

# Creationist 2.0

## *Creating is Lament*

02 October 2022

### Call to Worship – Lamentations 3

The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall!

**My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.**

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;**

They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

**“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,  
“therefore I will hope in him.”**

The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

**It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.**

### It is well with my soul

*Horatio Gates Spafford, Philip Paul Bliss*

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say,  
“It is well, it is well with my soul!”

It is well with my soul!

It is well, it is well with my soul!

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—  
My sin, not in part, but the whole,  
Is nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more;  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend  
Even so, it is well with my soul

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

A comment about how we relate to God.

I know from people's feedback that my prayer last week took some by surprise. Some of you loved the intimacy of the prayer. Others were offended by the same intimacy. I want to take a few moments to address some of those feelings. The first thing I will say is that I was in no way offended or upset at hearing how people felt. I love that you feel you can tell me how you are feeling about aspects of the services.

As I mentioned last week, we humans have a tendency to being very off/on, good/bad in our approach to life. It's the same with our approach to God. We each have a preference for how we connect with God. For some it is important to show complete deference and respect toward God. Anything less can feel disrespectful and not worthy of our God who is high and lifted up, seated on his throne. This is a legitimate way of connecting with God.

Others prefer a much less formal, intimate approach to God, who is our comforter and friend and walks beside us in our way. Addressing God in a similar way to how we would a friend simply feels right. This is also a legitimate way of connecting with God.

The theological words for these two approaches are immanent – God close by as a friend, and transcendent – God high and lifted up. I think it is important to keep in mind that the Bible presents God in both ways. David is described as God's friend and we read that Moses spent hours and sometimes days at a time in God's presence. We can also read of Isaiah's experience of God sitting on a high and lofty throne being very scary indeed.

The point I want to make is that I think God is big enough to welcome any approach we make. Your opinion of what is right or my opinion of what is right only begins to matter when, in our differing opinions we start to fight over who gets to be right. What is important is that we approach God. If someone approaches God in a manner that offends you, I don't think that is their problem. The way to deal with it is not to get in the way of their relationship with God, but to pray for them to have a deeper and deeper relationship with God. And to take the chance pray for your own relationship with God too. This makes it a win-win opportunity for you to both grow in Christ.

Let's keep talking about these things and use them as a way to deepen our connection with God and with each other.

### We Pray

God of high thrones and mighty thunder

Commander of armies and ruler of nations

As your people we are awed and astounded by your power and majesty

Cherished God, of friends and families

Sharing our meals and walking alongside us

As your people we are blessed by your touch and the gentle whisper of your Spirit

Teach us to find you in the unexpected places

Surprise us with your glory

Fill us with wonder at your tenderness

Gift us with the grace to receive you as you come to us

And with the grace to receive you as you come to others

We bring our private confessions before our God of grace

GOD is sheer mercy and grace;

not easily angered, he's rich in love.

He doesn't endlessly nag and scold,  
nor hold grudges forever.

He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve,  
nor pay us back in full for our wrongs.

As high as heaven is over the earth,  
so strong is his love to those who fear him.

And as far as sunrise is from sunset,  
he has separated us from our sins.

Amen.

### What is God like?

### Notices

Our next future church conversation is going to be on Tuesday 4 October at 2pm. We will do a quick overview where we got to last time and then we are going to begin working on where to from here. Between now and the 4<sup>th</sup> I would like you to find an article – from the newspaper, or something online – that highlights something that worries or concerns you about what is

happening in society. Or it might be something you don't understand. We will use those articles to assist our thinking.

## The Peace

Reading                      Jeremiah 8:18-22

*Jeremiah Weeps for Sinful Judah*

<sup>18</sup> My grief is beyond healing;  
my heart is broken.

<sup>19</sup> Listen to the weeping of my people;  
it can be heard all across the land.

"Has the LORD abandoned Jerusalem?" the people ask.  
"Is her King no longer there?"

"Oh, why have they provoked my anger with their carved idols  
and their worthless foreign gods?" says the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> "The harvest is finished,  
and the summer is gone," the people cry,  
"yet we are not saved!"

<sup>21</sup> I hurt with the hurt of my people.  
I mourn and am overcome with grief.

<sup>22</sup> Is there no medicine in Gilead?  
Is there no physician there?

Why is there no healing  
for the wounds of my people?

## Reflection

One thing we don't much like talking about in church is sorrow and sadness. We acknowledge it in others when they lose loved ones, and occasionally at other occasions. But we try hard to move on without giving it too much space. It's not a typical human response, but it is a very white New Zealander response.

The best example is funerals. Let's get this thing done as quickly and efficiently as we can. They're gone now and having everything hang around for ages after a death just makes life difficult. We struggle with the common practice in other cultures of having the body lie with the family for a week or more before the official funeral. My family thought it was strange when, following my father's death, I went down to the funeral home and sat with him for about an hour. For me it was an important part of my grieving process and I was able to deal with things in me that I think I would have struggled to deal with otherwise.

The usual practice for white Kiwis is to internalise our grief and, if possible, to push it deep enough that we don't have to deal with it at all. It is slowly becoming more acceptable to publicly display our grief. I have taken the occasional funeral where the men have struggled to compose themselves and sometimes failed – something that seems to be much harder for men than it is for women.

Of course, grief isn't all about someone dying. We experience grief when we move town, away from family and friends. We experience grief at the loss of a job or a pet. We grieve through divorce and children growing up and moving away. We grieve at lost opportunities, at accidents and injuries, at loss of mobility and eyesight. There is a vast multitude of situations where we find ourselves experiencing grief.

Unfortunately, we are, for the most part, terrible at grieving. And that plays havoc with our lives as we continue on in life. It is a contributor to depression for some people. It is a contributor to drug and alcohol abuse in some. It can be a contributor to tense and broken relationships in families. It can be a contributor to suicide. It can contribute to lost sleep and poor eating habits.

I invite you to read our reading from Jeremiah with me. We are going to go slowly, pausing frequently. Listen for the words, the moments where your heart moves in time with what Jeremiah is saying. Where you need to, pause and let the words wash over you. If you find yourself responding to something in the text don't try to analyse it, just sit with it, and let it happen.

[Jeremiah 8:18-22](#)

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Is there no physician there?  
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You might be wondering at this point how creating gets in on the idea of grief. I want to suggest that there are several points at which creating is deeply embedded in grief.

The first is that whenever we create, we choose to leave something behind. A nice example of this is my dilemma in creating something out of the timber in my workshop. Once I commit to using the wood in a project I can no longer use it for something else. I confess to putting off projects because I don't want to use the wood I have purchased for that project in case I think of another way to use it. Sounds kind of stupid but like that, but it really is an exercise I go through, nearly every time I make something. On a scale of 1-10 where 1, I don't care, and 10, it breaks my heart in two we're probably only talking somewhere between 2 and 4 but it is there nonetheless. Another little example is that when we smile at someone we are creating a small connection with that person. It's not something we can ever get back. Most people would wonder why you would ever want to get a smile back, but for some of us that smile is a commitment that comes at a personal cost. It is a small cost to be sure, but everything adds up.

Another aspect is that, just like Jeremiah's wonderful poetry, grief can lead to beautiful creations that speak across gulfs and years. We are going to take a moment to ponder these works of art that have grown out of grief: Van Gogh's, 'Sad old man,' Yamamoto's 'Return to the Sea,' Kramskoi's, 'Inconsolable Grief,' Vietnam Veteran's memorial, Oamaru Oak Grove.

## 10 000 Reasons

*Matt Redman*

Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before, O my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing when the evening comes

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger  
Your name is great and Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has come  
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

**Reading**                      John 19:38-20:2

### *The Burial of Jesus*

<sup>38</sup> After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. <sup>40</sup> They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup> And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

### *The Resurrection of Jesus*

**20** Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

### **Reflection**

To lament is simply to express our grief. I've long wondered why we see so little of Jesus' followers expressing their grief. It is hinted at with the two on the road to Emmaus, but for the most part it is left up to our imagination. I guess part of that will be that the writers of the story wanted to focus on the,

'He is risen,' part of the story rather than the, 'He is dead,' part of the story. When looking back in time and writing about something that happened 40 or more years ago I suppose it is relatively easy to gloss over the very real grief that Jesus' friends and family would have experienced.

I cannot imagine what it would have been like for Joseph and Nicodemus to take Jesus' body. To wash it and clean it. To take in the cold corpse of a man they had loved and hoped in. To wrap it in cloths, along with the myrrh and aloes and then to step back. To look and see that he really was gone. All sense of life leached from the body. To be gripped by deep, bone wrenching sorrow and yet to continue with the work of preparing him for burial. Then taking him to the tomb, laying him on the stone before stepping out and rolling the stone into its place. Over. Done. Finished. Where is the creating in this grief?

Paul writes in Romans 8

<sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. <sup>24</sup> We were given this hope when we were saved.

I can see Joseph and Nicodemus groaning in disappointment and loss because they had had a foretaste of God's kingdom as Jesus had ministered to them and with them. In that moment it was as if it was all over and everything they had hoped for was gone. But, but, BUT. It wasn't all over and out of the pit of their despair would rise a new hope. The Holy Spirit would come and together with the other disciples they would become a part of God's present kingdom. God would create out of their nothing something marvellous and wonderful.

I briefly explored a few weeks ago the possibility of God creating the heavens and the earth as an expression of grief. It is only speculation on my part, but it makes a level of sense to me at least. I think here we see another act of creation arising out of grief. Perhaps lament, the expression of our grief, is a foundation of all creating.



## We Pray

Weeping God, you lamented over your people, you sorrowed over Jerusalem, you mourn for our world in all our flailing discontent. We acknowledge our sorrow and grief for so many things. Lost loved ones, lost opportunities, lost friendships. Teach us to lament as you come alongside us. Teach us to express our grief in healthy ways and in mourning well to discover the creating you long for us to become a part of. Remind us that pretending to be joyful is no joy at all. And remind us that grief need not overwhelm us if we press in to you. Gift us eyes to see and ears to hear the hope you have promised us. Through Jesus who grieved over his people. Amen.

## Cornerstone

*Edward Mote, Eric Liljero, Jonas Myrin, Reuben Morgan*

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly trust in Jesus' name

Christ alone, Cornerstone  
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love  
Through the storm He is Lord  
Lord of all

When darkness seems to hide His face  
I rest on His unchanging grace  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil  
My anchor holds within the veil

When he shall come with trumpet sound  
Oh may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless stand before the throne

## Offering

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

Gracious and giving God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you this day and pray as we give them that you will kindle in us a deeper faith and a stronger commitment. We acknowledge that some of us have found our way back to you on our own; others of us have lived into a faith that surrounded us from the time we were born, lived out in parents, grandparents, siblings, and spouses. However this faith found its way into our hearts or into our DNA, help us to kindle it to flame, that the world might be set on fire with your love and compassion. In Christ, we pray. Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves

For the people of Turkey, burdened by sky-rocketing inflation. For the people of Afghanistan under the oppressive rule of the Taliban.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer  
When I call, answer me  
O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer  
Come and listen to me

For governments around the world beset by economic and political instability.

For the homeless in Oamaru, those wracked by poverty, tormented by drug abuse.

For ourselves and those we love, our families and friends and pets. For the ill and the travellers and those separated by distance and finance.

All these things we bring through Christ, our Lord, 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

## Amazing Grace

*John Newton*

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch; like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snare  
I have already come  
'tis grace has brought me safe this far  
And grace will lead me home

The Lord hath promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

## Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we discover the creativity of lament, to fill our hearts with the Spirit of grace and the hope of Christ.

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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