

Creationist 2.0

Creating is Seeing

01 January 2023

Call to Worship – Luke 1

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

O come, O come Immanuel

Translator: J M Neale

O come, O come, Immanuel,

and ransom captive Israel

that mourns in lonely exile here

until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel

shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,

who ordered all things mightily;

to us the path of knowledge show

and teach us in its ways to go.

O come, O Key of David, come

and open wide our heavenly home.

Make safe the way that leads on high

and close the path to misery.

O come, desire of nations. bind
In one the hearts of all mankind!
O bid our sad divisions cease.
And be yourself our King of Peace

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Summer rain and mist and wind
Colder out, wet grass, slippery paths
Looking out from inside
It's good for the garden
But I don't like it, even so
Summer sun and warm breezes
Brilliant glare and shining waves
Looking in from the outside
It's good to be warmed right through
But others don't like it, even so
How different we are, you and I
Designed to complement, to challenge
To support, to balance
Made in God's image
And never the same

Forgive us, God, for the times we forget our differences are our greatest strength. Help us to see past our desire for sameness and into your vast imagination of all the different things it means to be human.

We bring our private confessions to God...

Merciful Lord, grant us, your faithful people pardon and peace,
that we may be cleansed from all our sins,
and serve you with a quiet mind;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Notices

The Peace

Reading Revelation 21:1-6a

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;
⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”

Reflection

There is something about sight as one of our senses that goes much further than the obvious – the things we do that rely on being able to see. It is devastating for someone to lose their ability to see the world around them. Their world contracts and becomes less. At least for a time. The fascinating thing is to watch someone who has been blind for a long time, perhaps their whole life. Somehow they discover ways to sense the world that go beyond sight. Their sense of hearing becomes more acute. Their awareness of the world through touch and taste and smell is enhanced. It is almost like they lose one thing and gain another. It’s not that those of us with the ability to see through our eyes can’t be more deeply aware of the world in other ways. It is that because we can see we don’t bother. Perhaps that is to our loss.

I think, though, that there is more to seeing than the use of our eyes or even our other senses. We touch on it when someone explains a situation to us and we respond by saying, ‘I see.’ It’s not that we see in physical sense. Rather, we have formed an idea in our minds that enables us to work with what we are being told. It goes further than that too.

We human beings have the ability to hold great ideas in our heads. Ideas that encompass more of life than we may ever experience as individuals. Ideas that reach into the physical world and ideas that reach into the world of imagination. Think of the child playing with their toys, utterly wrapped up in an imaginary universe of their own design, everything accounted for down to the nail polish on imagined toes and the colour of the imagined car. As adults we can be forgiven sometimes for playing down those imagined places and people. Yet without our imagination none of us would accomplish much in life. Whether it be the imagined world of the young person longing to get married and have a family, or the imagined world of the person longing to own and run a business or to buy a house. Or the imagined world of travelling or shifting house or planting a garden.

All these things are aspects of seeing a world that doesn't exist anywhere outside our heads. It is exactly what was going on for John when he had the vision in our reading. He was seeing a vision of a world that didn't exist right then. It was a vision of something to come. That vision creates a new Jerusalem, it sees the home of God among mortals. It sees the death of death and the passing of mourning and crying and pain.

That world was not then. It is not now. It is to come. Within this imagined world are the seeds of that world. Because the creativity of God, reflected in the creativity of us human beings works to bring this world into being. It's no different to you thinking of a task that needs to be, then getting on and completing that task. You have seen in your mind what needs to be done and, in the course of some time and some work you have made what was merely imagined into something that is real.

I have played around with this idea in my head for a while now and I find it truly incredible that the person who would describe themselves as the least creative among us – whoever that might be – is constantly creating in their minds and then turning those creative thoughts into reality. You might be tempted to toss out the idea and explain it away as simply a part of doing what needs to be done. I am telling you right now it is far more than that. Whenever you think of something that needs to be done you are engaging in a genuinely creative act. In fact, without that act of creativity you would do nothing at all. You would simply sit there, blind to the world, mute, deaf, with no interactions at all. Your act of tuning in to this service, whether online or at home is an act of creating. You change the world a tiny bit when you have an idea and then act on it.

Let's take that idea just a little further.

This is a little dependent on what time of day you are watching, but I am going to work on the premise that it is mid-morning. What are you going to have for lunch? A sandwich? Filled roll? Fish and chips at the wharf? Coffee and cake? Whatever it is, hold it in your mind and imagine changing a single ingredient. Dressing instead of mayonnaise, beetroot instead of tomato, spinach in place of lettuce. I don't know, whatever takes your fancy. Now, which option are you going to have for lunch? You have just created in your mind two different ways of seeing the world.

OK, some of you are thinking, that's just silly. But what if you take that simple idea and apply it in other ways, to other circumstances, in larger ways, in more influential ways. Maybe no-one cares what you have in your sandwich. They

might care more about how much you contribute to the Sunday offering, or whether you choose to chat with your neighbour, or how you respond to a letter from a family member. In every circumstance of life your ability to see beyond the right now in front of you gives you the power to create new possibilities and new opportunities. Creating is seeing. More than any of us know.

We Pray

God who sees us. Who sees our hearts. Who sees our concerns and our hopes and our dreams. You have created us to see too. To see you. To see ourselves. To see each other. To see the world around us. To see what might be before it comes into being. Thank you for the incredible trust you place in us as co-creators with you. For letting us create, even when we are not conscious of what we are doing and changing in our world. Teach us to become more aware of how we create and what happens when we create, even, maybe especially, in the small things. Through Jesus who thought about us and brought us into being we pray. Amen.

God of Wonders

Chris Tomlin

Lord of all creation
Of water, earth, and sky
The heavens are Your tabernacle
Glory to the Lord on High

God of wonders beyond our galaxy
You are holy, holy
The universe declares Your majesty
You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth
Lord of heaven and earth

Early in the morning
I will celebrate the light
And as I stumble through the darkness
I will call Your name by night

Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth

Offering

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

God of glorious surprises: Like the wise men sent by Herod, we, too, come as searchers for a glimpse of your presence. Just like the people in those days, we are surprised that we find you not in a palace but in a stable, surrounded by a family of poor refugees and worshiped by the lowly shepherds. Like them, our gifts from our wealth seem simultaneously too material and woefully shabby and outshone by what you have given us. Just the same, use our gifts for the work of justice, mercy, and compassion—as would befit the Saviour who sleeps in a manger. It's in his holy name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

For the world we live in, the plants and animals threatened by vast extinction events. The lakes and rivers and oceans polluted by plastics and oils and other waste. The people struggling to breathe air clogged with particulates and carcinogens.

There is much we don't understand so we bring it all to you

Gift us strength to serve our world as we serve you

For the people we live among, the wealthy and the poor, the strong and the weak, the healthy and the ill, all searching for meaning in a world that has turned its back on the meaning found in Christ.

There is much we don't understand so we bring it all to you

Gift us strength to serve our world as we serve you

For ourselves, old and young, fit and not so fit, hope-filled and bewildered. Longing for those we have lost. Hoping for those we love. Dismayed over opportunities missed. Grateful for life lived.

There is much we don't understand so we bring it all to you

Gift us strength to serve our world as we serve you

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

Jesus is Lord

David John Mansell

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it

For by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it
Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
In flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding
Yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror
From death he rose; and all his foes shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
To show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

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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