

Church of the Lutheran Confession's
Ministry By Mail

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17

19th Sunday of Trinity

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Scripture Readings

Romans 8:15-25; Mark 10:2-16

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941)

#457 | #374 | #375 | #36



Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, You created all things good, but sin has brought corruption and death into Your creation. Forgive and renew us through Your Son, Jesus Christ, and keep us in the true faith until You bring us into the new heavens and the new earth, where all things will again be very good; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Sermon Text

(Genesis 2:18-25 NKJ) "And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to

his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Theme

What is Good?

Today I want to talk about the word "good." We use it in so many ways. If someone asked you how a movie was and you said, "It was good," you might mean that it was okay but not great. If your mother asks how supper is and you say, "Good," you could mean that it is delicious or that it filled you up, even if it wasn't tasty. If you are fixing something and say that it is good, you might mean that it is completely fixed—or that it isn't completely fixed but will work for at least a little while.

What does God mean when He calls something good or not good? God means something entirely different. When God uses the word "good" in our text, He means something without flaw or corruption. Something with flaws would not be good. Here is an illustration: Imagine that someone invented a new engine that could produce twice as much power while using half as much gasoline, but the engine could overheat and explode. Would God call that good? No, God wouldn't. No matter how amazing it would be to get twice the power while using half the fuel, the engine has faults. God would not design such a thing.

What has God designed? God created light, for example. It is, in fact, the first thing that God called good. "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good" (Genesis 1:3–4 NKJV). We might be tempted to overlook that word "good" because we are thinking of how we use the word rather than how God uses it. Light is amazing, and there were no design flaws in it. We will not fully understand how "good" light is until heaven—and maybe not even then—but just to give you an idea: Light can travel 186,000 miles per second. God made something that can do that! Yet light can also be refracted into all the different colors that brighten our lives. Light was an amazing creation with no flaws in its design. It travels through the vacuum of space. It provides energy for plants and, through them, for us. It brings us joy and comfort.

As amazing and as "good" as light is, man was even more amazing. God created man good. Before you wives get up and tell us all the ways your husbands are far from perfect, realize that I am talking about man before the fall into sin. Before the fall, man and woman were "good" in the way God uses the word "good." There was no flaw in their design.

But what, then, does God mean when He says that it is "not good" for man to be alone? No, it doesn't mean there was a design flaw; it means that God was not finished. Imagine that you made a perfect car engine that never wore down. That engine would be good, but wouldn't it be "not good" to leave it unused? You designed that engine to be used in a car, not to sit around. The engine is good, but when used in a car, it is very good.

It is the same way with plants and light. When God made all the plants, they were wonderfully and perfectly designed, but they were designed to use the energy of light to produce chemical energy. Thus it was also with man and woman. There was no flaw in Adam when he was created. He was made physically and emotionally to be with woman. This was not a design flaw but the genius of our triune God, who is three Persons in one God, dwelling in perfect harmony. He made man and woman to live together as one in harmony. Of all these things together, God said that they were very good.

But the genius of our Creator was not displayed only in designing man for woman and woman for man. God wanted Adam, whom He had made in His image, to understand what He had done. And so God brought a host of animals to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam, not yet corrupted by the fall into sin, was a ready and able pupil of God and comprehended with wonder the animals God had designed. Adam gave them names fitting their design. But Adam also, as God intended, comprehended something else. The animals God brought to him had males and females, but there was no creature comparable to Adam.

It was good that God showed Adam this, and it was good that God provided a helper comparable to Adam. What does it mean that Eve was a comparable helper? It does not imply inferiority. God uses that same word, “helper,” in Psalm 33:20 about Himself: “Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.” Our God provides what we need, not because He is inferior, but because of His love. A comparable helper means that woman was created for man and man for woman, each to be there for the other. This was very good.

Is it still good? Not in the way God uses the word. Men struggle to be comparable helpers to their wives, and wives struggle to be comparable helpers to their husbands. There is also much shame and lewdness connected with our sexuality. The once-good and perfect creation groans under the weight of death, decay, and destruction.

We all know the reason for this: Sin and its curse have ruined everything. Things that were once good, like our bodies, now have flaws. Our hearts, once righteous, are now filled with all kinds of evil desires. We are now born in unbelief and with a sinful nature.

There is almost nothing left that God would call good. Perhaps God would not even say it about light anymore. I am only speculating, but everything else has been corrupted by sin and its curse. Plants, animals, and creation are no longer good in the way God originally used the word “good,” so perhaps even light is no longer “good.” What a very sad thing that is. Imagine being God and looking upon a world in which You once delighted—a world that was filled with good and was, altogether, very good—and now seeing it not be good.

And yet there is still good. The good that remains is God. It is fitting then that the words “God” and “good” sound so similar. God is the source of everything good. When we say in the table prayer, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,” that is the same word God used here about light, about man, and about making woman for man and man

for woman. There is still good in the world. It isn't little children. It isn't nature. It isn't light. It isn't marriage. These things are blessings from God and should be appreciated, but they are not "good." God and His Gospel alone are good, uncorrupted, and without flaw.

The good news for us today is that God has not abandoned His creation to its broken state. The God who so amazingly made everything good looked upon a world that was no longer good, and He had a plan. That good plan was, in a word, Jesus, His only-begotten Son.

Eve was what Adam needed, built from his own flesh to be his comparable helper and his companion, sharing his work and joy. Jesus was the One we needed to be our Savior. He became flesh to save us. The One who made light and plants and marriage and made them good sent His Son to be our Savior—true God and true man—to redeem us from the condemnation of the Law.

Take heart. There is still good in the world—good in the sense in which God uses the word. What is good is God and what He did to save you. What is good is the life Jesus lived and what He won for you by His death on the cross: His own Son living a holy life in your place to make you righteous; His own Son, as true God and true man, actually taking upon Himself the sins of the entire world—and therefore yours—and then being punished for your sins. This is something God has done that is more amazing than light, more of a blessing than marriage, incalculably better.

We need God to show us our need for a Savior, just as God showed Adam his need for a wife. Adam probably would have figured that out on his own in time. We, however, could be given a thousand years or more and still would not believe in Jesus on our own. In His goodness, God does this for us. God did not merely deliver up His own Son to suffering and death; He also shows us our need for His Son and sends the Holy Spirit through the Word so that we believe and are saved. Despite what we have done and continue to do, God still wants us to live in a place that is good.

This place—this world, this universe—is not good. Certainly, evidence remains that it once was perfectly good. You can still see traces of that goodness in the beauty of creation and in God's other blessings. But it isn't good. There is death. There is rape. There is murder and theft, depression and anxiety, war and suffering. The new heavens and the new earth to come will be good in the way God uses the word "good." It is God's salvation in Jesus that makes this good place yours. It is God, through the Holy Spirit, who brings you—not animal after animal to show you your need for a helper—but the Holy Scriptures to show you your sin and the evil of this world. Through those same Scriptures, He shows you Jesus, punished on the cross for your sins and risen to give you eternal life in heaven. This is good. This is very good. Amen.

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