

June 14, 2026

Paul Purdue preaching

The CEB translates the first line in the Bible, *“When God began to create...”* I love the implications behind *“When God began to create...”* an affirmation that God *“is still making all things new”*. (2 Corinthians 5) When God began to create, God created light, land, sun, seas, sky, moon, stars, mountains, seeds, trees, bats, bees, bears and then on the sixth day...

*God created humanity in God’s own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.*

And God blessed them...

And God looked over everything God made:

And it was supremely good.

What does it mean that God created you in God’s image? Friends, if we are created in the image of The Creator, then some of the Creator’s creativity dwells in you and me! What is God creating in you?

In Exodus 35 the Hebrew people built the Tabernacle. Our first sacred building was a big portable tent. As they made the Tabernacle Moses called to the people *“All who are skilful among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded...”* Moses pointed out *“the Lord has called by name Bezalel and God has filled him with divine spirit with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, in gold, silver, bronze, cutting stones, carving wood, and in every kind of craft. And God has inspired Bezalel to teach...”* and God filled the people *“with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan, designer, embroiderer, weaver, silversmith, and every other sort of artisan, crafts person or designer.”*

Sometimes, I sit in our sanctuary, with the lights off and watch how the clouds and the angle of the sun interplay with our stained glass windows. Even without words, the colors, the light, the art speaks. Exodus tells us how God used architects, engineers, artisans, carpenters, weavers, and silversmiths to create a sacred space. The Tabernacle became a guide, a word of hope, a testimony to people wandering around the wilderness for 40 years. (Exodus 40) John’s prologue tells us how the Word of God took on flesh; Exodus 35 tells us how the Word of God speaks from timber, stone, metal, and fabric. God uses art to speak to us. How has a song, a story, a painting or poem opened your eyes, unstopped your ears, or changed your heart and mind?

Yes, God is holy, transcendent, beyond, mysterious, almighty... yet, we believe God is deeply incarnational dwelling with and in us. There is some risk of idolatry and self-deception in incarnational theology, but Romans' 8, Paul tells us that God's Spirit "testifies to our spirits" that we belong to God. (Romans 8) Art feels like a window into that holy mystery. Painting, photography, pottery, doodling, sermon writing, singing, journaling, woodworking, gardening, makes space in our souls: opening us up to God. Making art invites us to practise awe, beauty, mystery, and wonder. Creating invites us to dwell in ourselves and with God.

The Apostle Paul tells us that our dwelling "in Christ" is a creative process, shaping us into a new creation, "*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) Creative endeavors make room for God who is always creating something new in us: purifying our hearts, opening our eyes, unstopping our ears, changing our minds, lifting up our voices and strengthening our steps.

We know creativity is good for us! A study by Kalmi, Ray and Muniz asserts that making art "*resulted in statistically significant lowering of cortisol levels* (a stress hormone. (Reduction of Cortisol Levels and Participants' Responses Following Art Making) Making art reduces stress.

For me journaling was the pathway into art as prayer. This is not sermon writing, but me just pouring out my unedited soul... never really to be read by anyone. Psalm 22, which Jesus quotes from on the cross says "*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast.*". Journalling is a beautiful way to open ourselves to God who already knows our thoughts. Perhaps journaling lets us better see what is happening in our souls. Journaling helps us find our stuckness, our anger, our hidden joys and allows God to create something new in us.

The Psalmist invites us to create new songs.

*Sing to God a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.*

When our boys were little, Connie would sing these little songs she made up to the boys. They thought they were published works, not just spontaneous songs born of love for them. God will not judge our creativity, what parent looks at the card their child made for them and says "you can do better work?" God loves us and wants us to create, just to express our god-given creativity.

In Ephesians 5 Paul invites us to allow God's Spirit to write new songs in our hearts:

“Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to one another, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts”

Translation from Hebrew to another language always loses some of the power of the original. If you thought Psalm 111 was a little clunky, know that Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 are acrostic Psalms. They move through the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet from A to Z, each of the 22 clauses beginning with a Hebrew A, then B, then G all the way to Z. Each of the 22 clauses is a 3 word or symbol phrase. You can not see that artistic form in the english translation.

Now, a sermon about God’s gift of creativity needs something creative in it. So I wondered if we might create a new song together this morning with an ABC acrostic of praise? I will call out a letter... wait a few seconds and then say “we praise you for’ and I invite you to call out a word of praise for anything that begins with that letter.

Hallelujah we lift our voices in praise

- A... We praise you for ...Art
- B... We praise you for... Bees
- C... We praise you for Connie
- D... We praise you for Dancing
- E... We praise you for Electricity
- F... We praise you for Friendship
- G... We praise you for the Grand Canyon
- H... We praise you for Hands
- I... We praise you for Ingenuity
- J... We praise you for Jesus
- K... We praise you for Kindness
- L... We praise you for Laughter
- M... We praise you for Music
- N... We praise you for Night skies
- O... We praise you for Oceans
- P... We praise you for People
- Q... We praise you for Quiet
- R... We praise you for Rest
- S... We praise you for Sports
- T... We praise you for Thankfulness
- U... We praise you for Utah (have you been to arches national park)
- V... We praise you for Vermont
- W... We praise you for Wilderness
- X... We praise you for Excitement

Y..... We praise you for Yellow (the color)

Z... We praise you for Zinnias (I confess I googled Z words)

This week do something creative in a spirit of prayer. Make melody in your heart, try doodling a prayer, sing in the shower, journal, listen to the rain on your porch, offer a craft to God, visit the Frist, write an ABC of gratitude. Kindle the Spirit of God within you. You are made in the image of God. God is ready to hand your work on the Heavenly refrigerator. Be free- be open, lift your praise: allowing God to open our eyes, unstop our ears, lift up our hearts, sand our rough edges, strengthen our resolve, perfect our practice...setting us free to be something new, a new creation, beloved and beautiful. Amen.