

Creationist 2.0

Creating is Patient

19 June 2022

Call to Worship Psalm 43

O send out your light and your truth; let them lead us;

**let them bring us to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.**

Then we will go to the altar of God,
to God our exceeding joy;

**and we will praise you with the harp,
O God, our God.**

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

**Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.**

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!

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

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

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C41sun12.htm>

Most wonderful God, although the immense universe cannot contain your glory, you come to us not as a stranger but as a friend.

Please speak each of our names today, that we may be called away from the burble of the world which threatens to swamp our true identity.

Name each of us, so that we may truly know ourselves and take responsibility for our own lives and live boldly and lovingly. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen!

True confession is not often an easy or comfortable thing. Sometimes God needs to discomfort or hurt us so we might be healed.

Most faithful God, we admit to you and to each other that our deeds rarely match our good intentions, nor do our intentions measure up to our creeds

We have named you as Abba, Father, yet we do not live like your gracious children.

We have named Christ as Saviour but have not consistently lived like the redeemed.

We have named you the ever present Holy Spirit, but often we live as though you were at the other end of the universe.

Please continue to have mercy on us. Forgive us from our all dallying or rebelling. Recall us to our faith and let that faith penetrate deep within the factory of our goals and motives, that from the depths of our being we may be inspired to love and serve you.

For Christ's sake. Amen!

God can be utterly trusted.

If God through Christ says that our sins are forgiven, then they certainly are!
The saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with us all. Amen

Notices

The Peace

Reading 1 Genesis 3:6-13

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."

Reflection 1

Don't you just love it when carefully laid plans go wrong? I was putting hinges on my bathroom and toilet doors this week. Measured everything out, measured again. Made a template, tested the template, made adjustments. Routed out the first hinge spot. Looked good, the hinge fitted well. Did the second hinge. That went well. Started to line up the third hinge but something didn't look quite right. Check once, check again. I had routed out the first hinge on the wrong side of the line. Grrrrr!!! So back to fill the hole and put a new hole in the correct spot. I was so careful. But not careful enough. It gave me some grief, but I sighed, pulled myself together and fixed the problem. That's one of the beauties of working with wood. For the most part it is relatively straightforward to fix a mistake. It requires patience, and a willingness to think about the situation and work out the best way to get back on track.

Of course, working with human beings requires a whole other level of patience. Just ask any parent how much patience is required with children. My grandson, Benji, travels at a mile a minute. He is constantly busy and looking for new things to do. His focus is incredible, but it only lasts so long before he is onto the next activity. How my daughter manages to keep her eye on him

and Max at the same time is quite the wonder. Yet with patience and love she is slowly moulding him into a lovely kid who has a heart of gold and enormous creativity.

Watching all that going on from afar leaves me wondering how God manages to be patient with all of us. Just the first two people must have nearly been enough for God to throw out the mould and start again. Think about it for a moment. God created these very first human beings. And they were good. He was pleased with what he had made. And in the evening he would go out and spend time with them in the garden. I find myself wondering what they talked about. Did they watch the way the animals moved around, enjoying the interactions? Did they discuss the biology of the plants, exploring how the open spaces and full forests grew different trees and flowers? Perhaps they talked about how Adam and Eve were learning about each other, finding all those little foibles and preferences that made them different to each other. Maybe they just sat in silence and watched the sun go down and stars come out in the night sky.

But this, it seems, wasn't enough for the man and woman. Having all they had they still wanted more. It was like they had build towers with their blocks and then looked over to see someone else building a tower, and they wanted those blocks too, even though they already had more than they knew what to do with. It was more than just curiosity or jealousy. For some reason they were no longer satisfied with what they had and they wanted more. Everything just seems to go downhill from there. What was it that was so wrong in the original design that it all fell apart so quickly? Or is that the wrong question? What if the question is more like, 'What is the ideal way to design human beings to be the best they can be?' Now, I don't speak for God, but I am inclined to think that we humans are far more like a fine wine than a porcelain dish. We take time to mature and there is no way of knowing how good the vintage is until the bottle is opened and the wine tasted. The metaphor breaks down almost immediately after that, but I think it may give us some insight into what God was doing. God's very good creation wasn't finished on the 6th day. It wasn't finished on the 7th, and it's not finished even now. In fact, I suspect it won't be finished when the new heaven and the new earth turn up and God comes to live among us.

More than that, I wonder if all the broken bits, the imperfections and the disasters, small and large, are part of that creativity. I'm not saying that

everything bad is good. That's not where I'm going with this at all. But what if, just as Jesus had to come and live among us and experience all we experience in order to be able to offer salvation, our own living is a part of us learning how to be a part of the great creation that is God's ultimate design.

I'm reminded of the art of Kintsugi, or golden joinery. Taking broken pottery and repairing it with gold, the final piece more valuable than the original. Could it be that a part of God's creation is discovered in the repairing of the broken pieces of our lives that we bring to God so the end result is greater than the sum of the parts. Maybe we are human kintsugi, put together by the master craftsman with the gold of the Holy Spirit.

Which rather puts God's patience with us in a fresh light. We are imperfect, right from the beginning, and with infinite patience and deep, abiding love, God is piecing us together to become so much more than we ever could have been, left to our own devices.

How great is our God

Chris Tomlin

The splendour of a king, clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light and darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice, trembles at His voice

How great is our God
Sing with me how great is our God
And all will see
How great, how great is our God

Age to age He stands and time is in His hands
Beginning and the end, beginning and the end
The Godhead Three in One, Father, Spirit and Son
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb

Name above all names, worthy of all praise
My heart will sing how great is our God

Reading 2

Acts 7:2-8

² And Stephen replied:

“Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.’ ⁴ Then he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God had him move from there to this country in which you are now living. ⁵ He did not give him any of it as a heritage, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as his possession and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child. ⁶ And God spoke in these terms, that his descendants would be resident aliens in a country belonging to others, who would enslave them and mistreat them during four hundred years. ⁷ ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ ⁸ Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

Reflection 2

I rather suspect there are very few people who find patience comes naturally. It’s hardly the domain of the baby or small child – ‘I want it, and I want it now.’ With no sense of time or idea of delayed gratification, patience is simply not an aspect of their awareness. No, for most of us patience is won by hard graft and effort or by the simply expedient of it being forced on us through illness or some other life event. And dare I say it, for some of us, we never quite get there. I love that old prayer, ‘God give me patience. And give it to me now!’

When we look at someone displaying inordinate patience we can be fairly confident that patience is a learned practice honed over time through hardship and difficulty. I don’t think it is any coincidence that when Paul writes in Galatians 5 about the fruit of the Spirit, he says one of the fruits is patience. He knows that we need help when it comes displaying patience.

One of the amazing aspects of the story Stephen tells to the leaders of the Synagogue after he is arrested is the unmentioned patience displayed in the story. On the one hand by Abraham and then Isaac and Jacob. Abraham traipsed around the countryside for most of his life, never quite settling anywhere, always on the hunt for the land God had promised him. He patiently waited for the promise. Of course we know that at times he didn’t wait patiently at all. He wandered off to Egypt and got into strife there because he

wasn't where he was supposed to be. He made plans with kings and tribal leaders. He arranged to have a son by proxy when it looked like it wasn't going to happen with Sarah. The truth is that his patience was hard won and not always consistent. The same could be said of Isaac and of Jacob, neither of whom came by their patience gracefully.

And then there is God's patience. We talk about the patience of a saint. How about the patience of God! Centuries and then millennia and still God is waiting for us to get it together. It all brings me back to the kintsugi of God. The active creativity of, 'Let there be light,' requires the patient creativity of watching for the sunrise, of seeing the moon cross the sky, the stars cycling through the seasons, for it to be made complete. It is as if the activity needs to be balanced by the patience for it to take on its full glory. The rich colours of day are balanced by the soft darkness of night. We create and we wait. In the waiting we continually see nuance and colour and shape that we hadn't seen in the active part of our creating. I find that in much of what I do. I create, and then over time I see ways I can adjust and fine-tune. I also see new ways to appreciate what is before me. The finely laced gold of God is worked through me, through all that I do. Slowly, but surely, something better comes into being.

I want to invite you to wait with me, to be patient with me for a few moments. I will put an image on screen for those who like to wait actively but I encourage you to simply wait for God. Try not to expect God to do something in particular – I think we all do that. See if you can allow the fruit of patience to enrich your soul as you wait for God.

We Pray

Incredibly, indescribably patient God, thank you for waiting for us, waiting with us. Teach us to wait with you, to be patient in our creating just as you have been patient with us. Teach us to see beyond our now and into the hope of light and earth and sky, the beginnings of how we came to be. Guide our minds and our hearts as we seek to live out being the creators you created us to be. 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

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

God of power and might, as we offer our gifts to you this morning, we remember how dependent we are on your love and mercy for every good and helpful thing in our lives. We affirm in our giving that all the money and possessions in the world cannot rescue us from the demons that torment and tug at us every day. When we've tried to fix things on our own, we have failed; when we put our trust in your loving power made known to us in Christ, we have found our lifeline. Dedicate these gifts and our lives, that we might not only find our way but lead others toward Jesus, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C41sun12.htm>

For other people, close to us or far off, let us pray.

Wherever some have lost contact with reality, and suffer mental torments through every hour of each day.

Let your life come in its fullness, loving Healer.

Wherever some are at last breaking free and taking the first steps towards independence of mind and spirit.

Let your life come in its fullness, loving Encourager.

Wherever human beings are physically restrained but remain mentally tough and spiritually and mentally free.

Let your life come in its fullness, loving Inspirer.

Wherever they seek a reliable friend, or healer, comforter, adviser, teacher or a sure Redeemer.

Let your life come in its fullness, loving Counsellor.

Wherever people suffer the indignities of poverty, the loneliness of misunderstanding, or the crushing brutality of war;

Let your life come in its fullness, loving Saviour

Wherever the members of your church have traded liberty for legalism, or the living Truth for dogma, or trust for religious fears;

Let your life come in its fullness, loving God.

God of liberty, enable us to enter more completely in to the kingdom of love which has been waiting for us from the beginning of time.

Through Christ, in Christ, for Christ, we so pray. Amen!

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

God, you spin the whirling planets

Jane Parker Huber

God You spin the whirling planets
Fill the seas and spread the plain
Mould the mountains fashion blossoms
Call forth sunshine wind and rain
We created in your image
Would a true reflection be
Of Your justice grace and mercy
And the truth that makes us free

You have called us to be faithful
In our life and ministry
We respond in grateful worship
Joined in one community
When we blur Your gracious image
Focus us and make us whole
Healed and strengthened as Your people
We move onward toward Your goal

God Your will is still creating
Calling us to life made new
Now reveal to us fresh vistas
Where there's work to dare and do
Keep us clear of all distortion
Fashion us with loving care
Thus new creatures in Your image
We'll proclaim Christ everywhere

Benediction and Grace

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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