

Genesis 2:18-24  
Pentecost 20 Midweek + Proper 22B + October 10, 2018  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church + Boise, Idaho  
Pastor Ed Brandt  
"Aloneness Destroyed, Oneness Restored"

Genesis chapter 1 concludes, *"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."* Except that we're getting ahead of ourselves. God didn't say it was all good on that sixth day of creation until he'd taken care of one last thing. There was a good planet; there were good stars in the heavens, good trees and plants and birds and fish and every good beast of the field. There was even a man formed specially and very well from the dust of the earth by God himself. But something wasn't good yet. As Scripture describes creation in more detail in Genesis 2, *the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."* Man's aloneness is the opposite of good. Humankind is created for community, "for sociability." More to the point, man is created not for aloneness, but for "at-oneness" and, specifically, to be at-one-flesh with his wife.

Our Old Testament reading told how the Lord God made things good for the man by making the woman, a helper suitable for him, a companion to stand with him, an ally. Man's companion/helper was more than suitable, she was great. The two fit together and complemented each other physically and emotionally, as part and counterpart. Without the counterpart, the part is unfulfilled and useless. Without the part, the counterpart has nothing to fulfill and complement. Both must be there for the other for creation to be fulfilled and bring forth new life. This is what is *good*.

So things were good for a while, but then suddenly it wasn't good. Genesis chapter 3 records the fall of man into sin. With sin came separation, disunity, aloneness. The man and woman hid from God. Adam pointed the finger of blame at Eve, forgetting that he had failed to protect her from the temptation of Satan. Romans 5:12 says that *sin entered the world through one man*, going on to contrast Adam who brought death with Christ who brings life. The evil of separation had replaced the good of oneness. Could what made the world good in the first place make it good again? *Good* is when aloneness is replaced by oneness. For that second time around, the sinner's aloneness is destroyed as the sinner is brought into oneness with his God by the forgiveness of all sin.

The message tonight will first contrast good with what is not good, then contrast oneness with aloneness, next see how oneness is restored, and finally see how good is restored.

In our first contrast, from the words, *"It is not good for the man to be alone,"* we see *good* as that which brings forth, supports, enriches, and embraces life. We see that first in the beautiful, productive world in which we live. All of creation, including the stars, the waters, the plants, and so forth were good in that they were created to support and enrich the life, ultimately, of mankind. As another year's crops are harvested, we give thanks to God for providing a rich land that supports life.

More personally, man and woman were good in that they were given the role and blessing to be fruitful and multiply. It is not good for the man to be alone because, alone, the man brings forth no life. While he is without his companion counterpart, no life will come from him. But with his companion counterpart, his wife, there is the bringing forth of children, and all creation can now be seen as good in that it provides food and sustenance and is beautiful to man and woman and their children. Although some without God's Word say that all life is equal, that humans are no more valuable than plants and insects, God's Word says that human life is the crown of God's creation. He made us stewards of the rest of creation to manage it for human good. In addition to creation, obviously the Creator is good in bestowing gifts and upholding all life, both physical and spiritual, by the Word of His mouth.

In contrast *Not good* is that which does not bring forth life, which denies life. Even before sin's entry into the world, man without woman was not good. Since then, man without woman, the separating or distancing of husband and wife through tension, mistrust, anger, and abuse—all because of sin-- is not good. And it is all too common.

Satan speaking words to divide us off from the God of life is not good. Those tempting words in the garden, "*Did God really say?*" were how the devil brought evil into the world, how he destroyed oneness and brought aloneness. He is still using that same question today. Here are two examples: Did God really say that the context for physical intimacy and the bringing forth new life is the sacred oneness of marriage? Doesn't it make more sense to try things out first? Did God really say that all life is sacred, even the developing child whose beginning is unplanned and inconvenient, even the elderly infirmed person who can't contribute or even respond? Doesn't it seem more sensible to make choices? Of course, that is the thinking of human self-interest, prompted by the devil. God's Word makes it clear that anything that doesn't uphold and embrace life, any taking or cheapening of life, is simply evil.

Next we contrast oneness with aloneness. God created us for oneness and unity, in our homes, schools, workplaces, communities, and congregations. God created us to enjoy the oneness of man with woman. Sex as God gave it is good. Our text records God establishing the honorable estate of marriage. The marriage rite says that "The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy.

God created us to live in a perfect oneness, intimacy, with Himself. When God created Adam and Eve in His image, they truly knew God as He wishes to be known and were perfectly happy in Him. They were righteous and holy, doing God's will.

Tragically, we brought aloneness and disunity by our sin. It first happened in the Garden of Eden, and it happens every day in our homes, schools, workplaces, communities, and congregations. The devastating division between mankind and God that happened in the Garden spread into all the world and affected our horizontal relationships. We brought division throughout all of creation, over which we had been given dominion. So we struggle with weeds, weather, and war; with illness, injury, and all kinds of hardships. By our sin, we brought division between the man and woman. We experience that personally as thoughtless words and actions bring silence and separation.

The Gospel reading addressed the permanent separation of divorce. There's the old joke in the form of a riddle that has a man on a sinking boat with his mother and his wife. If he can save only one, his mother or his wife, which one should he save? The joke's answer is that he should save his mother; he can always get another wife, but he can't get another mother. (The women probably have another thought on who should have gone overboard.) It's not a bit funny that in our world's view of marriage, husbands and wives are less than "one flesh."

Jesus identified divorce as a human accommodation to the reality of hardness of heart and separation. Yet our Lord speaks of marriage in a much more wonderful way: The man and woman are one flesh, joined together by God himself. No separation, no division, and no thought of replacement. Where we have suffered a broken marriage from the sin of others, God's compassion and love sustains us in times of aloneness. Where we have sinned against our Lord's gift of oneness, the hardness of our hearts is addressed only and fully by the kindness and healing of his Gospel. Like every sin, divorce has been paid for by Christ, and forgiveness can be received through repentance and faith.

At this point the sermon turns from law to gospel with the good news that oneness is restored. But that restoration started in a rather somber way. Jesus Christ, God's Son and God Himself, made Himself one with our sin and death. Phil. 2:8 says that He *made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness*. His humble service reached its climax on the cross. There, as Hebrews 2:9 from our Epistle says, "*He suffered death, . . .*

*[tasting] death for everyone."* In our place, He was paying the required price for divorce, misuse of sexuality, strife within marriage, and every sin that brings separation and aloneness.

All our division from each other and from our God reaches its final culmination in death, the ultimate separation, aloneness, and forsakenness. This is the death Jesus took upon himself for us as He cried out from the cross, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

By His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus makes us one with His righteousness. He sanctifies us with his blood, so that we can truly be called holy, of the same family, His brothers and sisters. All our division from God is destroyed in Jesus' act of sanctifying us and unifying us to Himself by His blood. The sinner's aloneness is destroyed as the sinner is brought into oneness with his God. Through the cleansing washing of Holy Baptism, the freeing word of gospel, and the nourishing meal of Christ's body and blood—a true holy communion of man and God is found in the sanctifying blood of forgiveness. In this way, Jesus lovingly declares of his Church, *"Here am I, and the children God has given me."* Oneness with God and with each other is restored. Our practice of Holy Communion reflects this deep and abiding oneness.

And finally, good is restored. Of course, we must recognize that in this earthly life the restoration of good will not be very evident to our eyes. Instead we will see all kinds of evidence that things are not good: terrorism, war, and fearful situations between nations, world religions, and competing ideologies; bitter division among and within nations, and sad statistics of divorce and abortion. The evidence is pretty clear that the devil and sinful human nature still resist the bringing forth, embracing, and sustaining of life.

But this sad earthly reality is counteracted and even trumped by a glorious spiritual reality. In his Word of Gospel, our Lord grants faith. By that faith we can see a most profound, far-reaching good--- the new life brought about by our Lord's atonement. Faith is the certainty of what we do not see but know from our Lord's Word. Jesus came that we may have life and have it to the full. In Him we can experience good, now and forever.

Even in our brokenness, by faith we know that our Lord gives restoration by His Word of Gospel. The husband who has not loved his wife and gave himself up for her may rejoice in sins forgiven. The wife who has not respected her husband and looked to him for the gifts of marriage may rejoice in her Lord's word of grace. Parents who see conflict in their families may teach their children of any age the words of reconciliation in Christ Jesus.

There is forgiveness, healing, and support for all who are alone, whether because of one's own sin or divorce or abandonment or timing or unfortunate circumstance or the painful loss of death. Those experiencing aloneness may look to their Lord in faith, knowing that even as we live in this world of division and aloneness, our Lord lovingly speaks to us His Word of oneness—His Word comforting us in sorrow, sanctifying the sinner with his own blood, reestablishing us in communion with Him and with each other. In this imperfect world, He will sustain us with oneness and good.

And one day, the oneness and good limited here by sin, will be replaced by perfect oneness and good, as we stand before our Savior in glory. In heaven there will be no aloneness, strife, or death. In perfect unity and unending life, we will stand together, praising our God and Savior for His glorious restoration. Both then and now Jesus stands in oneness with us, saying of us, *"Here am I, and the children God has given me."* And God saw all that He had made, and *now, in Christ*, it was very good. Amen.