

Creationist 2.0

Creating Breaks Boundaries

12 March 2023

Call to Worship – Psalm 95

O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

**In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.**

The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

**O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!**

**For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.**

All things bright and beautiful

Cecil Frances Alexander

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flow'r that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Mud and silt fills streets and gardens and homes
Broken trees clog streams and rivers
Hillsides slide about as if on marbles
Nice, gentle rain is one thing
Raging torrents of water fed by gravid tropical cyclones
Is another thing indeed

We watch these things on TV
And pray that it won't happen to us
These randomly destructive acts of the creation
Are too big, too dangerous, too much

How do we find you in the midst of these things, God?
How do we understand the casual devastation
wrought by nature on our world?

Forgive us for turning in on ourselves at these times
Yes, we try to contribute, to support, to care
At the same time, in the back of our minds we are simply grateful that it
happened to somebody else. That it wasn't us.

Teach us to lift our eyes to you in the midst of disaster
To discover hope in Christ even as the world seems to collapse in on us
We bring our private confessions to you now...

Merciful Lord,
grant to 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.

The Peace

Reading

John 4:5-15

⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Dramatic Reading 1

Reflection

Whenever we go into creating mode we break boundaries. Often the boundaries are almost invisible, unnoticed because they are familiar spaces that we cross and recross regularly. For example, when we share something with our neighbour across the fence. It might be something out of our garden, or perhaps a tool, a conversation, or a hand to move a heavy weight from one place to another. That fence is a boundary we see every day, a demarcation between our place and theirs. When we share with each other the role of the fence shifts from being a barrier that keeps the other out to being a symbol of what we have to share.

There was no visible boundary between Jesus and the woman at the well. It was, in many ways an imagined barrier – created by years of historical and cultural bad temper if I can be blunt. The Samaritans were those who had stayed in the land when their wealthier and better educated brethren had been transported to Babylon. When the Babylonian Jews returned they treated those who had remained as unworthy castoffs and pushed them into what

became known as Samaria. It couldn't even properly be characterised as racism – they were all of the same heritage. It was more of the upper class rejecting the lower class.

Jesus, on breaking the barrier of moving into Samaria in the first place (it was a shortcut to Jerusalem), almost immediately breaks two more barriers by speaking to a Samaritan Woman.

And here is the things about breaking barriers. It creates opportunities.

Reading John 4:16-26

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Dramatic Reading 2

Reflection

It took me a little while to get my head into this. You see, for some reason I have this persistent thought that Jesus speaks and everyone listens. Just because. That somehow he has this kind of magical ability to command people's attention just because he looks in their direction. I think we can be quite sure that our reading is only a summary of the main points of Jesus' conversation – after all, there was only the woman and Jesus there for most of it. I suspect that the conversation they had was far more convoluted and involved than what we read about today. I suspect the woman wasn't well educated, if at all, and there would have been a bit of discussion to get to a common point of understanding. I think we can see that reflected in the

woman's response to Jesus talking about the water – 'I want some of that water so I don't have to keep coming here to get water.' She clearly didn't understand what Jesus was saying at all.

Jesus has broken some barriers to have a conversation, but there are still plenty of barriers in the way of understanding. So Jesus changes tack. 'Go and get your husband.' I confess I have always read this part of the exchange as the woman being blown away at how Jesus knows so much about her. Now, I'm not so sure. I think she is intrigued. But I don't think she is in any way convinced. Her response is kind of a, 'Sure, sure, you're saying all this, but I'm just going to wait for the Messiah because he will sort it all out.'

Personally I think cynical is a reasonable response in the situation. Strange man turns up, talks about water that never runs out, does a magic trick to tell me how many husbands I've had. Probably worth getting a few more eyes on the scene. I'll be right back...

Just let me say

Geoff Bullock

Just let me say how much I love You
Let me speak of Your mercy and grace
Just let me live in the shadow of Your beauty
Let me see You face to face
And the earth will shake as Your Word goes forth
And the heavens can tremble and fall
But let me say how much I love You
O my Saviour, my Lord and friend

Just let me hear Your finest whispers
As You gently call my name
And let me see Your power and Your glory
Let me feel Your Spirit's flame
Let me find You in the desert
'Til this sand is holy ground
And I am found completely surrendered
To You, my Lord and friend

So let me say how much I love You
With all my heart I long for You
For I am caught in this passion of knowing
This endless love I've found in you
And the depth of grace and forgiveness found
To be called a child of God
Just makes me say how much I love You
Oh my Saviour, my Lord and friend

Reading John 4:27-42

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world."

Dramatic Reading 3

Reflection

For every person who breaks a barrier there will be several more who want to put those barriers right back up. Barriers make us feel safe. There is an experiment that was done some years ago where some children were taken into a great open paddock and given lots of toys to play with. The children huddled into a small group and just sat there doing very little if anything. After a little while a fence was erected around the area. There was plenty of room to play but there were also clear boundaries. The children quickly spread out, all over the enclosed space and played their hearts out. Now, there are significant questions about the hows and whys of the experiment and even the obvious conclusions raise questions that are not easily answered. But it would be safe to say that those children felt freer to play within the boundary than they had without a boundary.

Does that make boundary good, no boundary bad? I don't think it is that simple. There's not a person in this space who has not stepped over a boundary in some way over the years. There are some who make it their business to step over boundaries. Others for whom stepping over is a fear filled act. What seems clear to me is that judiciously stepping over boundaries enables creating to happen in all sorts of ways, some expected and some deliciously unexpected.

Look at the creating that happened as a result of Jesus stepping over those at Jacob's well. Perhaps we could gain from pushing our boundaries a little more...

Reading

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.⁹ Much more surely

then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Reflection

The biggest boundary Jesus stepped over was the transition from being in the form of God to becoming a human being. The act of becoming human, living as fully human, then dying as fully human enabled the boundary between us and God to be bridged. I find it fascinating that after 2000 years of scholarly debate no-one agrees on exactly how it works. And that inability to pin God down, to use our wisdom to explain God, is simply brilliant because it creates a space in which we can explore and become more than two dimensional Christians who dance to the same tune every Sunday.

Ahh, but then I am pushing up against our own barriers when I say that. Those boundaries we have erected keep me safe, away from potential dangers, real, or imagined. Exploring is dangerous. People get hurt when they go exploring. Yes, they do. And they also discover new things, new ways of being, new places and activities that bring joy. They create.

Perhaps we could think about it this way. In creating the world, us, everything around us, God opened up to the possibility of incredible pain and disappointment. And to the certainty of joy and hope and love. I suspect you can't have one without the other. Created to be creators, we are called to be open in the same way – to joy and hope and love as well as pain and disappointment. Perhaps that is what creates in us endurance, character and hope.

We Pray

God, who experiences our pain and our joy alongside us, we bring our barriers to you today. Most often they are barriers of our own making, formed out of fear, we hesitate to move far from what is safe. We miss out on the life lived to the fullest that comes from making ourselves vulnerable and available to your call on our lives. We miss the opportunities that come from walking alongside Jesus and going places that can seem dangerous even though our Saviour is right next to us.

Forgive us for being so fearful. Forgive us for so often failing to follow our call. Gift us with renewed courage to break down boundaries and learn to create in all the glory you have given us. Through Jesus who lived to break down boundaries we pray. Amen.

O come to the altar

Steven Furtick

Are you hurting and broken within
Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin
Jesus is calling

Have you come to the end of yourself
Do you thirst for a drink from the well
Jesus is calling

O come to the altar
The Father's arms are open wide
Forgiveness was bought with
The precious blood of Jesus Christ

Leave behind your regrets and mistakes
Come today there's no reason to wait
Jesus is calling
Bring your sorrows and trade them for joy
From the ashes a new life is born
Jesus is calling

Oh what a Saviour
Isn't He wonderful
Sing alleluia, Christ is risen
Bow down before Him
For He is Lord of all
Sing alleluia, Christ is risen

Bear your cross as you wait for the crown
Tell the world of the treasure you've found

Offering

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

God, our provider, in Christ you give us a spring of pure water that overflows to eternal life. Your love and hope fill our hearts, so we want to worship you in Spirit and truth. Open our eyes to see the places in this neighbourhood where our church's ministries could reach new people. Direct our gifts and offerings for your purposes, so that our community will become like a field ripe for harvest. We ask this through Christ, our risen Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves – Anthea Brown

"Almighty God, Our World, has wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornados and other disasters.

Our World, has poverty, diseases, pollution and a myriad of other ailments, affecting mankind. Our planet, which you have created, has given us so much beauty and pleasure, but for many it is a place where there is fear, loneliness, and hopelessness.

In our private prayers, let us remember people of all nations who are struggling. So many do not know anything about Jesus and we also pray for them that they can hear and receive the word of God and find peace in their hearts as well as salvation.

Let us spend time in prayer...

Lord God, We give you thanks for the many blessings we receive from you. We have life in its many different forms and colours, changing seasons, friends, pets, food, somewhere to live, families, including our Church family, and the ability to love and to give love. . Help us to be mindful of others and appreciate all you have done for us . We think of our Church and pray for wisdom and discernment for Andrew, our Parish Council, and other leaders.

In our private prayers, let us ask God to forgive us for those times we have sinned and let us also pray for those we love and care for...

All these things we pray through Christ our Saviour 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

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 push beyond the barriers we have erected to create in the name 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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