

Creationist 2.0

The Work of Creating

29 May 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 97

The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!

**Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.**

His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles.

**The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.**

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

Beneath the Southern Cross

Rev Catherine Burton and Rev Malcolm Gordon.

From the ends of the earth
We will sing; God is here, the kingdom is near
In the Land of the Long White Cloud
Christ to dwell, Immanuel

From north and south, from east and west
Beneath the Southern Cross we rest
Found by One who came for all
In this tale of spacious love we're born

This whenua on which we stand
This holy ground made by God's hand
Marred and scarred yet marked by grace
Held and healed in Christ we find our place

God of nations, at thy feet
In the bonds of love we meet
Strangers once, now called as one
Aotearoa, wake to greet this love

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

For the power of a wave, we give you thanks
For the power of the wind, we give you thanks
For the power of the tide, we give you thanks
For the glory of the sun, we give you thanks
For all the in-between moments, we give you thanks
Hear us as we bring you our failures, our pride, our sin
Gift us your forgiveness
In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Homework

I want us to sit for a moment and ponder what it means to be creative beings. Keep in mind that creativity is so much more than making things. It can be making things, certainly. And it is more. Talking, thinking, smiling, laughing, weeping, listening, touching, tasting, seeing, walking, even simply being – allowing the moment to wash over you can be, is creative. Now I know that for some of you, sitting, with nothing tangible to do can feel quite the opposite of creative. You might feel fidgety or distracted or like you are wasting time. For those of you feeling that way, find something to do with your hands. Fold a piece of paper, play finger games, whatever helps you focus and be creative. Now we're going to take that moment to ponder, in our own way, what it means to be creative.

Notices

The Peace

Reading 1 Genesis 1:6-10; 2:1-3

⁶And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Reflection 1

Work seems to have a very narrow definition these days. Unless you are actively engaged in some kind of money-making exercise – be it as an employee or as a boss – what you are doing is barely considered work. Spending all day looking after small children is considered work if you are an early childhood teacher but not if you are a parent. Mowing lawns and cutting hedges is work if you are paid for it, but not if you are a homeowner. Attitudes are changing slowly, but much of the work done in the world is not recognised as work. If you are a full-time parent and you are injured while looking after your children, good luck getting ACC to cover your costs of childcare while you are recuperating. But injure your ankle playing Saturday sport and ACC will come to the party, covering lost income while you recover. If you had a paying job before your injury. Now there are significant equity issues tied up in all that, but it is only symptom of a larger question. What is work?

I am going to go out on a limb here and suggest a definition for work. It won't pass muster for the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment simply because it is far too broad for them to control. But what if we simply defined work as the act of creation? Our definition of creation is adding something good to the world. So now we have work is the act of adding something good to the world.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.

God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

The entire act of creation, from light to human beings, was work. And it was good. The number of implications that flow from here are stunning. I am going to attempt to cover a few of them. I would love to hear from you what I have missed.

Implication 1 – Creation is constant

I am constantly working because I am constantly creating. Ideas, sharing smiles, cleaning the kitchen, looking after the kids, packing someone's groceries, singing a song, watching a sunset, resting in my chair. Some is

obvious work, easy to identify. Some doesn't seem like work until we come back to that idea of adding something good to the world. It doesn't have to be a good that anyone but you can see and identify. It doesn't have to be a large good. It doesn't have to be a small good. It may even seem to someone else as not so good – but it's not up to them to define your good. As you create, as I created, it is good. And it is work.

Implication 2 – Creation is costly

The act of creating, which is work, requires an investment. It is costly. That cost may seem small or large depending on what you are working on. It will certainly require an investment of your time. It may require other resources, materials, money, space, opportunity. These are all what economists term the opportunity cost. In other words, in choosing to create in one particular way, we give up, in that moment at least, the opportunity to create in some other way. As we are often reminded, there is no such thing as a free lunch. And so it is with the work of creating. There are many things I could be doing with my time right now. I am putting those aside to go about the work of creating this message. Which leads me to my next implication.

Implication 3 – Creation is choices

The work of creation involves making choices. As with everything about creation these choices can be small or large – there is no defining principle that dictates the choices. First there is the choice of what we will create. And from there a cascade of other questions and choices. How much time will I spend on this? What resources will I use. How will I decide I am finished? How will other people be affected by my work of creating? What opportunities am I prepared to give up in order to create this particular way? Let me give you an example: Let's say that my work of creating is going to work as a petrol station attendant. Doesn't sound like much but if it is my job, then it matters and it can be just as creative for me as being an artist or an actor. I am creating by engaging with customers. I am creating by supporting my employer to make money. I am creating by earning money that enables me to do other things with the rest of my time. I give up the opportunity to be unemployed. I use my resource of time and concentration and energy. I can work hard at making other people feel good about their day. These are all choices that I can make as I go about my job. Mundane, perhaps. But I want to suggest that it is just as much a work of creating as separating the waters from the waters and making dry land and seas.

Let all creation sing

Paul Zach, Andy Zipf

Let all creation sing before the Lord
and every nation of the earth rejoice,
let all the trees lift a shout of joy
for the Lord is King.

Let the deep waters of the sea resound,
let every mountain, every hill sing out,
let all the fields make a joyful sound
for the Lord is King.

Mighty river, barren desert,
howling wind and stormy weather,
every canyon every valley,
sing your praise and give him glory.

Nature proclaims the glory of our God,
nature proclaims his name.

Every star and constellation,
every wonder in the heavens,
silver moon and supernova,
sing a shining hallelujah!

Nature proclaims the glory of our God,
nature proclaims his name.

Honey bees and weeping willows,
grizzly bears and armadillos,
every narwhal and sea otter,
every son and every daughter.

Nature proclaims the glory of our God,
nature proclaims his name.

La la la la la la - All the earth, praise the Lord
La la la la la la - All the earth, praise the Lord

Reading 2

Mark 6:30-34

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Reflection 2

Implication 4 – Creation is tiring

A fourth implication is that the work of creation is tiring. Have you ever noticed how you can come in from sitting in the sunshine and feel tired? Of course, some of that is your body relaxing and letting go. But I want to suggest that some of that tiredness comes from the creating that is happening as you are refreshing and renewing your being. Then there is all the other creating that we do. Weeding the garden, cleaning the house, walking in the bush, going for a swim, cooking muffins, shearing sheep, just a giant list of creative activity, all of which takes energy and effort. Everything about what we do involves our brain, our bodies, from the simplest task to incredibly complex undertakings. All that effort means we get tired. And getting tired means we need to rest. My figuring is that if it is good enough for God to rest after the work of creating, it is good enough for us to rest too. Of course, I am going to argue in another message that resting is creative in its own way, but for now I want to focus in on the necessity of resting and why it might be important to give more thought to our resting than perhaps we might be otherwise inclined.

Resting Restores

I have been restoring the doors in my house. I want to reuse them because they are solid rimu doors and it would be criminal to throw them away. But they need a little love and attention. And so, with some help from my eldest son, and from Derek and Stef I have been working on those doors. Stripping off the old paint and varnish. Filling holes, resetting hinges and with apologies to the purists among us, painting them because even with all the restoration work they are not in condition to simply slap a coat of polyurethane on. That aside, they are coming up beautifully. The dings and holes are gone and without some inside knowledge you would never know they were second

hand, part used. Resting does the same thing for us. Work, by its very nature puts dings and holes in us. Our muscles get tired, our brains get tired. Often there are emotional drains and spiritual trials and intellectual challenges that go along with the physical stresses. If we don't take time to rest those things all build up. Eventually you find yourself with holes right through and swinging precariously from one hinge. I suspect that is what was going on for Jesus and the disciples. We can see how busy they were by the fact they had no leisure even to eat. Of course, we can all do that for a while. But it's not sustainable over time. Without proper rest we burnout and lose our creativity.

Resting Refocuses

Something else about resting is that it helps us to get an overview of where we have been and where we are headed. You will know the idea of tunnel vision. There are very few of us able to keep both the moment and the big picture in sight at the same time. If all we are doing is head down, focused on what is in front of us it is easy to lose track of where we are going. When you are learning bushcraft one of the things you are taught fairly early on is to not watch the compass. If you do that you will likely walk in a big circle. Instead, you use the compass to get a sighting, perhaps on a high point or a distant feature, then you put the compass away and walk toward that point you have identified. Resting enables us to get out our compass and figure out where we are going from here. Once we have identified that we can carry on with our work of creating. I have this feeling that this idea of refocusing is perhaps more important than it may have been in the past. Change is upon us, and it is a little like the land is moving even as we walk along it. Pausing to rest and refocus helps us to keep a close eye on where we are headed and map out course changes as they become necessary.

Resting Reshapes

Have you ever gone to bed with a problem and woken up with a solution? One thing that resting does is enable resources we aren't even conscious of to go to work. It's kind of like part of our work of creating can only happen when we are not at work. Without good rest we are only applying a part of the resources God has given us to who and how we are. That's actually a pretty cool way of thinking about resting.

Which brings me to our homework for this week.

First up, I want you to keep being purposeful about your creating. Plan to do one thing creative each day. It can be the same thing every day, like I have

done this last week. Or it can be all sorts of different things. Come ready to share what you've been up to next week.

Second. I want you to think about how you can be purposeful in your resting. I'm looking forward to hearing what you come up with.

We Pray

We pause before you, O God, just as you paused after your work of creating. We are each in different states. Some of us energised and raring to go. Others weary and struggling to see any way forward. Help us to find our way in you. Where we need to rest, grant us insight to know how best to stop. Where we need focus, gift us your vision. Where we need to run free point the way and set us on our way. We long to give you the glory with all that we are. May we touch the hem of your robe and find healing and hope in your presence. Through the love and mercy of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love

Offering

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning>

God of justice and mercy: The temptation is strong to make our gifts to you on Sunday feel as if we've done all that is expected, then wake up on Monday and live like all the rest of the world. Deep in our souls, we know that's not what Christ called us to do, but the safe road is so much easier. God of compassion,

embolden us to be involved in some “good trouble.” Embolden us to stand out against the backdrop of a world that says, “take care of your own.” Embolden us to use our voices to speak on behalf of the voiceless, to use our ears to hear the discouraged and defeated, and to use our arms to help the weak and powerless. In the name of the one who conquered death. Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

For the people of your church, near and far

For the message of salvation through Jesus

For the leaders of nations

For the poor, the weak, the outcast

For those we love

Through and in our wonderful Lord and Saviour, Jesus, who taught us to pray...

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

Shine, Jesus, shine

Graham Kendrick

Lord, the light of Your love is shining

In the midst of the darkness, shining

Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us

Set us free by the truth You now bring us

Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory

Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire

Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy

Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence

From the shadows into Your radiance

By the blood, I may enter Your brightness

Search me, try me, consume all my darkness

Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me, shine on me

Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here, may we always see the opportunity of creation and learn to rest when needed.

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.