HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Category: Observations

In a way, there is nothing special about today. The earth just happens to have returned to more or less the same place in its trip around the sun. It does this on a fairly regular basis; once a year to be exact. Then again, the earth is also rotating on its axis, the sun is rotating around the centre of our galaxy and our galaxy is speeding away from the centre of the universe. So, if we are being really strict, the earthÂ hasn't returned to the same place. It's just in more or less the same place in relation to the sun which is moving at a vast rate of knots.

However, we human beings like to find patterns and significance in events. Somewhere in the Northern hemisphere, someone noted that around this time, the days started to get longer; the sun was starting to win its fight over the powers of winter and darkness and a New Year was starting.

Against the backdrop of the universe, the lengthening daylight in one hemisphere of a small planet is hardly a major event. Even on the earth, it's just another year; they turn up pretty regularly. The events of the last year seem important to us, but are they? The rise of Daesh and the ensuing refugee crisis have consumed our news media for the past year, but compared to the rise of the Mongol Empire, the fall of the Roman Empire or, more recently, the Second Word War, our current crises are actually quite small. Placed against the canvas of an unimaginably large universe, they hardly matter at all.

Our earth is just a pinprick in space and whatever we do to our planet, the galaxies will keep rotating and moving outwards, carrying our sun with them.

> ## *Psalm 8*
>
> *1Â O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!*
> *Â Â Â Â Your glory is higher than the heavens.*
>
> *2Â You have taught children and infants*
> *Â Â Â Â to tell of your strength,*
> *silencing your enemies*
> *Â Â Â Â and all who oppose you.*
>
> *3Â When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingersâ€"*
> *Â Â Â Â the moon and the stars you set in placeâ€"*
>
> *4Â what are mere mortals that you should think about them,*
> *Â Â Â Â human beings that you should care for them?*
>
> *5Â Yet you made them only a little lower than God*
> *Â Â Â Â and crowned themÂ with glory and honour.*
>
> *6Â You gave them charge of everything you made,*

> *Â Â Â Â putting all things under their authorityâ€"*
>
> *7Â the flocks and the herds*
> *Â Â Â Â and all the wild animals,*
>
> *8Â the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,*
> *Â Â Â Â and everything that swims the ocean currents.*

> *9Â O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!*

Yet despite this, we are significant, we do matter; not because of the stuff we do, but because of the one who made us. This planet is special because the one who created the cosmos walked on it. We are special because God made us in his image and then became human, himself, in order to restore us to him. One who was greater than the whole universe, the one who created it all, walked on this tiny planet.

Viewed against the vastness of space, or even against the timeline of human history, our lives are pretty insignificant. And yet we matter to God. The events of the last year, the suffering and poverty, the generosity and the kindness are significant because God makes it so. He cares, he inspires and he suffers alongside us.

I am inspired by science. The study of the universe fascinates me and fills me with admiration for the people who devote their lives to understanding the way in which things work. But the real meaning of life, the universe and everything isn't found on the edges of the universe, it is found on tree outside of Jerusalem about 2,000 years ago and in an empty tomb just a few days later.

So, as the earth starts another trip around the sun, and the sun keeps zooming through space, I wish you a significant New Year. Health, wealth and happiness would be great and I hope you get them, but more importantly, I hope you find meaning and significance in a relationship with God who loves this tiny little planet and its weird inhabitants.