

## **Deep Well Questions: Does God have a Plan?**

### *Psalm 104*

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, you are amazing...  
...you set the earth on its foundations so that it shall never be shaken.  
You cover it with the deep...at your rebuke the waters flee...  
...You make spring gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal...  
You cause grass to grow for cattle and plants for people to use  
to bring forth food from the earth...  
The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly...in them the birds build their  
nests...  
You have set the moon for setting to mark the season; the sun knows its time for  
setting...  
O Lord, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all, the earth is full of your creatures...  
Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
O Lord, my God, you are amazing!

Sixty plus years ago a group of church folks got an idea. They said let's put a church somewhere on Bolton Street. So they began to meet. Putting together some time, energy, money. They dreamed about what this church could be. But in order to get from an abstract idea to something more tangible, they had to have a plan. So they hired an architect to draw up blueprints and sketches about what the building could look like. And here we are. But before any material gets purchased or before anyone swings a hammer, we need a plan for what we are trying to do. Whether we are building a house, or putting together Legos, or building a life, there seems to be some sort of blueprint we follow.

When we read the Psalm the psalmist sings about God's blueprint for creation. How the earth is put on its foundation. How the streams flow into valleys to give animals something to drink. How plants feed us and how the moon organizes our seasons. For the psalmist—who appears to be vegetarian—they see God as an architect whose intentional design is all part of some wonderful divine plan.

*Even something as small as an apple It's simple and somehow complex  
Sweet and divine, the perfect design Can I speak to the architect?*

*And there's a canyon that cuts through the desert  
Did it get there because of a flood?  
Was it devised, or were you surprised When you saw how grand it was?  
Was it thought out at all, or just paint on a wall?  
Is there anything that you regret?  
I don't understand, are there blueprints or plans? Can I speak to the architect?*

The truth is we have probably all wondered if there is some master plan we are all part of, or if this is all happening by chance? Does creation simply exist or is there some sort of divine intervention holding it all together? It's the age-old question about who God is, who we are, and how the pieces fit together? I mean, how many times have we heard that God has a plan or has some control over our world? On the one hand, if God is in control of all things, how do we make sense of hurricanes wiping out communities, or children going hungry, or the purpose of mosquitoes? If God is in control then why is there so much suffering? On the other hand, if God is removed from all things, then how can we have hope for a better future, or find inspiration to bend the world more toward justice and love. So we seem to either say that God has a plan for all things, which includes suffering—which can be harmful, or we say that God has a plan and we just don't know it yet; or we wonder if God has any plan at all.

*Sometimes I look in the mirror And wish I could make a request  
Could I pray it away? Am I shapeable clay  
Or is this as good as it gets?  
One day, you're on top of the mountain So high that you'll never come down  
Then the wind at your back carries ember and ash  
Then it burns your whole plan to the ground  
Is it thought out at all, or just paint on a wall?  
Is there anything that you regret?  
I don't understand, are there blueprints or plans? Can I speak to the architect?*

But here's another option: what if God has a plan, but God's plans change like ours do. In a world where the only constant is change, what if God's plans shift as well? Because God's plan is primarily about working with us rather than for us. And throughout human history that has meant constantly going back to the drawing board. Remember: in the beginning God creates everything. But humanity is too violent so there's a flood—back to the drawing board and God says, "okay let's try this." Then the people are freed from slavery, but they need direction, so God gives them the law—back to the drawing board and God says, "okay let's try this." Then they build an empire in Jerusalem, but they create an oppressive system which leads them into nationalistic idolatry, so they end up in exile—back to the drawing board. Again and again, it seems God is rewriting the script, working with what God has just like we do.

I mean, how many times have we thought life would turn out one way only to discover it ends up rerouting and looking like something entirely different. Because life is less like a blueprint and more like one of those HDTV shows where someone buys an old house and the designers draw up a picture of what the house could look like based on that person's budget. Except, when they tear into the walls, the supporting beams are in the wrong spot, or the wiring isn't up to code, or they discover termites in the attic. And so they have to reroute and let go of one part or another. It's just how life is: because there is always another issue that pops up, or another curve ball life thrown our way, and the plans...they have to change. Maybe it's true for all of us, even for God.

*I thought that I was too broken And maybe too hard to love  
I was in a weird place, then I found a strange grace  
And the stars and the planets lined up*

*Does it happen by chance? Is it all happenstance?  
Do we have any say in this mess?  
Is too late to make some more space?  
Can I speak to the architect?*

Still, creation is a marvel. How the earth is set on its foundations. How the stream flows into the valley to give animals a drink. How the earth continues to provide us with food and seasons. And despite all the doubts, or questions, or how many times we have to go back to the drawing board one thing seems certain: That the Architect who dreamed up our world is still up to something. Still working with us. Still strengthening us. And always, always loving us. And that is the part of the plan that will never ever change.

*This life that we make, is it random or fate?  
Can I speak to the architect?  
Is there an architect?*