

# Creationist 2.0

## *Creating Takes Time*

*23 October 2022*

### Call to Worship – Psalm 65

Silence is praise to you,  
Zion-dwelling God,

**And also obedience.**

**You hear the prayer in it all.**

We all arrive at your doorstep sooner or later, loaded with guilt,  
Our sins too much for us—

**But you get rid of them once and for all.**

Blessed are the chosen!

Blessed the guest at home in your place!

**Dawn and dusk take turns  
calling, “Come and worship.”**

### All creatures of our God and King

*W H Draper*

All creatures of our God and King,  
Lift up your voice and with us sing  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam,  
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,  
O praise him, O praise him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,  
Ye clouds that sail in heav'n along,  
O praise him, alleluia!

Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,  
Ye lights of evening, find a voice,  
O praise him, O praise him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,  
And worship him in humbleness,  
O praise him, alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
And praise the Spirit, three in one,  
O praise him, O praise him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Almighty God, fount of all wisdom, crown of all knowledge;  
give us eyes to see and minds to understand your marvellous works.  
The spring blossoms on the trees sing your praise through their beauty  
The birds chatter and sing a song of joy as your hand holds them up

Let us know you through your handiwork  
and use your creations to your glory;  
you have given us the heritage of this good and fertile land;  
Teach us to respect and use it  
So others may thank us for what we leave to them.

As we ponder these things we bring our confessions before you now...

May God who loved the world so much  
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour  
forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.

Amen

## Notices

### The Peace

Reading Joshua 6:1-6

#### *The Fall of Jericho*

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. <sup>2</sup> But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. <sup>3</sup> You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup> Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. <sup>5</sup> When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."

<sup>6</sup> So Joshua called together the priests and said, "Take up the Ark of the LORD's Covenant, and assign seven priests to walk in front of it, each carrying a ram's horn." <sup>7</sup> Then he gave orders to the people: "March around the town, and the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the LORD."

## Reflection

Learning a new skill. Drawing a whale.

(Link: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/hTZtTIdnI5M>)

We all know that learning a new skill can take time. A very long time ago while I was just 13 a friend and I spent the summer playing table tennis, up to 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. We constantly pushed each other to get better but aside from having a heap of fun we didn't really think much of it. Until we went back to school. Michael decided to join his school's table tennis team. Without even trying he beat the best senior player on their squad. 300 hours of concentrated practice can do that for you. There's a saying that it takes 10000 hours of practice to become an expert. Turns out it isn't true, but it does point toward a truth – the more you work at something the better you will get. I want to dig into how that relates to what we have been learning about creating in a moment, but first, let's think about Joshua and the Israelites marching on Jericho.

The first thing we should remember is that Joshua didn't simply march up, walk around the city a few times and everything fell down. There was much more to it than that. You may remember the spies hidden by Rahab. They weren't there on holiday, they were there to take a measure of the city, to scope out the defences and observe the movement and numbers of soldiers. There was planning that went into this battle. Planning that likely went over several months. There would have been scouts checking out the surrounding territory. Lookouts in place to observe the flow of people in and out of the city. Soldiers being trained. Logistics prepared. The seven days of walking around Jericho was simply the final piece of the puzzle to all the work and preparation that had gone on beforehand.

At the point of marching around the city it is easy to imagine everything fell down and somehow the rest of the city evaporated. I need to pop a few bubbles at this point. Jericho was a fortified town with likely around 2500 inhabitants of whom probable a fifth were soldiers. It covered an area of around 9 acres or 3.6 hectares. To put that in perspective it's around about 3.5 rugby pitches. Marching around an area this size isn't going to take all day, maybe an hour since they would have had to keep some distance away from the walls to avoid missiles thrown by the defenders. In fact it is likely that there wouldn't have been more than a few thousand attackers in the march because otherwise the head would meet the tail and be totally confusing. What I'm

saying is that the scale of the affair is much smaller than most of us have usually assumed.

Even on this smaller scale, planning and preparation was necessary. Everyone involved in the attack needed to know what was expected of them and how they were to behave in the process. When the walls fell down each man had a job to do. All of this would have taken time. It is likely that the time between the spies scoping out the fortress and the walls coming down would have been measure in months, not days or weeks. In the end, the act of destruction would have happened fairly quickly, but the lead-in time was significant. I wrestled with this a little, but I do want to say that this is a magnificent story with ugly undertones. Very little is made of the fact that only Rahab and her family were the only people to escape from Jericho alive. God gets the blame for apparently insisting everything of Jericho was to be utterly destroyed. I'm not sure that the God of Jesus Christ would have asked for that. I think this is an example of people taking God's real instruction well beyond its intent and using God as justification for an act of atrocity – something that unfortunately continues to happen in places even today. But that is not what we are focusing on here. No matter what we think of how the Israelites dealt with Jericho it is a useful reminder that nothing is instant, even coffee requires water to be boiled.

I'm going to pivot away from all this now and invite you to think a little more deeply about creating. What is creating? Early on I defined creating as adding something good to the world. We have dug into what that means and thought about a whole range of different ways in which we can add good to the world, from a friendly smile to tending the garden to making something. All of which is wonderful stuff. And we can go deeper. We have talked about how we are co-creators with God and this is where I think it gets really interesting. If we are co-creators with God, then it is important to remember that we can't just bowl on ahead and do whatever seems good to us. Imagine being on a sports team where every player just did whatever they liked on the field. It would be chaos at best and unlikely to be much fun for anyone. Now think of that team working together to achieve a common goal. Perhaps not exactly what every individual would want for themselves, but so much more satisfying.

What might it look like if we were to become a team with God, working together to achieve a common goal? What incredible things would we see creating not merely as individuals, but as members of a group focused together to co-create with God?

### Take me into the holy of Holies

*David Browning*

Take me past the outer courts,  
Into the holy place,  
Past the brazen altar.  
Lord I want to see Your face.  
Pass me by the crowds of people  
And the priests who sing Your praise.  
I hunger and thirst for Your righteousness,  
But it's only found one place.

Take me in to the holy of holies.  
Take me in by the blood of the lamb.  
Take me in to the holy of holies.  
Take the coal, touch my lips, here I am.

### Reading Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup> But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup> Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

## Reflection

I like working as part of a team. Instead of having to do everything myself I can rely on others around me to pick up parts of the task that I can't do so well. There are opportunities to see and hear other perspectives and ways of doing things. We can celebrate each other's successes and find support in our failures. It's also more demanding because when I rely on someone else to do something I am trusting them. Often they don't do things like I would. Sometimes they do things in a way that makes me cringe. I have to breathe deeply and encourage and support so everything comes together in the best way possible. All of which takes time. Sometimes lots of time. Sometimes time that I would rather spend on other things.

When I lived in Dunedin I played on a social volleyball team. Because it was social and we wanted to make people feel welcome we sometimes had people who could be a little challenging in their skill level. For the most part we learnt to play in a way that hopefully ensured their enjoyment and our thirst for success – we were pretty competitive! I think all of us would have nights when our frustration at limited skill levels would boil over, but let's face it, none of us were exactly world class anyway.

As we think about the bridesmaids in our reading I find myself wondering why Jesus took such a long winded approach to telling people to stay awake because they don't know the day or hour. In the first place, no-one can stay awake 24/7 – the longest anyone managed on record was 264 hours and the results weren't pretty with paranoia and hallucinations. Which leads one to think that Jesus wasn't talking about not sleeping. But what if he is talking about planning and teamwork and taking account of the time that is needed to bring that together? What if the image of staying awake is about learning to look out for each other and preparing together? For a long time I have thought that the wise bridesmaids were just mean. But it is more than that. They were selfish too. If they had cared at all about their 'friends' they would have helped make sure there was sufficient oil for everyone right from the beginning. This is a story about more than just thinking ahead. It is also about caring for others, or in this case not caring for others. Which brings us back to time. Because caring for others takes time.

I used to run youth group camps on a regular basis. One of the things we would do before going away on a camp was to go through the kids' gear to make sure they weren't missing anything important. Invariably there were

missing sleeping bags and towels and plates and cutlery and toothbrushes. It took an hour to do the prep and saved multiple hours at the other end having to sort out missing gear. That investment of time was worth every minute, but it was a real drag in the moment. The outcome was a much happier group of young people who didn't have to spend their time worrying about what they had forgotten or left behind. And a much happier group of leaders who weren't left with attempting to sort out kids with missing gear. As a result we all got to focus on the fun and challenges of camp.

This is where I want to bring everything together. It's fairly obvious that whenever we create something we invest our time into that process. What I think is perhaps too easily forgotten is the investment of time into getting to the point of creating in the first place. The practice time, the planning time, the preparation time. It's all too easy to go to a concert and hear a great performance and forget that it has taken thousands of hours of hard slog to get the concert ready for your enjoyment. The same goes for co-creating with God. It requires an investment of our time in practice and planning and preparation. That may be prayer or studying the Scriptures, it may be the work of building displays or practicing instruments. It may be meeting people and building relationship so that trust is built, and questions can be asked without fear. It may be a whole multitude of things I have never even touched on. Our challenge, here and now, is to press into God and find out what we need to be practicing, what we need to be planning, how we need to be preparing. Some of that has been going on ever since we were born. More since we met Jesus. Some of it needs to begin now.

How have you practiced, planned, and prepared? What time have you invested into co-creating with God? And more importantly, what comes next?

### We Pray

God of the ages, the Alpha and Omega, beginning and the end, we are amazed that you choose to create alongside us. We regularly invest our time in everything other than what you are doing around us. Help us to gain a broader understanding of how we can practice, plan and prepare to work alongside you. Help us to gain a deeper understanding of how you are at work around us and how we can be a part of that work. Teach us to serve each other, encouraging and equipping as we delve into co-creating with you. Amen.

## In Christ alone

*Stuart Townend*

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save:  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied –  
For every sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine –  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand:  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.



## Offering

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

God of the universe, you were with us at the beginning of our lives, and you will be by our side when we draw our last breath. In between, we struggle through life, too often trying to find our way based on our own wants and desires. In our giving to you this day, may you bless us so that we might better keep our eyes focused on you, that one day we might be able to echo your servant Paul as he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. We pray this in the name of Jesus who loved us even to the cross! Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves

*Stef Jeschke*

Lord our Creator,  
We live by your goodness and wisdom.  
The world is not ours, it is yours.  
Our science pursues your thoughts.  
Our technology relies on your laws.  
Our economy lives on your goods.  
Our politics are answerable to you.  
We thank you for the spirit and strength of mankind,  
for spirit and strength are from you.  
You have entrusted us with peace,  
the joy and happiness of all people.  
We pray to you for every human being on this earth,  
whose peace and happiness are in danger.  
We ask you to keep us in peace  
and keep us from  
from endangering the peace of others:  
the peace of our families, friends and neighbours  
and all those we meet.  
God, we humans have been given much power.  
What your wisdom has created  
is entrusted to us unwise humans (or people).  
What you have given so that we may live,  
has become a danger to all our lives.  
We want to thank you for your world.  
We want to protect each other from violence and hatred.

We want to guard your gifts:  
people, their happiness and the life of all living things.  
We pray to you, Creator of this world,  
help us and give us success.  
Amen

### The Lord's Prayer

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

### The church's one foundation

*S J Stone*

The church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
we are a new creation  
by water and the Word.  
From heav'n he came and taught us  
what perfect love can be;  
through life and death he sought us,  
and rose to set us free.

The church in ev'ry nation  
is one through all the earth;  
our charter of salvation,  
one God, one faith, one birth;  
one name together blessing,  
one holy food we share,  
to one hope ever pressing,  
at one in work and prayer.

Still, schisms, tribulation,  
and hatred fuel our war;  
we wait the consummation  
of peace forevermore.  
The saints their watch are keeping;  
their cry goes up, "How long?"

And soon the night of weeping  
shall be the morn of song.

Yet we on earth have union  
with God, the Three in One,  
and mystic, sweet communion  
with those whose rest is won.  
Oh, happy ones and holy!  
God, give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
may live eternally.

### Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here may we find time to prepare ourselves to co-create  
with Jesus

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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