

# Creationist 2.0

## *Creating Requires Endurance*

*21 August 2022*

### Call to Worship – Psalm 103

Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.

**Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits—**  
who forgives all your iniquity,  
**who heals all your diseases,**  
who redeems your life from the Pit,  
**who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**  
who satisfies you with good as long as you live  
**so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**

The LORD works vindication  
and justice for all who are oppressed.

**The LORD is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

### I serve a risen Saviour

*Alfred Henry Ackley*

I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today.  
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.  
I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer;  
And just the time I need Him He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me a  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives?  
He lives within my heart.

In all the world around me I see His loving care,  
And though my heart grows weary, I never will despair;  
I know that He is leading, through all the stormy blast;  
The day of His appearing will come at last.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing  
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!  
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find,  
None other is so loving, So good and kind.

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Sunrise on the harbour, glittering, sparkling  
Bringing light and shadow to the world  
The flatness of night giving way to shape and depth  
The fullness of God's creation  
Laid bare for all to see

A town waking to the dawn  
Crisp, cool air with the morning breeze  
Gently melts the frosting on the grass  
The fullness of God's creation  
Laid bare for all to feel

Movement in the trees around  
As birds begin their daily rounds  
Air filled with song of Tui, Bellbird, Blackbird  
The fullness of God's creation  
Laid bare for all to hear

We dwell amidst God's handiwork  
Filled with awe and wonder at the bounty of creation  
Sorrow for our sometimes lack of care  
Brings us to our knees – metaphorically for those knees  
that won't bend that way any longer  
Hear our cry for forgiveness  
Teach us to care more deeply and more actively  
Help us to receive your forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### Notices

Thinking about the future Part 2  
Reporting back to Presbytery  
Thinking about how Waitaki Presbyterian Parish can move into the future.  
Tuesday 6 September, 2pm.

## The Peace

### Reading Hebrews 12:1-6, 12-13

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

<sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. <sup>4</sup>In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup>And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—

“My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
or lose heart when you are punished by him;

<sup>6</sup> for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves,  
and chastises every child whom he accepts.”

<sup>12</sup>Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup>and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

### Reflection

I used to do a fair bit of tramping. Not been in years. One of the things I remember about being out in the middle of nowhere was the contrast between the good days and the not so good. There are days, walking through the bush, surrounded by life, the call of birds, the occasional scuffle of animals avoiding you, the sun peering through the trees overhead, when all is as it should be. Everything is great, you're full of energy and it seems like each fresh step takes you into a new world of wonder and joy. Then there are the days when it all turns to mud. Snow and rain, the pack seeming to drive you into the sodden soil, chilled to the bone, head down, counting your steps to the point that you never get past 1. Nothing about you are doing in that moment seems enjoyable or fun. You just have to keep going until you reach your destination, no matter what else happens.

I realise that not everyone listening will have been tramping. I am quite sure that everyone has their own experiences of both energised joy and bone sapping weariness to which we cannot give in.

It is that keeping going in spite of everything else that is what we call endurance. After all, when you're fit and healthy and have plenty of energy it is pretty easy to do what needs to be done. There's not really any endurance

required to run across the road or boil an egg for breakfast. At least for most of us. There are some for whom those activities require a supreme act of willpower. They will get where I'm going in spades (another idiom for you 😊). For the rest of us it is the longer races, the harder jobs that call for endurance. It might be a long day of shearing, or laying a large slab of concrete. It could be that supreme act of endurance we call overseas travel. It is the months and sometimes years of broken sleep with small children. The care for a chronically ill partner or family member. The agonising effort of owning and running a small business. The list could go on and on. All these are examples of endurance, of pushing through the pain, the weariness, the frustration or anger to reach our goal, whatever that happens to be.

Some of you may remember the 1998 Commonwealth Games when Craig Barrett failed to finish his race despite showing incredible endurance. Here is a short clip of the end of his race.

It's worth noting that not every feat of endurance ends in what we might call success. In Craig's case he wasn't able to carry home a medal despite the superhuman effort. It is likely that he will spend the rest of his life regretting not quite making the tape. For Jesus it could hardly be called success to be hung on a cross and left to die. Looking back we might all say, 'Well it was supposed to be that way and see how wonderful the outcome was.' I'm sure Jesus didn't see it that way when, in the garden of Gethsemane, he begged God to not put him through what was to come.

And here's the thing. Not all of being a Christian is easy or straightforward. Some of it is sheer, hard grind. Some of it is painful. Some of it is even devastating. Not because we are Christian, but because we are human. Our faith doesn't shield us from the pain, it serves to remind us that our pain is not borne alone. Rather we have a companion who stands alongside us through the pain.

One of the abiding images from war is that of the soldier holding their friend as they die from wounds inflicted. We often see it depicted in the dying soldier holding the hand of their friend, a comfort as life slips away. That comfort doesn't deaden the pain, doesn't make it all better, but it gives the strength to endure what is coming next. The same thing happens when you sit with an ill friend. You cannot experience what they are going through. You cannot possibly say with any hint of integrity, 'I know what you are going through.' But there is something about simply being there that can bring them strength to endure.

I want to pause a moment and re-emphasise something about creating that we need to be reminded of. Creating is not all about making things. It does not matter if you cannot cook or paint or write or build or act or play or any of those things that have stolen the title of creating. I say stolen, because it is not theirs to own. Of course it is creating to cook a beautiful meal or build an amazing bungalow. But these things are only a subset of creating, a portion. We could imagine that the world of creating is like a giant cake. All those making aspects of creating are a single slice of the whole – they're not even the largest slice. When I say that we are created to be creators I am speaking to the whole cake, not a single slice.

This is why it is so important to understand that creating requires endurance. Of course making things can require endurance. It is the other parts of our lives of creating that are more likely to require the deep endurance Jesus exhibited. Those times we find ourselves searching for God's presence in the midst of hurt and pain can be some of the most creative stages of our lives. In them and through them we surface understanding that can light up the rest of our lives. That is why we look to Jesus' endurance as an example – so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

## Blessed be your name

*Matt Redman*

Blessed be Your Name in the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow blessed be Your name  
Blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise  
When the darkness closes in, Lord still I will say

Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's 'all as it should be' blessed be Your name  
Blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering  
Though there's pain in the offering blessed be Your name

You give and take away  
You give and take away  
My heart will choose to say  
Lord, blessed be Your name

### Reading Matthew 14:13-21

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. <sup>15</sup> When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup> They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." <sup>18</sup> And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup> Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup> And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup> And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

### Reflection

Enduring can lead us down unexpected and creative paths. In our reading Jesus had just heard that his cousin John had been beheaded by Herod. I rather doubt any one of us can truly understand how that must have felt. It is no wonder he decided to try and find somewhere he could be alone to think. How better to do that than get on a boat and set off for the far shore. I'm not too sure how the people got there ahead of him – maybe the lake is fairly small – but no matter, when Jesus arrived at the other side there were a lot of people looking for his attention.

I suspect most of us have experienced this in some way – we are tired, exhausted even – and there is someone, or many someones demanding our attention. In those moments we can turn away from the need, or we can turn toward it. Turning away is nearly always the easiest response. It is the path of least resistance and requires less of our depleted stores of energy. Let them sort out their own issues.

Turning toward the need is something quite different. It recognises that even in the valley of our own wants and needs we still have something to offer. We still have the ability to create hope, to bring life into moments of despair.

I have a question for you. Have you ever, in a moment of distress or anxiety or just plain weariness, picked yourself up and gone to help someone else? I would be completely amazed if you told me you have never done that. In fact I would be amazed if you haven't reached out in love many times over the course of your life.

Now, I want you to take a moment to think about one of those times you have reached past your exhaustion or despair to serve someone else.

Think about the effect it had on the person or people you reached out toward. Think about how you felt and what you saw.

How did you, in that moment, add something good to the world?

What was the good you added?

I don't know for sure, but I think that it is in these raw moments, when we are most honest with ourselves, that the best creating, the best adding good to the world goes on. Perhaps it was in a raw moment that God spoke the world into being. How would it be if, instead of a gentle word of compassion, 'Let there be light!' was a roar rising out of pain and disappointment. And the good that is the world was a result of pressing through that pain to create you and me. Perhaps that is a stretch too far. But what if...?

### We Pray

Sometimes, God, it seems too hard. Too much to bear. We have given it all we have and it's still not enough. And then, in the midst of weariness and pain there is a call for more. A call to endure through our suffering to add good to our world. Teach us to find you in those moments, to press into your strength as we falter in our weakness. Teach us to set our eyes on Jesus, our example of enduring, and find creation bubbling up out of who you have made us to be. In Jesus we pray. Amen.

## Everything that has breath

*Parachute Band*

He is our God

Let all creation bow

The sovereign King most holy one

He sacrificed His life

Washed and cleansed within

Portioned by faith

We're destined to win

Everything that has breath praise the Lord

Everything that's in me praise the Lord

I can praise Him on the highest mountain

Praise Him in the lowest valley

Everything that's in me praise the Lord

## Offering

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

Mighty God, bringing our tithes and offerings to you today, we pray over them and sing your praises. Then we slink back into our day-to-day lives, hoping those gifts meet the expectations of our discipleship. You have called us to more – to speak for you, to make our testimony part of our offering, which terrifies us. Then scripture reminds us that you will provide us with the words. Give us the faith and courage to speak of your love, mercy, and compassion. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves - Sung

### O God, why are you silent?

*Marty Haugen*

O God, why are you silent? I cannot hear your voice;  
the proud and strong and violent all claim you and rejoice;  
you promised you would hold me with tenderness and care.  
Draw near, O Love, enfold me, and ease this pain I bear.

Now lost within my grieving, I fall and lose my way  
My fragile, faint believing so swiftly swept away  
O God of pain and sorrow, my compass and my guide,  
I cannot face the morrow without you by my side.

My hope lies bruised and battered, my wounded heart is torn;



my spirit spent and shattered by life's relentless storm;  
will you not bend to hear me, my cries from deep within?  
Have you no word to cheer me when night is closing in?

Through endless nights of weeping, through weary days of grief,  
my heart is in your keeping, my comfort, my relief.  
Come, share my tears and sadness, come, suffer in my pain,  
oh, bring me home to gladness, restore my hope again.

May pain draw forth compassion, let wisdom rise from loss;  
oh, take my heart and fashion the image of your cross;  
then may I know your healing, through healing that I share,  
your grace and love revealing, your tenderness and care.

### 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

### Where the road runs out

*Colin Gibson*

Where the road runs out and the signposts end,  
where we come to the edge of today,  
be the God of Abraham for us,  
send us out upon our way.

Lord, you were our beginning,  
the faith that gave us birth.  
We look to you, our ending,  
our hope for heaven and earth.

When the coast is left and we journey on  
to the rim of the sky and the sea,  
be the sailor's friend, be the dolphin Christ  
lead us in to eternity.

When the clouds are low and the wind is strong,  
when tomorrow's storm draws near,  
be the spirit bird hovering overhead  
who will take away our fear.

## Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we press through the strain of the ebb and flow of life to discover the unseen creating that grows out of enduring to the end.

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.

BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS: WAITAKI PRESBYTERIAN PARISH 02-0940-0018657-00