

# The Goodness of This God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, why don't we join our hearts together and let's pray just before we dive into this text together. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the time together we've had already today. And Father, thank you so much for the truth that was contained in the children's talk, reminding us about the parable of the sower and our response to your word as it goes forth.

And Lord, I just ask that you would help us all today. Father, we know our proneness to wander. We know our ability to be distracted by things. Father, we ask that you would come and help us, Lord, respond rightly to your word, your life-giving word of truth today.

So, Father, thank you that you love us. We pray all these things knowing that you hear us. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. Well, folks, turn back to Genesis chapter 2. This is where we're going to be today.

Those verses that Ruth read for us just a few moments ago, we've began this short series. In the opening section of the book of Genesis last week. And if you remember chapter 1, if you were here, you can check it out online.

If you weren't here, we encountered the God who is there. So, the eternal God who created the world in six days by the power of his word.

[ 1 : 17 ] This God spoke and things came into being. And on the seventh day, God rested. And to understand kind of what's going on in chapter 2, it's a bit like Google Maps.

If you can picture Google Maps in your head. You know how you get Google Maps and you start with a big picture. And then you type the place in the search bar where you want to go. And all of a sudden, Google Maps goes right down to the street view of the place that you're searching for.

It's kind of what's going on in chapter 2. Chapter 1, we were big. Okay. And then in chapter 2, what we've done is we've hit Google Maps and we've scrolled down right down to the sixth day.

Okay. So, this is where God's created man and woman. This is where we are in Genesis chapter 2. And there's a central idea to this chapter that we all need to get in our minds straight off the bat if we're to understand and appreciate the beauty of what's going on in chapter 2.

And I was trying to think about a way this week to try and help us get a hold of it. And I'm going to chuck four characters on the screen. So, for the avoidance of doubt, this is, and for the recording, this is Victor Meldrew.

[ 2 : 23 ] This is Mr. Burns. This is the Grinch. And this is Scrooge. Now, my question to you is what connects the four of them? Answers. What connects the four of them? Not very happy.

They're mean. Anyone else? Grumpy. One more. Stingy. That's what I wrote down. Yeah.

Self-centered. Self-centered. Yeah. Great.

So, we have these four people who are connected by a reputation for being mean, for being stingy, for being bad, and for being a bit of a killjoy in life, right?

Now, here's what I want you to do. I want you to take those ideas and those words, and then I want you to picture the polar opposite of those things. Get them in your mind. What would it look like?

Because what we need to understand is that in chapter 2, the writer is showing us that this God is unbelievably good. He is passionate about the fullness of life.

[ 3 : 25 ] He is passionate about pleasure. This God is so good. And I want us to walk out here today, and we've been helped so greatly so far in everything that we've done in this service already.

I want to walk out here today with a better understanding of the goodness of this God. So, we're going to get words in chapter 2 like this, okay?

They're lavish, and abundance, and delight, and pleasant, and colour, and pleasing, and joy. This God is passionate about the fullness of life.

And so, we're kind of building up a picture here in chapter 1 and chapter 2 of who this God is. Chapter 1, we saw, and if you look at the text there in chapter 1, we saw his greatness, okay? And in chapter 2, we're going to see his goodness. So, you'll notice that the word in chapter 1 for God, if you look at it there, all the way through, it was God, God, God, God, God, God, God. [ 4 : 23 ] It was the Hebrew word Elohim, okay? It just, it kind of means the majestic God, the powerful God, the God who is up there. And in chapter 2, if you come with me to the text, you'll notice nine times we get the word Lord God.

Lord, okay? Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. So, this is Yahweh. This is the covenant name of God that the author is using here, Moses is using.

And it's the term that tells us, signifies to the reader, that this God is up close and personal with his people. So, kind of put those two bits of the jigsaw together and see what this is telling us about this God.

This God is powerful and he is personal, right? This God is great and he is good. And that's why this has been much cause for celebration down the ages for God's people.

That this God is both of these things. Because how horrible would it be if he was great but he wasn't good? How horrible would it be if he was powerful but he wasn't personal and couldn't love us?

[ 5 : 38 ] And then flip that around. How bad would it be if he loved us but had no power to do anything about anything? Do you see how this God is great and he is good?

And that is why the chorus down the ages of the church has been, give thanks to the Lord for he is good. And his steadfast, his hesed love endures forever.

It just keeps on going. It never ends. This is who this God is. And so chapter 2 comes at us today and screams at us that this God is so unbelievably good.

And we don't have time to do justice to everything that's in the text today. I'm just going to pick out four ways. You're going to get a four-point sermon today. But don't panic, okay? It's the same length. Four ways that this text shows us the goodness of God.

We're going to rattle through these today. Here's the first one. It shows us the goodness in the forming of the body. Right? Verse 7. Come with me. Then the Lord God, there's our term again, formed a man from the dust off the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

[ 6 : 48 ] And the man became a living being. So the image there is of a potter making something out of the clay. Right?

Remember that show back in the 90s? It was Tony Hart, wasn't it? This little character called Morph. This little character that he had made. If you remember that TV show. This is kind of what's going on here. So when it comes to God making the human body, here's what we need to see. Two things. Firstly, that this is, in one sense, extremely ordinary. Okay? God formed the man's body from what? The dust of the ground. Not from some kind of special indestructible material. Okay? We're not Iron Man. But he made us from the same stuff as he made the rest of creation. Hydrogen, oxygen, carbon. Our bodies are dust.

That's why I've done funerals over the years. Finished with the dust we've come from and to dust we will return. Our bodies are dust. And I suggest that it's extremely humbling for us to come to grips with that.

[ 7 : 50 ] And I would argue it's extremely freeing as well to come to understand what our bodies are. In one way we are extremely ordinary. But in another way do you see how we are very extraordinary.

What does God do with this dust? Right? Forms it. Forms the man. And what does he do? And feel the language here. He breathes into the man.

Right? He breathes into this man. Puts his breath in his lungs. And this man becomes a living being. Do you not love that term? And what this is telling us is that this God is so intimately involved with the creation of human beings.

In a way that he just... He wasn't when it came to the rest of creation. To the extent that human beings have the very breath of God in them.

And as we sit here now and as we take another breath and out it goes. Take another breath and out it goes. Take another breath and out it goes. This is God's breath that is in us.

[ 9 : 00 ] Sustaining us. Animating us. Isn't that an incredible thought? Here's what this means. This means that our bodies are precious. Right?

And what we do with our bodies, it matters. It seems to me that our world gets this wrong in two extremes. On the one hand, we obsess about the body. Right? Remember going to the gym back in the day. Speaking to people there.

What are you guys doing today? What do they come back with? We're sculpting. That's what they said. Sculpting. Right? Diets. Protein shakes. Whey bars. Strict regime.

Obsessed with how they look. We live in a world where images, magazines, Facebook, everything. And just obsessed with the body. And we think to ourselves, if only if we could look like that, then we'd be happy.

Obsessed with the body, on the other hand, we neglect the body. We don't see it as fearfully and wonderfully made. In fact, we see it as unimportant. And we see it as almost disposable and changeable to what we fancy.

[10:02] Right? We're going to see next week so much more about this and how our bodies are affected by the fall. But for now, do you see that the body is both a deliberately designed and a precious thing?

And as we look at our own bodies and take that in, this passage calls us beyond that to see the God who we are so dependent on.

The God whose very breath is in us. And it throws us to look at him and to find our identity in who he is. Not in how we feel, which is so changeable, but in him.

Again, remember what we said last week, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And you understand what Paul says, isn't he, in Romans 12 there, when he encourages the Christians in Rome to offer what as their spiritual sacrifice?

Their bodies. Everything that they are. God has made them. And he's made us for the purpose of worshipping and knowing him. Right?

[11:09] Second way God shows his goodness in this passage is in planting the garden. Come with me to verse 8. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden.

And there he put the man he had formed. So Eden is a real place, right? This is not Narnia. This is not Middle Earth.

The writer is letting us know that if you type this, right? Try and imagine this. If you type this into Sat Nav back in the day, right?

You would end up in a place. And you can figure that out where that is from the four rivers there, right? Read commentators that will kind of show you where that is.

But do you see more than that what this place is? This is a, as my flatmate, Univ, who was from down south, used to say, this is a lush place. Yeah? Lush place.

[12:05] This is a lavish place. Do you see God's goodness in this? His beauty in this? Look at verse 9. Do you see how God's not just a landscape gardener? Do you see how God's a food connoisseur?

Love it. Right? He makes trees pleasing to the eye. Right? Good to look at. And he makes them good for food. And the land's full of precious stones.

You get it there. Gold, bdellium, onyx. And there's water everywhere. Giving this place life. Do you see how the Lord positively delights in providing abundance for the man?

Right? This God, remember what he said at the start, is passionate about beauty and about the fullness of life. This is where God puts his man. Right?

Not in economy class. Saying if you collect enough air miles, you might get bumped up to business class one day. No, he puts him in Eden. Right?

[13:05] Right? And in the Hebrew there, Eden is very similar to the Hebrew word for delight. You begin to see what's going on. The writer is telling us. This place is lush.

It's beautiful. God is abundantly good, isn't he? Third way he shows his goodness is in defining the work. Okay?

What is the man going to do in Eden? Is he going to sunbathe? Is he going to travel? Is he going to sightsee? No. God gives his man a job to do. Verse 15. To work and to keep.

Those are two verbs. To work and to keep. Which speaks of both protecting and cultivating. So using and developing the land's creative potential for the glory of God.

And let me just say that. That's why. I don't know about you, but I love creativity. Right? In life in general. Love creativity. And that's why this should not surprise us.

[14:08] That flowing from this, human beings down the ages have done things like send fellow human beings into space. Right? Just the creativity of humanity astounds me sometimes.

It still amazes me, right? That I can speak into a tiny bit of, I don't know what, is that plastic on my phone? And I can speak to somebody on the other side of the world. Still blows my mind how that happens. I don't know.

Right? Human beings inventing the telephone. Human beings building cathedrals. Human beings composing songs and poems. I love it. One of my favorite jazz artists, a man called John Coltrane. Most famous album, Love Supreme. He writes this in it. This album is a humble offering to God. And my attempt to say thank you, God, with my work, the same as I do with my heart and with my tongue.

And see, next week, again, that one of the results of the fall is that our work will now be frustrating and hard and in many different ways. But do you see right now in chapter two that we need to appreciate that God gave work as part of his good design for human beings.

[15:15] We're not designed to be lazy, to sit around. We're designed to be working and doing stuff for his glory. As I say, as Christians, it should cause us to think differently about how we approach work, shouldn't it?

As we live in a world that so often neglects work or, again, just obsesses over work. Those two extremes. To be different in how we understand our work. And fast forward again to the New Testament.

You can check this out in your own time. You see, Paul encouraged the Christians in Ephesus not to be idle, but to work with their hands. To transform how we understand work.

It's a good gift from God. But in all this, do you see how there is one stipulation? Okay, come with me. Verse 16 and 17. In all this work, there is one thing that God says to the man.

And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat of it, you will certainly die.

[16:25] So do you see how there's one rule in the garden? God says you can have access to everything else, but don't eat from that tree.

Right? It's an act of love because he knows that if Adam does that, he's going to die. But it begs the question, doesn't it? Why would you create that tree in the first place? It's the question we're all sitting here asking.

It's the question we should be asking. Why create that tree in the first place? Right? The text is silent. But let me pitch you an idea. Okay? I'm one of three boys.

And there was a rule in our house when we were growing up. Right? And it came into play after we'd all passed our driving tests. And it came into play any time any of us wanted access to the car when we were going out at night.

Right? And my dad would lay it down to us just before we were about to exit the door. And all he would say, and this became a joke in our house, three words. Right? Home by 11.

[17:28] Home by 11. Which looking back on it, it was extremely lenient really. Okay? So it comes to my girls when they're teenagers. They're not getting home by 11. They're getting bed by 10. Right? There's a boy involved that is bed by 9.

You just got that forward. But do you know what? She's a teenager. I hated him for that. Right? Hated that rule. But see, looking back in it now, was my dad killing my joy like I thought he was? I don't think so. I think my dad was showing that he loved me. Right? Out late at night in the car, just passed my test. He knew I got tired. Right? Driving back late at night, not the safest thing to do. He knew that driving back at night, visibility is not everything that it should be. No, here's my dad saying it was good to be at home. It's good for you to be at home.

And you'll flourish. If you trust me, then I've got your best intentions in mind. How often is it the case in life that the boundaries that we think are killing our joy are actually there to help us live?

[18:34] Is this God saying to Adam, if you have a chance to respond to God's abundant goodness, by saying, Adam, would you listen and obey my word? Show me that you love me through your obedience.

Because trust me that I love you. And the best place for you to flourish is for you to live your life under my loving rule. Again, you fast forward to John 14.

You've got Jesus there speaking with his disciples. How will they show him that they love him? By keeping his commands.

Joy stealer? Fun killer? No, the testimony of every Christian submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ following his word is that he is the joy giver.

He turned our obedience from being a drudgery into being a delight. Why? Because we know the character of the one who gave it and he is good.

[ 19 : 37 ] God showed his goodness in defining the work. And finally, fourthly, he shows his goodness in creating the marriage. Okay, verse 18.

Do you see? And this should really hit us here. How, for the first time, God says that something is not good. And that should hit us because in chapter one, remember we saw and we thought about this.

It just kept going good, good, good, good, good. Very good. Yeah, but we've zoned in on day six here. Something is not good and that should cause us to stop and ask, what is not good?

What is not good is that the man that God has made is alone. Let's do a little bit of work there.

Okay, that doesn't mean that he was lonely. What that means, sorry, this is not about God finding him a play date.

Okay, this is about the man not being able to do the job that God had given him to do on his own. What does he need? He needs a helper. Right?

[ 20 : 37 ] That's not a derogatory term. You read the rest of the Bible, you hear God refer to himself as the helper of Israel. You fast forward to the New Testament, you see Jesus calling the Holy Spirit the helper.

No, the helper is somebody who will come alongside to help the fulfillment of a God-given task.

See, Adam needs a helper. And I love this.

God, what does he do? Just get the image in your head. He troops out all the animals, right?

Troops them all out. Is that your help? No. Is that? No. Is that your help? And as a friend of mine once said, really glad that Adam never chose a hippo at this stage.

Right? God troops out all the animals. No, no helper to be found. So God goes to work. Again, see the beauty and the goodness of God in this. And with Adam asleep, what does he do?

He takes a rib and he creates woman. And I love it. This is what Puritan Matthew Hemery points out about this section. Notice that the woman isn't taken from Adam's head to be over him or from his feet to be under him, but from his rib to be beside him and for him to put his arm around her and love her.

[ 21 : 48 ] Here is woman. Right? Equal with Adam in dignity, but different from Adam in design. And the two so wonderfully complement one another.

You see, Adam and Eve, who God has brought together, and we need to see this with the express purpose, if you like, of facing outward. The two of them hand in hand facing outward and worshipping God together as they carry out the job that he has given them to do.

What a team. And like a father of the bride, God walks Eve down the aisle to Adam. Right? And here is the first marriage in the Bible.

Adam is absolutely thrilled. Do you see it? Right? God, you're good. You nailed this one. Yeah?

Feel Adam's joy in this. Do you see it? Verse 23. We get the best groom's speech ever.

Don't we? Adam's not thanking his guests for coming. Adam's not telling a few funny stories about her. Adam is heaping affectionate words on his bride.

[ 22 : 55 ] He sings about her. Look at verse 23. This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. He's celebrating the fact that he is like her.

She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. And what does God say to them? We need to dip back in here, actually, to verse 28 of chapter 1.

He says to them, fill the earth. Work, fill the earth. Work, fill the earth. So, they have to be intimate together. They have to give themselves to one another.

They have to have babies. They have to have sex. This is how they're going to fill the world, with fellow image bearers of God. And right there, we need to stop and appreciate that sex is a good gift from this good God.

It is a good thing. Why? Because it is a God thing. But here's also what we need to understand from the text, that this is more than just a physical thing.

[ 24 : 00 ] Right? We can come and chat this out afterwards if you want. But I would argue that it's been to the detriment of society that we often turn it into something like that. Purely physical. It's more than that. Right? This is, as you see it here in the text, feel like this is a soul-on-soul thing.

It's two souls coming together. Surely, that is what God means when he talks about one flesh.

There is a coming together. This is a precious, precious thing.

And God says to enjoy it, his good gift within his good parameters of a marriage between one man and one woman. As they come together and are one flesh.

It's God's good design. We love him for this. His good design for sex and marriage. Let me just say, in our world today where people think differently to this, we want to bless people who think differently to this.

We want to love people who think differently to this. We want to care and serve for people who think differently to this. All the while affirming, obeying, and loving what God says in his word about his good design for sex and marriage.

[ 25 : 09 ] And as we do those things, who is our example? It's Jesus. All out in his love for the word of the Lord. And all out in his love for people. Here is God's design.

Do you know what I've been thinking about all week? I've been thinking about amoeba. Right? Show you how I got there, okay? Now, have you ever asked yourself why God created two sexes? Ever asked that? You haven't asked that. You're not asking that. You're getting this, okay? Two sexes. Because if we are made, think about it, in the image of this three-in-one God, if we were made in his image to almost reflect something of who he is, why did God not create one sex to reflect his oneness?

Yeah? Because life would be a lot easier in some respects if we were all amoeba, if we were all snails, wouldn't it, in some respects. Why did God not create one sex? Flip it around. Why did God not create three sexes to reflect his threeness?

Why did God create two sexes? Well, surely the answer, and showing us that the goodness and the greatness of God, is that in the fullness of time, we would come to understand the ultimate marriage.

[ 26 : 38 ] Right here. The one that our marriages on earth are meant to be based upon and point to. The marriage on the last day when Jesus, heaven's groom, returns to take home and marry his bride, the church.

It's got to be the reason. And that is why we love the Genesis 2 marriage, because we understand it with the New Testament understanding, with the New Testament lenses on, and we see that we love this marriage, because it points to that marriage.

It points to that marriage. And it's so important that all of us here today understand who Jesus is and understand that marriage, because many of us will be here today, and we're struggling in all sorts of ways, at the very mention of sex and marriage.

Okay? We're struggling over previous marriages. We're struggling over current marriages. We're struggling over regrets. We're struggling about singleness. And we need to understand that it's about that marriage.

All right, I've used this before, but I'll preach this prerogative and use it again, okay? I remember when I was growing up, 90s, big film, Jenny Maguire. Okay? One of the most quoted films of my lifetime growing up, certainly.

[ 27 : 53 ] If you haven't even watched it, you'll know these two lines, because they're so commonplace, right? The first one from that film was, Show me the money. Heard of that one, yeah? Show me the money. Second line, the one that Jerry said to his, the girl that he fell in love with was, You complete me.

You complete me. I've been at weddings where people say that all the time, right, in their speeches. You complete me. You complete me. You complete me. Let me just say, it's cute.

But friends, I don't buy it. I don't buy it. Right? Don't hear me wrong. I've been married to Alex. She's my best friend for nine years. And you know what?

I love her. Okay? She's my best mate. Love her. But she does not complete me. And because she lives with me and sees me warts and all, let me, she will tell you, okay, I do not complete her.

Right? But think about it. How could we complete one another? Given who we are, given that we have, we were made of dust, that we make mistakes all the time.

[ 28 : 57 ] How could we complete one another? Let me just say, whoever you are here today, whatever you think about any of this, there's only one person who will complete you. And his name is Jesus.

One who satisfies. One who gives life. Jesus. The one who calls us to follow him. To deny self. To take up cross and to follow him. The one who offers us forgiveness and wholeness. And the one who says in John chapter 10, verse 10, that I have come that you may have life.

And life in all its fullness. See, Jesus, the very embodiment of the goodness of God. Giving us his son.

And I always love it, that part in the wedding ceremony, when the couple read out together, with my body, I honor you. And all that I am, I give to you. And all that I have, I share with you.

[ 29 : 59 ] You know that part of the vows? I was thinking this week, boy, how Jesus can say that to his bride in the final day. Right? He went to the cross.

He gave himself fully to pay his bride's debt of sin and to win her for himself. And that joyous relationship that he has with the father, his people share in now, because we are joined to him. He has made us his own. And all the promises that he gives us to those who trust in him, that we read at the end of Revelation, of a new heavens and a new earth, a new heavenly city.

What do we read in Revelation 22? It's in the middle of that city. A garden. What's in the middle of the garden? The tree of life.

In other words, God's new Jerusalem will be like the garden of Eden. In all its beauty, except it will be bigger and better.

[ 31 : 08 ] God is so good. Did you get that from this chapter? He is so good. And where we need to leave this chapter, verse 25, the last word, I want you to notice what's not here.

What's not here? Shame's not here. And guilt's not here. And pain is not here.

And suffering is not here. And regret is not here. And death is not here. Which shows you, doesn't it, that these things, as they affect all of us, did not originate in God's good design.

They must have come from somewhere else. You need to come back next week to see how that works out. But for now, friends, do you see how this God is so, so good? He is so good.

And listen, as we close, we started by thinking about some people in life who are killjoys, right? Let me put the man on the screen, Freddie Mercury, who sang what? He was having a good time. Wasn't he?

[ 32 : 16 ] Right? Don't stop me now. I'm having such a good time. I'm having a ball. Great song. Okay, don't hear me wrong. But I read this this week, that seven years after that song was released, he said this in an interview.

Okay, he said, you can have everything in the world and still be the loneliest man. And that is the most bitter type of loneliness. Success has brought me world idolization and millions of pounds, but it's prevented me from having the one thing that we all need, a loving, ongoing relationship. Six years after that, man dies a tragic, tragic death. See, Genesis 2 asks us, maybe where you're looking for the good life is not where you'll find it.

Asks us, where are we looking? And then it beckons us to come to the good God. And to find life with this good God under his rule.

Friends, we were made for a relationship with this good God. And it is ours through faith in Jesus Christ. The one who said, I've come to that you may have life.

[ 33 : 30 ] What is this telling us? It's telling us that this God is good. He is so good. And his steadfast love endures forever.

Let's pray together. And father, we ask that your Holy spirit would be at work in our hearts. No, Lord, as we chew over some of the things that you're, you're, we've seen in your word today. Father, as these land on our hearts, we pray for that he would come and bring, healing, that he would bring understanding, father, that he would bring forgiveness and life as he points us to the person of Jesus.

So in the silence now, dear father, I pray that you would be at work by your spirit in our hearts. Lord, thank you for your abundant goodness.

Help us grasp and live in light of the fact that you are good all the time. And all the time you are good. Lord, we love you. Thank you that we love you simply because, and only because you loved us first.

[ 34 : 38 ] And we pray these things in Jesus's precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen.