. 1v20-23**

By way of placing our chosen text within its broader context, verses 20 through 23 of Chapter 1, describe God’s fifth day of creation, in which He creates all the creatures of the seas, as well as the birds. This is according to the pattern of Genesis, where God used the first three days to prepare an environment, and the second three days to populate that environment.

Furthermore, God’s spoken command here is to let the waters, the seas, etc teem or swarm with swarms of living creatures. The picture painted here is of filling up an ocean intended to carry the abundance of God’s creation. In a similar way, God commands the sky to be full of birds that would fly across its previously empty expanse. This is all part of a process where God’s design comes into sharp focus. God did not merely create the oceans for their own sake. The purpose of the empty sky was to host the countless variety of birds He would create.

Dear Reader, if God had not intended to create the oceans for their own sake but to support life and to the habitat of His creatures, then this calls on us, as human beings to exercise even greater care to look after our beaches. We all know that this festive time of the year, our beaches are frequented by holiday makers more than any other time of the year. While this is good to see, especially after the Covid 19 restricted and, at some stages of the pandemic, completely prohibited such outings, the flip side of the coin is that our shores and beaches are polluted more this time of the year to the detriment of maritime creatures such as fish, etc. This message therefore calls on us to refrain from the usual negligence of littering along our beaches, associated with the end of the year holiday season. Likewise, the senseless pollution of our skies by individuals and corporates and factories need to stop.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for the precious gift of our oceans and our blue skies. Thank you for all the airborne and maritime animals such as birds and fish for our own nourishment. Make us responsible enough to take better care of your creation for our own good. Amen

**Day Six: “God said: ‘Let the earth produce every sort of animal.” Gen. 1v24-31**

(Today we read and meditate on the story of Gen. 1v1-15 as found in the **Foreword** of our **Textbook**.)

**Day Seven: “God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy...” Gen.2v1-4**

(...Saturday evening or in the Sunday morning service or at any time of the week... in the form of a **Sung Service** {Singkerk} with hymns and tunes honouring creation and the beauty of it, but also our responsibility to look after it as **God sees us** doing us/it)

**For our children present every day:** Let them draw, paint, cut out, colour in, collect, make images that fit the daily theme found in the Meditation – but keeping them aware that God is always watching us as we care about and for his Creation and Creatures.