

Five Minute Sermon

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A day at the Zoo

Recently, I spent a day at Northumberland Zoo. Like many visitors, I wandered from enclosure to enclosure, marvelling at the variety of creatures that share our planet. There were playful animals, sleepy animals, noisy animals and surprisingly shy animals. But my favourites were the fruit bats.

Hanging upside down, wrapped in their wings like little cloaks, they looked quite unlike anything else in the zoo. They weren't the biggest animals, the fastest, or the most obviously impressive. Yet I could have watched them for ages. They were fascinating simply because they were themselves.

As I stood there, I found myself reflecting on the remarkable diversity of creation. The world would be a poorer place if every creature looked the same, behaved the same, or lived in the same way. Instead, nature seems to delight in variety. Perhaps there is a lesson for us there.

We don't all think alike, look alike, live alike, or experience the world in the same way. Sometimes those differences can feel uncomfortable, especially when we meet people whose lives or viewpoints are very different from our own. Yet communities flourish not when everyone is the same, but when we learn to live alongside one another with curiosity, kindness and respect.

Just as a zoo would be rather dull if it contained only one kind of animal, our towns, neighbourhoods and families are richer because of the variety of people within them. Accepting difference does not mean agreeing about everything. It means recognising the value and dignity of every person and understanding that each of us has something unique to contribute.

The opening pages of the Bible speak of a world created and declared good. Looking around the zoo, it wasn't hard to believe that. From the fruit bats to the farm animals, from the smallest creatures to the largest, there was beauty in their diversity.

Perhaps the same is true of us. We don't need to be someone else. The world needs us to be the person we were created to be.

Now that is something worth celebrating.

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