

We had all heard of the great riot in Ephesus, when Demetrius the silversmith sought to crush the work of our brother Paul as he taught about the Way¹. Demetrius stirred up a great disturbance in his fellow craftsmen and other artists who supported themselves by making silver shrines of the false god Artemis, and who were very concerned about losing the great income that they had from this business. Demetrius argued that these images were necessary to glorify Artemis, and he was fearful that the doctrine of the Christ would diminish that glory (though he was mostly concerned about his own finances). He also claimed that their artistic way of life would suffer loss. The crowd seized Paul's companions and exhibited such violence that the city clerk stepped in and warned the people that they were in danger of getting into serious trouble for having an illegal assembly. The clerk also used the argument that if Artemis was truly a god, then she could take care of herself!² He told the crowd that the courts were available to entertain legal charges, but maintained that Paul and his friends had done nothing wrong.

I have seen these images. Having never seen this "god", it was interesting to consider someone's creativity in developing an image that became copied over and over in various media (silver, gold, wood, etc.). I realized in examining these items that there was a great difference between an artist who merely made (admittedly very good) copies of a visual image, and someone who actually created it from nothing but a concept. One can be an artist who reproduces objects with great talent – but there needs to be a target to copy. One can also be much more than that - a creator who makes something from "nothing". A creative artist rises to the next level and goes beyond what is already in existence.

When I look up at night, I realize that the universe the greatest dynamic artwork that I could ever imagine. The Psalmist claimed "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands"³, and "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth... when I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place..."⁴. My thoughts also expand to include life in its many varied and colorful forms. A fundamental characteristic of the Creator is that He creates!⁵ He is defined in terms of creativity, and He always has a purpose in its performance. It apparently flows from Him in a constant stream⁶.

God is not a copier, but a producer. He created the universe from nothing, with no indication that it matched any previous form. In the beginning, the earth was void and without form⁷ – it was not a copy of something else. I think that God creates love out of nothing as well. It just bursts into existence, and we see the brush strokes that identify Him as the only True God. His continual presence is seen as He works⁸ to maintain the universe⁹.

In his regard, I think about the parable of the sower in a different light, considering God as Creator. He created life, and with it the transformation of seeds into growing (and sometimes blooming) plants. Each plant is different from every other one even of the same type. Such variety can be seen to represent God's thoughts in "bloom"¹⁰, and every spring reminds us of God's creative love as evidenced more completely in terms of the Resurrection of His Son.

God Created us so that we also have the capacity for creative growth. He plants us to see what we will become (and continue to become). He does not want us to become static. What counts is the new creation¹¹.

It must be our purpose in His Kingdom to imitate God¹²; this of course relates to His Goodness, but should it not also relate to His creativity? In reflecting God's creativeness, we should not only be an echo of what exists (being obedient to His will) but imitate His creative process. Done properly, our actions would create new things to generate greater and greater glory for God. We are to be filled with the Spirit¹³, not just be clothed in an outer garment of appearance¹⁴.

We cannot exactly create things out of nothing, but we can continuously put things in a new context; assembling "juxtapositions" or combinations of existing materials – which lead to an uplifting realization¹⁵ experience concerning God. This is a part of loving God's raw materials that He has given us and doing something with them to glorify God.

Some people just exist (sitting waiting to be entertained) and do not grow in their souls. But there should be no "bored" followers of God¹⁶ - we should never lose the creative spirit that can propel us closer to Him. This reminds me of a growing network of roots that binds more tightly together as time goes on, increasing the interconnections¹⁷. Our minds must always be searching for the far-reaching expanse of God and His Love¹⁸.

Our work must always glorify God¹⁹. We must not be like Aaron, who crafted a golden calf for the Israelites to worship and claimed "out came this calf" when He was confronted with His work²⁰. God expressly forbade us to worship something besides Himself²¹, but that did not stop people from making idols out of any material that they could²². When He told Moses to build the tabernacle, He gave strict instructions to follow the "pattern" that He had prescribed²³. But He allowed creativity in many other ways²⁴.

My artist friend has a spirit that is constantly involved in creation²⁵. She does not just produce copies of the same thing; she is always pursuing ideas of new things that have not previously been in existence (though they are no surprise to the mind of the Creator). I believe that this spirit comes from God²⁶, and it feeds an urge that lives within her. She has a desire to paint anything and everything, whether it is moving or not²⁷. She claims that she has never been bored, and thinks that no one should ever be. I pray that she can always receive that creative spirit²⁸.

As I followed her in her path through life, I could see her creative imprint all along the way. I saw so many things that she had made (mostly for others). Traveling with her as a companion was like walking through an arbor or grotto decorated with evidence of her soul's continual expressive work. It was radiant throughout the day and even into the evening. There was also an intriguing aroma²⁹ that lingered after her passage.

Much of what she created was made from cast-off or rejected things. She would re-purpose them into something even greater than before. Just as flowers grow in soil enriched by decaying organic matter, and God created man from the dust³⁰, she made things from used materials. She did not cry over spilled paint! She painted something with it!

Our lives are to be creative in the pursuit of Good³¹. One night I had a dream, or perhaps more of a vision. In this dream I went to be with the Lord, and as I was introduced to the mansion that God had prepared for me, I was awed by its beauty and comfort. I was overcome by its brilliance, but the longer I experienced my new home I began to realize that it also reflected my own life's creative work. As my interest dealt with words, and I used them as building blocks for ideas aimed at glorifying God, I found that my words were written on the walls. But they were improved and expanded; God allowed me to see how they could grow from

my simple beginning. He did not necessarily “fix” them, but allowed them to grow in the direction of His glory.

I saw the rooms of others whose special purpose had been with art, music, and other creative realms. And, unfortunately, there were some rooms I saw with nothing at all on the walls³². It was very sad to them so bare.

Of course, God’s Glory is overwhelming in comparison. But He loves us and is pleased when we contribute to that glory, when He hears His words and thoughts echoed in our own³³. He wants to see what we have “made”. Naturally, we will leave some works unfinished – perhaps in the special creativity of heaven we will be able to continue them, or use them as the stepping stones to something ever greater!

Our love for God should include a love for creativity, because as the Great Creator He is the source of it. There is tremendous creativity in Love and Goodness; we just have to realize that. God is a creator God of continual growth – originally through the creation of the universe, but now through the people of His Kingdom (creation continues in the universe, though, as well)

The New Kingdom should be bursting with creativity³⁴. In terms of the artist, we have our colors (an example of all of the blessings God presents us with), which God created for us as tools to show us His beauty and glory; we paint paradise through the Spirit of God, and then we immerse ourselves in it³⁵. We fall in love with God, because He is Love³⁶ and we are the focus of that Love³⁷.

Mankind does not always perceive what God does as something beautiful. I remember the prophecy of the Christ where it was told he would have no beauty³⁸. But sometimes what seems ugly to man portrays the beauty of God³⁹. And the story of God’s love is the most beautiful story ever told⁴⁰! We should tell that story and create more love in everything that we do.

References

1. Acts 19:23ff
2. similar to Gideon’s father saying, “If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar” Judges 6:31c
3. Psalm 19:1
4. Psalm 8:1, 3
5. “... the universe did not have to be so vast.” From David Elrod. The vastness shows God’s enormous creative power or drive to create
6. “Whatever your theology of the Bible may be, God is always defined in terms of creativity. But the Creator has creativity with a purpose, with a mission. Creativity without the thread of purpose unravels in chaos. Like the conductor in Fantasia, God is whirling and swirling creation into being.” So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church; Sweet, Leonard; p.57
7. Genesis 1:2
8. from a quote by J.W. Alexander
9. Hebrews 1:3
10. “Flowers are God’s thoughts in bloom” (from a poem by Sammie Malone Elrod)
11. Galatians 6:15b
12. Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
13. Ephesians 5:18b

14. John 7:24
15. also known as the Aha! Experience
16. we have no value to God as robots
17. as in a neural network
18. Colossians 1:9b, “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives...”
19. Colossians 3:23
20. Exodus 32
21. Exodus 20:4
22. Isaiah 2:20, 45:20
23. Exodus 25
24. Exodus 31:5, Exodus 35:33, and Exodus 39:8, for example
25. “I love art more than anybody!” Soozie LaVelle Lowry [loving art (and creativity) is parallel to loving God]
26. See where God gave Bezalel the Spirit for the creation of artistic designs (Exodus 31:2-4 and 35:30-33]
27. Sometimes an artist needs to be an engineer, too!
28. We want to receive the spirit, and not quench it (1 Thessalonians 5:19)
29. consider 2 Corinthians 2:14 – the aroma of Christ
30. Genesis 2:7
31. 2 Corinthians 5:9, “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it”; Ephesians 5:10, “... find out what pleases the Lord”
32. See 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
33. The two highest compliments you can pay authors or any artists are exact opposites: first, that they resemble no one else; and second, that when you hear their music or read their words, you can hear in them Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Beethoven, Bach, the Beatles, Bono, etc. So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church; Sweet, Leonard; p.107
34. “The church of Jesus (the New Kingdom) should be bursting with creativity.” So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church; Sweet, Leonard; p.91
35. “You have your brush, you have your colors; you paint paradise, then in you go.” Nikos Kazantzakis
36. 1 John 4:8
37. John 3:16
38. Isaiah 53:2
39. 1 Corinthians 1:18ff
40. consider the book by “The Greatest Story Ever Told”, by Fulton Oursler