



Sunday 23rd August 2020

Welcome to our Sunday Service

Prepared by Angela Guntrip

Spirit of Creativity

Good morning everyone. I hope you're all well. One of my favourite local places to go prayer walking is Blawith Common. It's quite remote & rugged, with spectacular views all round. And if I feel that I want to shout aloud, I can because there's only God, me & the sheep to hear!!

Magnificent, marvellous, matchless love
Too vast and astounding to tell
Forever existing in worlds above,
now offered and given to all
Oh, fountain of beauty eternal
The Father, the Spirit, the Son
Sufficient and endlessly generous
Magnificent, marvellous, matchless love

Creation is brimming with thankfulness;
The mountains, exultant they stand
The seasons rejoice in Your faithfulness
All life is sustained by Your hand
You crown every meadow with colour
You paint every shade in the sky
Each day the dawn wakes as an encore of
magnificent, marvellous, matchless love

[Chorus]
How great, how sure
His love endures forevermore
Magnificent, marvellous, matchless love

What grace, that You entered our brokenness
You came in the fullness of time
How far we had fallen from righteousness
But not from the mercies of Christ
Your cross is our door to redemption
Your death is our fullness of life
That day, how forgiveness flowed as a flood:
Magnificent, marvellous, matchless love

Getty Music

Let's pray.....

**Father God,
We thank you that you are an
awesome creative God. We
marvel that You speak to us
through your handiwork; glorious
skies and all our natural
surroundings, down to the
finest artistic detail.
We thank you that when You
created mankind, you blessed us
with the spirit of
creativity within.
We praise You for so many other
things, too, Lord. And we continue
to ask your blessing and
protection over us all. We ask that
you might give us eagle wings to
soar with You – strength will rise
when we wait upon the Lord.**



**In the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ we offer our humble thanks
& praise, Amen.**



Psalm 19:1-2

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they display knowledge.

At our Zoom home groups, thoughts to do with God being an awesome creator have emerged quite a bit. God's creativity & the way He has blessed us all with creative gifts is something that always excites me.

In the book of Exodus in the Bible, there's a sizeable chunk between **chapters 25- 40**, describing the building of the tabernacle (tent, place of dwelling, sanctuary). A place for God to dwell with His people. Loads of interesting things to learn here, but I will only focus on 3 points from **chs 35 & 36**.

We are introduced to 2 guys here (also earlier in **ch 31**) whose names are Bezalel & Oholiab. Those names may not be as familiar as some others like Adam & Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul & Mary (not the American folk group from the 60s, by the way!) But I made an interesting discovery about their names, which I forgot to mention in my recorded talk but will share with you now. Bezalel means "***under the shadow or protection of God***"; Oholiab means "***Father's tent***". How cool are those names when we consider their task in hand?

These 2 guys were craftsmen – maybe they were brick makers when enslaved in Egypt. But God had a massive creative project for them, so He empowered them through the Holy Spirit "***with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts***". God also gave them the ability to teach other craftsmen the necessary skills, so that they weren't doing the job all alone. The work was shared. And God, through Moses, also appealed to the rest of the people to join in by providing a lot of the materials from their own possessions. Freewill offerings of gold, silver, bronze, yarn, linen, oils, spices, jewels etc.



Now to the 3 points I gleaned from this episode in Israel's history. They are to do with the sort of followers God desires. **GOD IS LOOKING FOR.....**

1People of Unity within Diversity

This struck me when I began to think a bit more about Bezalel & Oholiab. It must have been a real blessing for them to be selected to lead in the building of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place for that moment of time. Especially as they were from different tribes (see box).

TRIBE OF JUDAH

The Royal tribe.
Often led the people
when they marched.

Bezalel

TRIBE OF DAN

Sometimes had
reputation of
being a bit of a
rogue tribe!

Oholiab

This reaffirms that God is no respecter of persons (**Acts 10:34**). Black lives matter to God, white lives matter and, in fact, all lives matter. And as believers, we are called to work together for His glory.

Is He not the one....who shows no partiality to princes & does not favour the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of His hands.

Job 34:18-19

2.....Willing People

I love that even within the strict guidelines for the design & construction of the tabernacle, God gives His people choices:

“Then Moses summoned Bezalel & Oholiab & every skilled person to whom the Lord had given ability & WHO WAS WILLING TO COME & DO THE WORK” (36:2)

“Everyone WHO IS WILLING to bring the Lord an offering.....and everyone WHO WAS WILLING AND WHOSE HEART MOVED HIM came & brought an offering to the Lord” (35:5,21)

And later in **ch 36** we read that the people were **SO WILLING** to give, that they had more than enough materials for the construction & were asked to stop giving!

Wow! **God loves a cheerful giver**, says Paul in **2 Corinthians 9:7**. One who gives from the depths of a grateful heart for all that God has done, is doing & will do. This particular incident which involved all of the children of Israel, reminded me of how it was with the 1st century church, when the early Christians were together and had everything in common. They sold their possessions, gave to those who had need & met regularly in fellowship (**end of Acts 2 & Acts 4**).



3.....Humble People

Bezalel & Oholiab's creativity would never be exhibited in The Louvre, or Tate Britain Gallery, or Metropolitan Museum of Art! In fact, some of their wonderful craftsmanship would be seen by only a few eg the ark in

the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest was allowed in there, & only once a year! Did that stop them giving their best to God? Others weren't even named! Did that stop them working hard & creating Immense beauty? No-one kept a list of who from the people gave the biggest offering. Did that stop them eagerly giving to God's work?



Of course, the Lord encourages us to show appreciation and thank one another. But sometimes what we do for God might be unseen or unobserved by others. Should that matter? Does it hinder what we do for God?

God says we are ***his workmanship, created to do good works in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10) & as his children, called by his name, we are created for his glory (Isaiah 43:7).***

Sometimes others may not see, but God always sees. What we do, we do for Him.

I have been so blessed revisiting this Bible story which includes such a wonderful creative project. But, in the same way that (as a music teacher) I believe everyone can sing, so am I a firm believer that each of us is made with the ability to create.

It is a wonderful gift from God, right from childhood through to our older years. During the online service we watched Leah's son Mitch being creative with his construction toys and Janet took us for a tour of her pottery shed, demonstrating how to throw a pot and sharing the words on the next page by Emilie Barnes. Then Barbara has encouraged and blessed us this week, sharing some of her life story in an interview, which also featured some of her creative skills over the years.



The Spirit of Creativity by Emilie Barnes

I've heard it a million times – expressed with admiration and usually a little envy: “Oh, she's so creative.”

Usually it describes an “artsy” kind of person – someone who paints or writes or makes pottery. Such creative pursuits can bring great joy to those who do them and to those who enjoy the results. But you really don't have to be an artist to infuse your home and life with the spirit of creativity.

Creativity is so much more than “arts and crafts”. It is a way of seeing; a willingness to see wonderful possibilities in something unformed or ordinary or even ugly.

Creativity is a God-given ability to take something ordinary and make it into something special. It is an openness to doing old things in new ways and a willingness to adapt other people's good ideas to suit our personal needs. And creativity is an ability we all possess, although many of us keep it hidden in the deep corners of our lives.

Every single human being is creative. The creative spirit is part of our heritage as children of the One who created all things. And nurturing our creativity is part of our responsibility as stewards of God's good gifts.

Interview given by Barbara Spence with Angela

Angela and Barbara sat down with a cup of tea. Angela mentioned that although Barbara doesn't see herself as a creative person, she actually really is, and the evidence was clear to see as Barbara was wearing a lovely top that she had made herself! In a few minutes they established that Barbara was born in Barrow - after the war, her parents moved there because her dad had got work as a civil engineer to the docks board. Barbara has many happy memories of childhood in a very loving, Christian home. Her mum was a great baker and seamstress and Barbara loved to bake with her mum and sit beside her at the sewing machine.



These early experiences were the foundations to Barbara eventually training to become a home economics teacher. Her first teaching practice was in a rough area in Liverpool, which was a shock to her system, but she enjoyed it! Her first teaching post was at Alfred Barrow School in Barrow, where she taught for nine years.

Whilst training to be a teacher she met Steve (A man in a uniform!) who was training for the Merchant Navy. They married and eventually had three sons. Early in their marriage Steve was diagnosed with lymphoma and he lived with the illness for 36 years.



Barbara started volunteering at Sandside School when her children were young; this led to a Teaching Assistant post, and ultimately to a Teaching post. By the end of her time at the school, she was the Assistant Head Teacher. Barbara had a particular rapport with the more disruptive pupils and especially enjoyed working with pupils with autism. She took pupils on trips to Tenerife, Menorca and Mexico!

Angela: “Tell me a little about your faith journey?”

“As a child I was involved with many church activities; from an early age I knew God was there, but as a teenager it became less important - I did occasionally go to church with my mum. My brother suddenly died of a heart attack at age 29, he’d only been married for three years, had a little baby and was blissfully happy. My parents were heartbroken, but I saw how they took strength from their faith and the church.



Six months later my father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Their faith grew during this journey and they prayed everyday for healing, but God didn’t answer their prayers in the way they wanted. However, he died a very peaceful death which was not predicted. I saw that my mum’s relationship with God sustained her during this time, but I still didn’t have that relationship for myself. If anyone had asked if I was a Christian, I’d have said yes, or do you believe in God - Oh yes, but I didn’t have that relationship until sometime later.

Steve had been diagnosed with cancer and we knew if we wanted a family we’d better crack on with it in case Steve needed treatment, the chances are we’d not be able to have a family. That’s when the miscarriages started happening. I had miscarriage after miscarriage and the medical professionals couldn’t find out what was wrong. I was in my 30’s and starting to panic, feeling my time was running out. I was in a low frame of mind. Then one morning I was driving to work -I can picture the exact point on Abbey Road, the exact traffic lights - the miscarriages were on my mind and I was probably at my lowest point. I suddenly felt this overwhelming sense of peace and it was... ‘Oh, it’s all going to be alright’, there was no voice in my head, I just felt this overwhelming sense that it was all going to come right.



I thought, Ok then I'll just get on with it and we went on to have 3 children, but by the time I was pregnant with the first one I had worked it out, 'Hang on, this is God at work,' I knew that. So, while I was pregnant I started going to church; that's how I came to acknowledge God for myself."

Barbara concluded by sharing a Bible verse that a friend had given her during a difficult season in her life that had encouraged her on her spiritual journey.



**Those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

Isaiah 40:31

Maybe this week we could find time to list all our skills, talents, abilities & giftings; then thank God for each one of them. As we move into the "new normal", ask God how we can grow in these areas and how He wants us to use them for His glory. Finally.....

**The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you;
The Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.**