

# Creationist 2.0

*Easter Sunday*

*09 April 2023*

Call to Worship – Psalm 118

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
**his steadfast love endures forever!**

The LORD is my strength and my might;  
**he has become my salvation.**

This is the gate of the LORD;  
**the righteous shall enter through it.**

I thank you that you have answered me  
**and have become my salvation.**

The stone that the builders rejected  
**has become the chief cornerstone.**

This is the LORD's doing;  
**it is marvelous in our eyes.**

This is the day that the LORD has made;  
**let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

*Here is love vast as the ocean* William Rees

Here is love, vast as the ocean,  
loving-kindness as the flood,  
when the Prince of Life, our Ransom,  
shed for us His precious blood.

Who His love will not remember?  
Who can cease to sing His praise?  
He can never be forgotten  
throughout heav'n's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion  
fountains opened deep and wide;  
through the floodgates of God's mercy  
flowed a vast and gracious tide.  
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,  
poured incessant from above,  
and heav'n's peace and perfect justice  
kissed a guilty world in love.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me  
by Thy Spirit through Thy Word;  
and Thy grace my need is meeting  
as I trust in Thee, my Lord.

Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring  
Thy great love and pow'r on me  
without measure, full and boundless,  
drawing out my heart to Thee.

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

This is the day that the LORD has made;

A ball of nuclear fire glows above our heads  
Energy that sustains life and can so easily end it  
Warming our planet and shaping its course  
Perfect for life, perhaps unique in the universe

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Our local star drives the wind and the rain  
Powering the weather systems around the world  
Cyclones and hurricanes, rainstorms and drought  
Ocean currents carrying life, bringing life

This is the LORD's doing;

The miracle of life is constantly before us  
The cycle of seasons brings life, harvest, and death  
The sun rises, then it sets  
The glory of God shining through it all

It is marvelous in our eyes.

In the moment we pause to watch  
We are astounded by the magnificence of creation  
Equally saddened by how much we miss in our self-interest  
What a miserable people we are for seeing so little of God's wonder

We bring our confessions to God in the silence...

People of God, "by grace you are indeed saved, by a faith that is not your own making. It is a gift of God" through Christ in the fellowship of the his living Spirit.

## The Peace

Christ is risen!

**he is risen indeed!**

The peace of the living Lord Jesus be always with you!

**And also with you!**

## Reading

Acts 10:34-43

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

## Reflection

The book of Acts is populated by a people who are trying to get their heads around what God is doing. It is plain by the end of the book that they are groping for understanding just as hard as they were when they were desperately attempting to work out what Jesus was talking about as he walked around Galilee. By the time Peter arrived at Cornelius' house you could be forgiven for thinking that perhaps he had got his act together and was starting to figure out what was going on. Yet it had taken a supernatural event for him to even make the journey to Joppa, breaking through his built in racism against foreigners. Even then you get a sense that he arrived expecting nothing much to happen given his obvious surprise at the Holy Spirit coming on Cornelius and his household. And while I am determinedly against racism I have a feeling that the surprise factor as Peter is faced with a radical challenge to his sensibilities is incredibly healthy.

Then there is the surprise the disciples expressed when Jesus rose from the dead. Peter speaks about it as if it were a foregone conclusion. By now he has had time to process the amazing events of Jesus' death and resurrection, but at the time they had no idea what was going on.

Here's what I think. I think that the sense of surprise we see all through the Gospels and Acts and even, in some places in the letters is an essential part of our faith. I think that when we cease to be surprised by what God is doing in us and through us and around us we begin to sink into a malaise that leads to hopelessness and death. I have a suspicion that many of the stories of failures in the Old Testament begin with people ceasing to be surprised by what God is doing.

Let's be real here. We know the Easter story, inside and out, backwards and forwards. The downside with that is that we are often no longer surprised by it. We no longer ask ourselves, 'How did that happen? What was God thinking? Why did it have to be that way?' So we begin to miss the excitement of the chase, of learning fresh ideas and being challenged to follow Christ in new ways. When we think we know it all we risk falling into the trap David fell into with Bathsheba, Elijah fell into after the prophets of Baal, Jonah fell into when he fled Joppa, Peter fell into when he had to be persuaded to visit Cornelius. It is a trap that leads to missing the best God has for us, that addicts us to comfort and sameness, that pushes out the sense of wonder that came with our first love in favour of stability and permanence.

This Easter I want to invite you to be amazed again by God. Be surprised. Be astounded. Be astonished. Not because you know the story so well, but as if you don't know the story at all and God is calling you to learn it again.

## 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

[Reading](#)                      Colossians 3:1-4

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, <sup>3</sup> for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

[Things Above, Down to Earth](#)

For the fruit of the Spirit

**is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,  
gentleness, and self-control.**

We have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit,

**and we all share the same Spirit.**

Put on the whole armour of God,

**so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

Above all else, guard your heart,

**for everything you do flows from it.**

The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow.

**But the things we can't see now will last forever.**

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love,

**I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.**

Let us come before him with thanksgiving

**and extol him with music and song.**

[In Christ Alone – Video](#)

## Reading

### Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." <sup>8</sup> So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

## Reflection

Isn't it interesting to find the words fear mixed with great joy. I always find myself laughing at the angel saying to Mary and Mary, "Don't be afraid." What on earth else are they going to be besides afraid? A being whose appearance is like lightning and dressed in clothing white as snow rolling back a huge stone after an earthquake. I suspect I would be quite afraid as well.

So the women rushed off to tell the other disciples and they were filled with fear and great joy.

Those are both powerful emotions on their own. Putting them together would have been a potent mix. Now, I could reasonably stand to be accused of being cynical when I suggest that perhaps a degree of our Easter celebrations as Christians has as much to do with rote learning as it does with genuine wonder, let alone fear and great joy. We happily cry out, "Christ is risen," and respond with, "He is risen indeed." Yet how much of that is filled with the kind of gut churning fear and heart palpitating joy of the sort those two women experienced when they discovered he has indeed risen?

I know, I know, that particular moment has passed and will never be repeated and the question immediately arises, "How can we possibly experience that fear and joy?" Perhaps we can't in the same visceral manner, but that doesn't mean we can't set aside our reasoned knowing and be afraid of the

consequences, excited about those same consequences, stunned and amazed that this is all happening at once.

And so I make the invitation again. This Easter be amazed by God. Be surprised. Be astounded. Be afraid. Be astonished. Be excited. Be joyful. Not because you know the story so well, but as if you don't know the story at all and God is calling you to be in it again. To remember your first love and glory in it.

Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed!

### We Pray

God of surprises, of wisdom and grace we pause in your presence. Surprise again this day, we pray. Grasp us by our expectations and comfortable presumptions and squeeze us until we experience anew the fear and joy and astonishment that Jesus' disciples experienced that first Easter. Forgive us for the times we fail to be surprised by all you are and all you do in us. Teach us to be a constantly surprised and surprising people. Through Jesus, who never missed the opportunity of a fresh surprise. Amen.

### Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in his wonderful face  
And the things of earth  
Will grow strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace

### Offering

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

Mighty God of Resurrection and Redemption, we offer our gifts alongside our alleluias! We long for Easter to fill us and soak into our bones like those who were confronted in a graveyard by angels announcing, "He is not here, he is risen!" May we run from here, not walk, because we and every corner of the world so desperately need to hear the news the angels share! Before we speak a word, may others see in our faces that the world has been turned upside down. You win; death loses. In the name of the risen Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Prayer for Others and Ourselves

For those people for whom Easter holds no mystery and no hope

**God of Easter, in your mercy move us in action as well as prayer**

For those people whose Easter is simply more isolation and sadness

**God of Easter, in your mercy move us in action as well as prayer**

For those people who enter Easter in war or famine or disease

**God of Easter, in your mercy move us in action as well as prayer**

For those people who face Easter filled with hatred and enmity

**God of Easter, in your mercy move us in action as well as prayer**

For those we love, our friends, our families, our pets

**God of Easter, in your mercy move us in action as well as prayer**

For ourselves as we dwell in the hope that comes from knowing the One at the centre of Easter

**God of Easter, in your mercy move us in action as well as prayer**

Through Christ who acted for our salvation we pray. Amen

### Communion

Great prayer of thanksgiving

The LORD is our shepherd

In a world that grasps after everything

We lack nothing

Our strength, our hope, our lives

Come from You, O God

**You alone are worthy of our praise**

You set our feet in good places

The richness of Your presence

Makes every hillside green

The rushing streams and still pools

Gift us rest amidst the rush of life

**You alone are worthy of our thanks**

You travel with us in our darkest fears

When life becomes too hard

When our burdens become too heavy

Your presence in our darkness

Brings comfort and peace

**You alone are worthy of our praise**



You are behind us and before us  
In sin and hopelessness, fear and guilt  
You abide with us, we with you  
The cross of death a symbol of the life you give  
The empty tomb a silent beacon of hope

**You alone are worthy of our worship**

And so we praise you together with all your people  
And in the company of the heavenly host

**Holy, holy, holy Lord**

**God of power and might**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory**

**Hosanna in the highest**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord**

**Hosanna in the highest**

And now we live and proclaim the life, the death and resurrection  
The ascension and glorified greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ

**Christ has died**

**Christ has risen**

**Christ will come again**

Ever loving God, pour out your Spirit upon us  
That as we share in these gifts of the bread and the cup  
We might meet Christ anew  
Becoming his hands and his feet in this broken world in which we live  
By your Holy Spirit draw us together, one in love and unity  
That as we live out Jesus in us  
Your Holy Name might be praised and glorified forever.

**Amen**

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven holy be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is 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

God of love, send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts, that as we receive this bread and wine we shall by faith receive the body and blood of Christ.

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. **John 6:35**

This is the Lord's Table. Our Saviour invites all those who trust him to share the feast he has prepared. You may wish to take communion with us, you may choose not to this morning. Know that what ever your choice you are loved beyond measure and we are one in the bond of love

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## 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.

### Benediction and Grace

As we go, may we be open to being surprised by our God, who is so much more than we ever expect...

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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