

Text: Genesis 2:4-25

Title: "What is good for man?"

Time: 11/18/07 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I searched diligently this past week (for 10 minutes with my internet browser, anyway) for the origin of the term *baby shower*, and I came up empty. Some websites noted that history has recorded instances of Greeks and Romans giving new parents gifts upon the birth of a child. Others emphasized the 19th century Victorian practice of having a special ladies' tea for a pregnant friend who was not to be seen in public until after she had given birth. Still others said that the modern baby shower did not come into existence until after the baby boom following WWII.

Whatever the origin of baby showers may be, I do think we can say with certainty that the practice of showering offspring with a multitude of gifts begins right here in Genesis 2. Paul speaks of all men as the offspring of God in Acts 17:28, and so in terms of our creation we are God's offspring, God's children.

From Genesis 1:26-2:3, we saw that God's creative act answers the question "What is man?" We are God's creature, God's image, and the object of God's blessing. Now in Genesis 2 we have a more specific account of man's creation designed to answer the question "What is good for man?" Over and over again in this passage, God showers Adam with things that are good for him. Just like babies are brought into the world and then showered with gifts at their baby shower, so also God brings Adam into the world and showers him with gifts here in Genesis 2. I want us to see 5 answers to the question, "What is good for man?" from the gifts showered on Adam in this passage.

I. The gift of life is good for man (v. 7). Life is a gift from God.

Illustration: The discovery of DNA and RNA, key operatives in each of our trillions of cells, has presented insurmountable obstacles for the doctrine of evolution taught to our public school

children in their textbooks, that life evolved through chance random processes from non-living chemicals in a primordial soup about 3.9 billion years ago.

The soup already had big difficulties, because it required an environment that both included and eliminated oxygen for different reasons at the same time. But now, with an understanding of the complexities of the information code involved in the DNA/RNA processes of life, any measurable likelihood of the non-living becoming living through chance processes simply does not exist.

One of the co-discoverers of DNA, Francis Crick, has imagined an explanation for the origin of life he calls *directed panspermia*, a process by which alien space creatures planted seeds of life on the earth during its evolutionary history. The unavoidable law of nature called biogenesis states plainly that life must come from life. The first life, therefore, had to come supernaturally, from a Power not subject to the laws of nature like biogenesis. This is God, not alien space creatures. Life is a gift from God.

A. Because life is a gift from God, living things exist to praise the Lord (Ps. 150:6, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.") Our lives should bring our Creator praise.

B. Because life is a gift from God, we ought to remember our Creator even in the days of our youth (Eccl. 12:1, 6-7, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no delight in them'; . . . before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it"). Our lives should count for our Creator at an early age; life is a precious and fleeting gift; we have no time to waiste it living for ourselves.

C. Because life is a gift from God, He can remake the mess a man can make of his life (1 Cor. 15:42-49). Our lives should find hope in the saving power of the resurrection.

II. The gift of labor is good for man (vv. 5-6, 15).

Illustration: This is a truth that has always seemed counter-intuitive to me, especially when I was a kid. My dad used to tell me how good hard work was for me. Dad was a systems analyst, banker, and want-a-be farmer. That last occupation found an outlet in the three big gardens that we had in our back yard. There was always lots of work to do in those gardens. I hated working in those gardens, but Dad really enjoyed it. A couple of weeks ago Brother Scott and I and our children had the privilege of meeting the older gentleman named Felix who runs the sugar-house at the Parker Pancake Barn down in Mason. Felix was telling us all how concerned he was that young people today do not know about the joys of working the ground.

Application: Our jobs, though certainly impacted by the fall as we will see in Genesis 3, are actually blessings from a loving heavenly Father, and we need to view them as such. Labor is a gift that is good for man.

Illustration: Guild A. Fetridge is a retirement specialist who owns a consulting firm for retirees. He describes how he came to form the company in a *New York Times* article [www.nytimes.com/1994/11/20, "Help in Avoiding Pitfalls in Retirement"]: "'I had an idea for starting a business built around pre-retirement and life-planning seminars,' he said. 'The idea took form when I was at Midland Bank in the Manhattan office. I decided to organize a retiree day in which we would invite all the former bank employees in the area to a reunion at the bank.

"'A lot of people came, and I was curious about what they were doing with their lives. 'How's retirement?' I asked each of them.

....

"'For the majority of those, retirement was clearly not what they had expected. Instead, the years they had so looked forward to

were disappointing, empty and devoid of purpose. Many even said they wished with their heart that they were back at work. I was curious about why so many were so unhappy, so I wanted to explore the whole subject further, and I devised a 38-question survey, and over a three-and-a-half-year period I sent it to literally hundreds of retirees, and the answers I got were not what I expected.'

"Extra time, too much time, was an underlying problem for most, Mr. Fetridge discovered.

"'Personal relationships were a major problem,' he said. 'The 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week togetherness that comes with retirement put a strain on many marriages. But the extra hours of free time stood out as the most important negative factor in retirement. People were baffled about how to fill up an extra 8 to 10 hours a day for the rest of their lives.'"

Application: It is easy to dream about the ease of retirement, but God wants us to be thankful for the gift of labor. Are we thankful for the blessing of the work we are called to do?

III. The gift of location is good for man (vv. 8-14).

Illustration: One of the questions I received during my pastoral candidacy here was why would you want to come to a place like New Hampshire, a place where it is cold in the winter and full of bugs in the summer? Well, there are a lot of places that fit that description, but the reason I want to be in New Hampshire is that the place of God's placement is always the place of His compassionate blessing. His choice of location is a His gift to me.

Application: Happiness for the Christian is never a function of the characteristics of his location, but always a function of whether or not God has placed him there. As believers we are to settle in the place of God's choosing for our lives and seek to be fruitful in that place. My pastor in South Carolina used to call it "blooming where you are planted." God has given us a home, a

home church, a home town, a place that He expects us to call our own and care for.

Contrast the way the same word translated *put* in v. 15 is used in Isa. 46:7. Here, rather than God putting man somewhere, man has crafted for himself a god that he can put wherever he wants. How does it work in our lives? Do we serve a God who places us where He wants that we might know His rich blessing and do His will, or have we crafted a god whom we can stick wherever it suits us to have him so that he can fit into our plans? For those who are willing to do the will of God, to be where He wants them to be, the gift of location is a gift of his great blessing, and we can feel right at home in the will of God and bloom where He has planted us.

IV. The gift of law is good for man (vv. 16-17, 25).

Application: The difference between right and wrong is real because of the first four words of v. 16: *The Lord God commanded*. Because God exists, and because God's command or law exists, right is not also wrong, and wrong is not also right. God's law is the basis for all morality, and without it there is no sufficient basis for morality. We will say more about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil when we are in chapter three, but the passage before us today emphasizes two important characteristics of God's law that make it especially good for man.

A. God's law is wonderfully generous toward man ("you may eat freely," v. 16). Innocence before God's law is a position of great blessing, opportunity, and freedom.

Illustration: A train engineer that is willing to keep the train on its tracks can do some amazing things. He can travel cross-country and see some wonderful sites. He can move tons of material from one place to another. But the engineer who has decided that the tracks are too restrictive given all the other possible adventures waiting for him off the tracks is in for a train-wreck. When it comes to trains, life is best under the restrictions of the tracks.

Application: For human beings, life is best under the restrictions of God's law. Grammatically, verse 16 places a tremendous emphasis on all that Adam was free to do under God's law. The focus of the commandment from God is the blessing of eating freely from all the trees of the garden. Only one was withheld!

Contrast the focus that Satan directs Eve to in 3:1, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" God wants us to focus on all we can do under the law of God; Satan wants us to focus on the few things we cannot do under the law of God. God has our best interests at heart; Satan is bent on our destruction. Are we focused on the great blessing and provision of God within the restrictions of His law over our lives, or are we focused on that one or two things that we cannot do if we obey God the way we should? If the former, we are poised for success in God's will. If the latter, we are poised for failure and destruction.

B. God's law is unavoidably just toward man ("you will surely die," v. 17). The consequences of guilt before God's law are always absolutely certain.

Application: The Scripture is clear. God cannot ever let a man get away with sin. The penalty for sin is always just and it is always certain. God is not mocked. What a person sows; that must he also reap. It is this justice of God that forced the death of Christ in our behalf. He could not simply say, "Ok let's just forget the whole thing." The penalty for sin had to be paid, and it is paid in Christ. Are you in Christ today? Do you have the saving relationship with the Savior who paid your penalty that comes through repentance, faith, and calling upon him for salvation?

V. The gift of love is good for man (vv. 18-24). God calls Adam's love his *helper*, and I want us to understand three things about the role of the helper this morning.

A. The helper role is an equal role; it is different but not inferior.

1. God is correcting loneliness, not dirty socks in creating Eve for Adam (v. 18, "it is not good for man to be alone"; vv. 22-23). God created a companion for Adam, not a servant.

2. Two entities are legitimately labeled *helper* in the OT: Yahweh God and wives. Similar to the analogy of Paul that Christ is like the husband and the church is like a wife, the use of the term עֲזָרָה to describe the wife here presents the analogy that a wife is in some important sense like Yahweh, while God's people are very much like Adam, the husband. Note the praise of Yahweh's strength and majesty as a helper in Deut. 33:26, 29.

B. The helper role is a specific role; it has clear responsibilities.

1. Wives need to defend their husbands, not attack them. Deliverance from enemies is closely connected to the kind of help this word refers to (Exod. 18:4, Deut. 33:7, Ps. 22:19, 33:20, 70:5, 121:1-2, 124:8).

2. Wives need to honor their husbands, not shame them. Exaltation and honor are closely connected to this kind of help (Ps. 89:19-20).

3. Wives need to faithfully love for their husbands, not betray them. Trustworthiness, kindness, encouragement, love, and support are all a part of being this kind of helper (Ps. 146:5-9).

C. The helper role is an exclusive role; it is a monogamous union between a man and a woman (vv. 24-25). Note how the NT makes use of Moses' teaching on the role of the helper.

1. The union is designed as permanent (Matt. 19:5, Mark 10:7-8).

2. The union is designed to be physical (1 Cor. 6:16).

3. The union is designed to be covenantal (Eph. 5:31). It involves a promise made before God that should not be broken.

Conclusion: When God made man in His own image and likeness, He showered him with great gifts. This good Creator God is the same God we have come to worship this morning. We live in a world ruined by the sin of Genesis 3, but we still can know and love the God of Genesis 1 and 2, for He sent His own son to redeem the things ruined in the fall.

In Christ, we know this wonderfully generous Creator, who gives man life and labor and location and law and love out of His great goodness toward us. Do you know Him as your good God this morning? Have you found Him in Christ?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching