

Creationist 2.0

Creating is Love

12 June 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 8

O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Your glory is higher than the heavens.

You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength,

silencing your enemies

and all who oppose you.

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—

**what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?**

O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

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

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

GOD, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name.

Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that
drown out foolish talk, and silence ignorant babble.

I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,
your hand-made sky-jewellery,
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,
Why do you bother with us?
Why take a second look our way?

You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,
repeated to us your Genesis-charge,
Made us co-creators with you.

GOD, brilliant Lord,
your name echoes around the world.

Spirit of truth, something in our hearts says: "We are made for light and truth".
But our anxieties and doubts divert us back into the lies and prejudices of the
world:

Create in us a clean heart, O God,

and renew a right spirit within me..

Prince of peace, something in us whispers: "We are intended for concord." But our inner conflict reacts with the world's strife and leaves us suspicious and aggressive.

Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me..

Father of love, something within us wants to sing: "We are created for love." But a discordant self-interest allies with the world's greed and inhibits our will to love others.

Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me..

God of Jesus and our God, forgive us and straighten us out.

You are truth:
Help us to trust you with all that is in us.

You are peace.
Overcome our disharmony.

You are love.
Fill us with compassion.

Loving God, we thank you that our prayers are answered before we speak them. By your saving grace, we are certainly a forgiven and redeemed people. Thanks be to God. Amen!

I tell you plainly: Our sins are forgiven. Let us receive Christ's' grace, and accept the enabling power of the Spirit, and become more than we are today. Amen!

Homework

Take a few moments to share with the person or people next to you how you have been or seen creating at work this week.

Notices

The Peace

Reading 1 Genesis 1:26-31

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.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹ God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Reflection 1

I have been thinking over the last week that this story of creation, of being created to be creators, is a paradigm shift. What do I mean by that? It is a different way of looking at the world to what many of us have grown up with and become familiar with. It's not new. As I said a couple of weeks ago the story really does begin at the beginning. So if it's not new, then how is it different?

In some ways it is a little like a child learning that Santa Claus is actually mum and dad. Nothing has changed about how our Christmas presents have arrived under the tree. It's just that we see the process differently. For some kids it is an aha! moment. For others it is a disappointment, the loss of a fantasy. And for others it is just carrying on from one moment to the next, information filed and life continues.

Now, I'm not suggesting that our understanding of our faith is some kind of fantasy that we need to divest. It is simply an example of how our view of the world can be changed with quite simple ideas that were in front of us all along, but that we hadn't ever noticed before. I have to be honest with you when I say that I have not ever thought about my faith in this way before. This is as new to me as it likely is to you. What I realised in the middle of all this is that I am immersed in this paradigm shift, I am breathing it, I am living it and the temptation is strong to think that everyone around me must be doing the same thing. And of course that isn't the case.

Think about the disciples, living with Jesus, ministering with Jesus, performing miracles with Jesus. They spent 3 years full-time with Jesus and they still hadn't wrapped their heads around what he was saying and doing after he rose again

and fed them fish on the beach. I've preached this created to be creators thing twice, for 20 minutes on a Sunday. The amazing thing is that anyone gets any of it at all.

So, what to do? To begin with, I slow down. I genuinely believe that this way of thinking about our faith, of approaching how we talk about our relationship with God and with each other is potentially world changing. I say potentially because if I rush off and leave everyone behind in my eagerness to reach the end-point there's unlikely to be much changing going on. So I slow down. I talk about the ideas in bite-size pieces. We think about it together and hear each other as we process our thoughts. When God gave the man and the woman dominion over every living thing there was no suggestion that everything had to be in ordered rows the next day. In fact there is a sense that the idea of dominion was less about order and structure than it was about love and care. "Look after these good things I have created," seems to be the underlying principle. No rushing about understanding and analysing. Rather an awareness of nurture and giving attention to. Think of a bonsai master creating a bonsai tree. The work continues day in and day out. Love and attention are given to training and shaping the tree knowing that the task will never be finished. It is that same sense of love and attention that God applied to creation and that God calls the first people to continue. This is where I want to dwell in the moment as it were. Creating is the ultimate act of love. It may not always feel like it. I'm tired and dinner needs cooking and I really don't feel like it. In setting my feelings aside and preparing that meal I don't want to prepare I display love, for myself, and anyone else who may eat with me. It may not seem very loving to slap some baked beans on toast and call it dinner, but it is. Pausing to listen to the world around us is an act of love. One of my purposeful creating moments this last week was to stop and listen to the birds calling to each other. It was a beautiful moment and refreshed my soul. Sharing a moment with grieving person on the other end of the phone is a creative act of love. Knitting a bonnet for a child is a creative act of love. Preparing the soil for the next season's crops is a creative act of love. Holding the hand of a shut-in is a creative act of love. Accepting our weaknesses and frailties, and those of everyone around us is a creative act of love. And all of these creative acts of love flow from the one who created us in his image and saw that we were good. I think that's pretty cool!

The love of God

Frederick M. Lehman

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints' and angels' song.

When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Reading 2 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my

possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends.

Reflection 2

Here's another way to think about all this. 1 John 4:16 tells us that God is love. Genesis 1 shows us that in the ultimate act of love God created the universe, the earth and everything in it. So we could say that love and creation are inextricably combined. Creation could not happen without love and love is made real in the creation. I want to emphasise here that none of this creation stuff I am talking about is in any way new. What is new is the approach we are taking. It's a little like working out geometry from first principles or learning to build a house without any prior knowledge apart from how to swing a hammer.

Now, to be fair, if that sounds difficult, I would be inclined to agree with you. Instead of just saying, believe in Jesus and you will be saved we are going back some steps and trying to understand why we are saved when we believe in Jesus. I think maybe it's like when you build a house you need to put in a good foundation. Jesus is absolutely central as the rock on which our foundation is laid. Then we put in the footings and prepare the concrete base that goes on top. The thing we need to remember is that no matter how good the rock is, if we don't get the rest done well the house will still have the potential to slide off the rock in the event of an earthquake.

With all that said, I want to explore some of those footings in the form of creation as an act of love. First of all, verses 1-3 from our reading in 1 Corinthians. Allow me to paraphrase it this way. I can be as creative as I like, make things, say things, do things and without love infusing every little part of it I am wasting my time. Just as God's motivation to create was love, our motivation also needs to be love. I have already defined a creator as someone who adds something good to the world. I think it is important to hold that definition close when we think about love. There can be a temptation to think that simply doing is a creative thing that should fit the bill. I have found myself sliding that way. But what if love is a necessary part of creating good? I am in a way thinking out loud here – you will probably get a lot of that over the next

few months. What if an essential ingredient for all good creating is the liberal application of love? I am imagining a mechanic peering over a vehicle looking to effect a repair and the love for the task results in a good job being completed. Or a hospital visitor sitting with a sick person and their love for that person enabling that creative act of comfort and encouragement.

And this is where we find the next part of our reading so enlightening. Love is patient. The act of creating requires patience. I think we all know that, even when we are tempted to rebel against it. The act of creating is kind. Yes, creating can involve breaking something down in order to build something else in its place. But there is no sense of hatred or disgust in the process. It is moving resources from one point to another in a way that will make the world a better place. The act of creating is not envious or boastful or arrogant. It has no need to be any of these. Creating is adding a gift to the world. It sees hope and possibility. Out of that hope and possibility comes generosity and freshness. The act of creating isn't looking to twist or break the world, rather it gifts the world with a new way of understanding, a vision of how the world can be transformed into the new heaven and earth. The act of creating lays out vistas of hope and endurance.

And I just know that some of you are listening to this thinking, what does any of that have to do with me making cheese rolls on a Wednesday morning. To begin with I struggled to avoid a trite or arrogant sounding response to a question like that. Until I thought back to the need to slow down. Maybe the best answer is to ask if you made the cheese rolls with love. Because if you did that, all the rest kind of just flows on from that. You may not see it. You may not feel it. But as you create with love it happens anyway. And you know what? I think that's pretty cool too.

We Pray

God who created with love and who continues to create with love we welcome your presence here with us today. We confess that often times we just want to get on with life, or at least let life get on with us. So much of life can feel like hard work and we want to climb off the treadmill. Help us to find your creative love in the midst of our struggles. Help us to creatively rest where we need rest and seed goodness when we are ready to move. Teach us to create with love, in your love. Amen.

Morning has broken

Eleanor Farjeon

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing
Praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven
Like the first dewfall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass

Mine is the sunlight
Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise ev'ry morning
God's recreation of the new day

Offering

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

Mighty God, who is both one and three, we praise you as God above us, God beside us, and God within us. We bring our gifts to you in worship and gratitude as our Creator and Provider of all good things. We acknowledge that our relationship with you in all three persons begins and ends on your side of the equation: beginning with your devotion and not our own, beginning with your wisdom and not our own. We come into relationship resting on your grace-filled love and not our intermittent efforts to be faithful in our love for you. Bless these gifts we give and bless the transformational impact they might have. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

Those affected by the war in Ukraine. In particular today we think of those who are facing hunger as a result of grain not being able to leave the region.

Spirit of God who searches our hearts and knows our thoughts

Intercede for us according to God's will

For leaders around the world who have failed to lead for all their people, captured by money and power and left flailing for answers when those things no longer make a difference.

Spirit of God who searches our hearts and knows our thoughts

Intercede for us according to God's will

For the poor, those who struggle to put healthy meals on the table, or perhaps have no table at all, who have to choose between health care and a roof over their heads, who keep their children home from school because they are too embarrassed to admit they can't afford shoes.

Spirit of God who searches our hearts and knows our thoughts

Intercede for us according to God's will

For ourselves, happy in our own small worlds, failing to hear the cry of the Spirit to look up and look out to see the work of the Kingdom that is in our hands.

Spirit of God who searches our hearts and knows our thoughts

Intercede for us according to God's will

For those we love and care about. The sick, the travellers, our families, young and old.

Spirit of God who searches our hearts and knows our thoughts

Intercede for us according to God's will

In and through the love of Jesus Christ we bring all these things. Amen.

[Do something beautiful](#)

Graham Kendrick

We are a shining light

City on a hill that can't be hidden

A shining light

And this shining light

Is the life of Jesus in us, Oh what a light

The fire of his Spirit burns

With justice, joy and peace

And works through our hands and feet

Go do something beautiful

In the name of Jesus

Do something beautiful

Go do something Jesus would

Do something beautiful

Do something beautiful

We are the salt of the earth
Here to purify and flavour, salt of the earth
Sent through all the earth
To love God and love our neighbour, salt of the Earth
As freely as we received
So freely we must give
And we are his hands and feet

Let your light so shine
Before the world
That all may see
The good you do
And give their praise
To God our Father

Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may our hearts be filled with love, spilling out into all we do and create.

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.

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