Sermon: **“Through the Son God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself”** (Colossians 1.20)

Apotheosis! Anyone know what it means? I will tell you a little later!

Star gazing in NZ, especially in deep countryside is so much better than in UK, where light pollution obscures so many stars.

As you look at the night-time sky, you are overawed by the vastness. The furthest galaxy so far discovered is GN-z11, 13.4 billion light years away! Think how long it would take to get there.

Staggering to think God created all this, in such detail and complexity.

Bishop James Ussher said in 1658 that creation began on 23 Oct 4004 BC, based on times in Bible. Others have said diff dates but around the same time. Whilst it might make sense of what it says, the Bible is not a scientific document, never meant to be. I find the scientific account more wonderful. Just think, God had to wait over 13 billion years to commune with humanity! What foresight and planning! TEXT.

Why did God do all this? Apotheosis! The idea that God became man so we could become divine.

This sounds quite alien, and wrong to western ears but is a common belief in Orthodox Churches. Based on:

2 Peter 1.4: **that you… may come to share the divine nature.**

Romans 8.17: **if we share Christ’s suffering, we will also share his glory.**

John 17.22: **I gave them the same glory you gave me.**

**For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.*"*** *(Irenaeus)*

**"For He was made man that we might be made God."** *(St Athansius)*

**"The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."** *(Thomas Aquinas)*

See our hymns today: last 2 lines of “A Frame So Beautifully Formed”, 2nd verse of “What a beautiful name”.

It links with John Wesley’s ideas about Christian Perfection, which are not about being holier than thou, but about a process of purification, perfection in love towards others, self and God.

**Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be** (from Love Divine by Charles Wesley)

 If we find this hard, think it means we will share in the life of God. What a wonderful thought.

TEXT. Heaven becomes not just where we met loved ones, but even more. The whole of creation is to come back to God, to share God’s life. A much bigger picture. What a beautiful, wonderful, powerful God!