

“Under Construction”

Isaiah 65:17-25, 29:16 & 64:8, Romans 8:21-23, 2 Corinthians 4: Select Verses, Revelation 5:5

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Isaiah 65:17-25 MSG “Pay close attention now: I’m creating new heavens and a new earth. All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten. Look ahead with joy. Anticipate what I’m creating: I’ll create Jerusalem as sheer joy, create my people as pure delight. I’ll take joy in Jerusalem, take delight in my people: No more sounds of weeping in the city, no cries of anguish; No more babies dying in the cradle, or old people who don’t enjoy a full lifetime; One-hundredth birthdays will be considered normal—anything less will seem like a cheat. They’ll build houses and move in. They’ll plant fields and eat what they grow. No more building a house that some outsider takes over, No more planting fields that some enemy confiscates, For my people will be as long-lived as trees, my chosen ones will have satisfaction in their work. They won’t work and have nothing come of it, they won’t have children snatched out from under them. For they themselves are plantings blessed by God, with their children and grandchildren likewise God-blessed. Before they call out, I’ll answer. Before they’ve finished speaking, I’ll have heard. Wolf and lamb will graze the same meadow, lion and ox eat straw from the same trough, but snakes—they’ll get a diet of dirt! Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill anywhere on my Holy Mountain,” says God.

Today is a wonderful spring day. Do you remember the weather two weeks ago? We were in the midst of a blizzard. Three days earlier it was in the 50s. On that day Pastor Kara Root wrote, “Good morning Church! As we enter this gorgeous, sun-drenched day that is predicted to be in the 50s, I am reminded of something important to remember in this season of contemplating resurrection. Today will feel for all the world like we are finished with winter. Spring has come! New life prevails! But thanks to the technology of modern forecasting, we know that tomorrow will start out rainy, then freeze and turn snowy, then coat the world in thick ice and mounds of snow, and finally wrap it all in gusting, blustery wind. Tomorrow night and Saturday will feel for all the world like Spring is never, ever going to come. Today - beautiful hope-filled Spring. Tomorrow - brutal, soul-crushing return of Winter. Which is true? What can we believe? Here's what's true about Resurrection: it comes. Regardless. Sometimes in a sudden blaze of glory. But often in fits and starts - glimpses of hope swallowed by stretches of despair. But still, resurrection comes. God is always, always in the business of bringing new life out of death. So, here's what I suggest: We have what is right in front of us today. We live today. Not dreading tomorrow or pining for the future beyond that. This moment. Where is life right now? Where are you right now? Where is God right now? And tomorrow, when the storms come, we will do the same. And the next day, and the day after that. And Spring will come.”

Isaiah proclaims, “God is creating a new earth.” “Look ahead with joy. Anticipate what God is creating.” All of creation and all of us are under construction. God promises more than God’s presence and comfort for God is in the process of creating, transforming, renewing and perfecting each of us and all of creation. The world is not as it should be. We are not as we should be either. God is creating a world of peace, love and joy. Similar to most construction, God’s creating is much slower and messier than we want. Isaiah invites us to anticipate, imagine, and lean into God’s vision for us and the world. God invites us to pay close attention to God’s creating as each of us considers how we are lending a hand to God’s great construction project. God is not sitting back watching the world. God has not given up on the world. God is not content to wait until we enter Life Triumphant to reveal some of the splendor of heaven. God is active in the world today, and will be tomorrow, creating to make all more radiant. The Apostle Paul writes, **Romans 8:21-23 NLT “All creation anticipates the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as God’s adopted children, including the new bodies God has promised us.”**

C.S. Lewis illustrates this truth in the Chronicles of Narnia. The world was in the pain of World War II. Families were being split apart. The constant bombing of London made it unsafe for Lucy, Peter, Edmund, and Susan, so their mother sent them to the countryside. The pain and stress all around them begin to diminish their love for one another. They began to drift apart. They discover Narnia, another world, that mirrors their own. Narnia is not the way it should be; it has endured winter for hundreds of years without a single Christmas. Everyone is cold and living in fear. Some take advantage of the situation to hate, fight, and take from those with less power. Yet there is hope, anticipation, because the great lion Aslan is prophesized to return bringing Christmas and spring. Scripture refers to Jesus as the lion, stating **Revelation 5:5 NRSV "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David."** Narnia has been aching for years for, the return of Aslan, to end the icy winter, to bring spring and recreate the land in stunning beauty. Aslan is on the move and the beauty of spring precedes him. Edmund experiences Aslan's grace. He is forgiven and reunited with his family because of Aslan's sacrifice. Aslan's love unites Lucy, Peter, Edmund, and Susan. Together with Aslan and creatures of every kind they bring about a beautiful and glorious Narnia. In the end, they find themselves back in the real world; yet, they have been changed by Aslan's love. Now, they are a close family united in the harmony of love. Their experience of Narnia gives them hope and the courage to partner with God in creating a better world.

Martin Luther said, "The world is now in its working clothes and that by and by it will be arranged in its Easter garments of joy." God is on the move! God's great construction project continues. God is still creating. God invites us to imagine God's completed work. Isaiah proclaims when all troubles, chaos, and pain will be forgotten, we will all be filled with joy. Each of us will savor God's pure delight in us. There will be no weeping, no cries of anguish, no pain, no suffering. No death for children. No disease, everyone will live a full lifetime. Everyone will have a house and enjoy it as a loving home. Everyone will have meaningful rewarding employment and enjoy the fruit of their labors. No one will have their home or their career taken from them. Everyone will be satisfied and enjoy abundant blessings. God's love and joy will permeate everyone and everything. God's presence will be so discernable that before you even utter a prayer you will hear God's answer. No animal or person will kill or inflict a hurt of any kind. The wolf and lamb will graze side by side. No one, no animal, will take advantage of another. There will be no losers. This is the prophecy of Isaiah and this isn't heaven Isaiah is foretelling this is to be earth.

The dilemma for us is we are in the midst of the construction, in the icy grips of winter. The completion of the world, the coming of spring seems so far away. In Narnia some of the animals gave up and joined the White Witch in doing evil. Others hoped, anticipated, and worked with Aslan to bring about a glorious Narnia.

Isaiah says pay close attention to the ways God is creating earth. God inspired Martin Luther King Jr. to have a dream and boldly proclaim that dream to us. Together with God we have made significant progress in making King's dream a reality, but we still have a long way to go. God is creating earth. God inspired people like Mother Teresa to loving care for those who many considered to be undesirable outcasts. God is creating earth-inspiring rock stars like Bono of U2 to use his influence and wealth to help the Third World. Is God loving through teenagers today to make our schools and country safe? Is God constructing a fair, just, righteous world through technology and social media? Is God creating a peaceful and inclusive world by raising up innovative leaders? Is God nurturing a world where all have food, clothing, shelter, and health care through an array of churches, charities and religions? Is God constructing through caring people, and brilliant engineers, to enable us to live in synergy with our planet? God is still creating. God hopes you will contribute a unique facet, for together, with God, the cosmos is being constructed glorious.

Isaiah proclaims, **Isaiah 64:8 NRSV "We are the clay, and you, God, are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."** We are so tempted to try and reverse this order to be in control. Isaiah warns **Isaiah 29:16 NRSV "You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay? Shall the thing made say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of the one who formed it, "He has no understanding"?"** We are the clay. We are under construction. If we yield to God and remain pliable God will smooth out all our blemishes and finish each of us as a spectacular masterpiece.

It matters not if we are a fine dish for the governor or an ordinary pot. We may even be a cracked pot, but God will create beauty even from our cracks. Many years ago, a rich man had a servant whose job was to carry water each day from a distant stream to his master's house. The servant carried the water in two large pots, each of which hung from opposite ends of a pole he carried across his neck. One pot was in perfect

condition and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream. The other pot had a crack in it, and always arrived at the master's house half full. For two years the servant delivered only one and a half pots of water to his master's house each day. The cracked pot felt ashamed. It was miserable knowing it was not able to accomplish what it had been made to do. Still, it did the best it could, even if it was only half of what the perfect pot could do. Finally, the cracked pot spoke to the servant one day by the stream. "I need to apologize to you," the pot said, "For two years now, I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value for your efforts." The servant simply said, "When we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." As they made their way back to the house, the cracked pot saw the gorgeous wildflowers beside the path and was cheered a little by their beauty. When they reached the house, the servant said to the cracked pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path? I've always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path. Every day when we walked back from the stream, you watered them. For two years I've been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. If you weren't just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. You might say we're all a bunch of crackpots. But if we will allow God to keep creating us then even our flaws will be transformed into something that will decorate God's creation. In God's great construction project, nothing goes to waste. God has a marvelous plan. The message translates the Apostle Paul's word's as **2 Corinthians 4:Select Verses MSG "It all started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful. If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. We are surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! We believe that God who raised up our Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you, alive. Every detail works to your advantage and to God's glory: more and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise! So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without God's unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever."** God is still creating earth and still creating you. All is under construction. God invites each of us to partner in constructing a glorious cosmos. Amen