

Creationist 2.0

Created to be Creators

22 May 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
**that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.**

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah***

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.

**May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.**

How Great Thou Art

Carl Boberg

Oh Lord, my God

When I, in awesome wonder

Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder

Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Whakaaria mai tou ripeka ki au

Tiaho mai ra roto i te po

Hei kona au titiro atu ai

Ora, mate hei au koi noho ai ai ai

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee

How great Thou art, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee

How great Thou art, how great Thou art

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Bethne Dodd

Life-giving God – You who makes all things new -
Ever since Your Spirit first hovered over the waters of creation
Ever since You first mingled earth's soil with Your breath
to create humanity in Your image,
The world remains charged with Your grandeur.

(based on Gerald Manly Hopkins quote)

Landscapes sing
Stars glimmer
Seas resound
Stones themselves cry out to Your glory
All nature Your book, filled with rough sketches for us.

(based on GK Chesterton quote)

How could we not join in praise for all nature's gifts.

From the very beginning
You remain closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.

(based on Alfred Lord Tennyson quote)

You inspire us with Your creative spark
You renew us with Your Spirit
You fill us with Your love
You bless us with one of nature's most meaningful creations – friendship.

(based on Ralph Waldo Emerson quote)

Yet, there are still times we fail to fully appreciate
the generosity, and everyday blessings,
You, this world and its people provide.

Forgive us...

When we take these things for granted
or view them with a sense of entitlement rather than as a privilege.
When we degrade our environment, others and ourselves.
When we become so dulled to our surroundings
that we forget to be thankful.
When we become so indifferent to the hurts of others
that we fail to notice those in need...

In the privacy of our own hearts we bring our personal confessions to God...
(Pause)

Despite our continued failings,
our mistakes and messes whether deliberate or accidental,
You remind us, in the end these things don't define us, You do.
This makes us even more grateful for Your eternal patience,
Your ever-lasting love and the reassurance of Your forgiveness
through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.
Amen

Reading 1 Genesis 1:1-4a; 26-27

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good;

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Reflection 1

We are useless. Not entirely. As long as we sit still we make perfectly good paper weights. But for the needs of this story we are useless.

Well, that's a fine way to begin you might think. You may think you are useless, but don't dare assume you can speak for me! Which is a fair response. So let me put it this way.

When was the last time we had a brand-new Christian walk into our church as a direct result of who and how we are as ambassadors of Christ? It's not happened while I've been here. And forgive me if my assumptions are entirely too great, but I don't think it had happened for some time before I arrived either.

So, measured by that statistic, we, that is you and I, we are useless. We are entirely incompetent to complete this most basic task of continuing and growing the church.

Now before we all give up, close up and go home, I want to suggest that while what I have just said may be true, I think that it might miss the point. And I think that it misses the point right from the very beginning of our story.

I have this gut feeling that we are stuck in our uselessness, not because we made bad decisions, although we still have to take responsibility for our actions, but because somewhere along the line in the last few hundred years the church lost sight of how God made us. It may seem arrogant in the extreme to suggest, but bear with me a while longer. There are two parts to this as I see it and I want to begin at the beginning before comparing and contrasting the beginning with our now.

In the beginning God created...

Let's think about that for a moment. What is the very first thing we are told about God? God created. The very essence of who God is, is as creator. Being as we are the temptation is to want to move on from that and ask, 'Well, what was created?' But if we do that we miss out on an incredibly important point. God is more than just 'the' creator. God creates. In a sense God self-defines as creator. We could quite reasonably stop in our descriptions of God, leaving off God is love, God is provider, God is comforter, God is..., because God as creator encompasses all these things and more besides. Take a moment and try to think of something that does not involve the act of creating in some way. Even destruction requires creation before it can take place. Without creation there is nothing to love. Without creation there is no provision, no comfort.

Now look at the creation. In particular, the first people.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our own image...'

Stop! What was that? We are made in God's image? What is God's self-image? That of creator. So we, you and I, are made to be creators. Not only that, but everything that God says and does from here on in serves to emphasise our role as creators. From naming the animals to tilling the ground and bearing children, even the building of an ark and making alcohol. Creating in quite literally in our DNA. I would go so far as to say that our true nature is as creators. And before you start saying, 'But I'm not creative,' let's think about what being a creator looks like.

I am going to define a creator as someone who adds something good to the world. That might be physical, or emotional, or intellectual, it might be huge, or it could be tiny. It could be teaching someone to cook, or sharing a smile in passing. A small child creates when it plays with its toys or builds mud pies in the rain. Singing, writing poetry, making, playing, walking. Even resting in the sunshine can be an act of creation as it renews and refreshes our souls and our bodies. Saying thank you, laughing out loud, weeping for lost loved ones, chatting over a cup of tea, mowing the lawn, making a meal, can all be acts of

creation. And in each of these acts we emulate our creator, working out the DNA placed within us.

Jesus, we enthrone you

Paul Kyle

Jesus, we enthrone You
We proclaim You are king
Standing here, in the midst of us
We raise You up with our praise

And as we worship build Your throne
And as we worship build Your throne
And as we worship build Your throne
Come Lord Jesus and take Your place

Reading 2 1 Corinthians 2:6-13

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Reflection 2

Somewhere along the line we, that is human beings, lost the plot. Maybe it was at the point the man said, 'She made me do it.' Maybe it was later. Whenever it was, and I suspect it has happened multiple times down through the millennia, we lost sight of our true nature as creators. Oh, the creating went on, but we either didn't understand, or denied the source of our creativity. In our denial we began to lose faith in who we are as creators. And

from there it is a short step to losing faith in ourselves entirely, closely followed by a loss of faith in others and in God.

I find myself wondering if this is God's wisdom that Paul refers to. That secret and hidden wisdom decreed before the ages for our glory. Let me explain. In God's wisdom we were created to be in the image of God. That image is, first and foremost, of being a creator. You and I have been created to create. But we have lost sight of what that really means. It has become secret and hidden precisely because we stopped being creative in the way God intended us to be. Instead of adding good to the world we began tearing down and taking away. Where once there was harmony we brought disharmony. Where there had been conversation we brought argument. Where there was equality we brought disequilibrium and opprobrium. Slavery became acceptable. Patriarchy became acceptable. Supremacy, be it white or some other kind became acceptable. Division and hatred became the norm. It is no wonder we lost sight of God's wisdom.

But what of the consequences? Leaving aside the obvious I want to suggest some consequences of failing to create that I think are overlooked.

When we stop creating (think back to how we defined creating) we experience a disconnect between what our DNA tells us is normal and what we are doing. If we stop for too long, it begins to build up bad juju. We begin to stop trusting ourselves and other people. That loss of trust combines with a lack of self-belief – because we are not being who we know we really are – and we lose hope. It is no wonder that people in New Zealand and around the world are experiencing such high levels of mental health disorders and suicide. When we can no longer be who we were designed to be we break. Imagine a painter never allowed to paint or a builder never allowed to build or a farmer never allowed to farm or a chef never allowed to cook. What is going on in their hearts in that scenario? Let me dig a little deeper. The rash of farmer suicides in the 80s as interest rates forced people off their farms. As they were pushed away from the very centre of their creativity all too many just gave up. Now think about a young person, forced through an unbending schooling system to do what everyone else does when all they want to do is dance or run or make things. Even the best teacher in the world is not enough if you have shut down a child's passion to create in their own way. Is it any wonder that our youth are killing themselves in unprecedented numbers?

So, what to do? First, we need to acknowledge that the church is no better at this than the rest of the world. Because we aren't. We are just as good, if not

better, at shutting down people's creativity, as anyone else. Let's own that. Let's own our lack of creativity and freedom to create. It's not comfortable. It's not easy. But we can do it.

Then we look God in the eye and ask, 'What now? How can we be creative in a way that reflects the DNA God has placed within us? Let me suggest some homework for this week.

Everyday this week look for a way that you can be deliberately creative. Plan something for each day. It might be 10 minutes in the garden one day. It might be smiling at a stranger another day. Perhaps making something, small or large another. Calling someone on the phone. Singing a song. Going for a walk. Encouraging a child in their learning. Whatever it is that floats your boat. And when we get to church next week we can share with each other what we have created.

We Pray

God who is constantly creating, making, teaching, learning. You have given us your DNA of creativity. Teach us to break out that creativity in all we are, in every aspect of our lives. Gift us courage to be creators in the way you have designed us to be. And as we make our timid steps into this incredible place of being like you, help us to bring others with us. We want to see you glorified in all that we do, revealed in our actions, in our creating. In Jesus, who created with a word, we pray. Amen.

Indescribable

Laura Story

From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea
Creation's revealing Your majesty
From the colours of fall to the fragrance of spring
Every creature unique in the song that it sings
All exclaiming

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.
You are amazing God
All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God

Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go
Or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow
Who imagined the sun and gives source to its light
Yet conceals it to bring us the coolness of night
None can fathom

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.
You are amazing God
Incomparable, unchangeable
You see the depths of my heart and You love me the same
You are amazing God
You are amazing God

Offering

God of the mountains and the valleys, of the dry places and oceans: Your voice speaks to us across creation; the flowers and the trees sing of your majesty; and the stars of the night speak of how much we still don't know. As we offer gifts to you and speak our words of gratitude, help us to hear your voice anew. Give us ears to hear, faith to believe, and determination to truly listen to how you would send us into a hurting world. In Christ, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

Bethne Dodd

During these prayers for ourselves and others, when you hear the words
May your love bring new life to the world
Our response is: **May your love bring new life to us all.**

Humanity. Originally created in Your image, we each retain the capacity to do as much good, or harm, as we choose. The greatest of deeds hand in hand with the worst evil imaginable. The reality of our world confirms this. Our news headlines do not. Dominated by war, violence, and devastation. Greed, hatred and anger. Abuses of power, injustice and inequality, it's enough to blind us to the good that does exist and make us want to give up – many do.

We uphold places and people ravaged by destruction, despair and desperation... (Pause)

May your love bring new life to the world

May your love bring new life to us all.

Your road, Lord, leads to life. May we choose hope and cooperation in relationship with the God who chooses us. Who invites a partnership rather than a dictatorship. For God's love never forces our hand but instead joins with us in making all things new. And enables us to change for the better by gifting us the Holy Spirit, whose purpose is creative transformation - of ourselves and the world around us.

We uphold those we know in need of transformation... (Pause)

May your love bring new life to the world

May your love bring new life to us all.

Life brings its rewards alongside its disappointments. In the midst of it all, give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning. Mould our suffering into compassion. Turn our hardships into hope and our frustrations into passionate justice, that we may see Your will done on earth as in heaven.

We uphold others, and ourselves, in need of Your great exchange... (Pause)

May your love bring new life to the world

May your love bring new life to us all.

Sharing in the words Jesus taught his first disciples to pray, we end together with the Lord's Prayer...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Immortal, invisible

Walter Chalmers Smith

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest, the great and the small;
Through all life Thou livest, the True Life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish, but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory; pure Father of light;
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render: O help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we create with joy and hope and love. May the world be a better place because we have made something good wherever we go.

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.