

## **Good, Very Good Genesis 1**

### **Introduction**

The first Thanksgiving celebration in our country expressed deep gratitude that the colony had even survived. Pioneering in a new continent far away from the old country, with a deep sense of being strangers and pilgrims in the earth. The fall of the year is harvest time. There's good reason for gratitude because the labors of the spring and summer have paid off. Food for the winter and seed for planting in the spring has been gathered in. In an agricultural society all this makes perfect sense.

But in a time and civilization like ours where our survival seems a given, and we get our food from places far removed from where it actually comes with little awareness of all the work it took to get it to our tables, thankfulness often seems to drown in a sea of entitlement. We can click an icon on our phones and whatever we want is delivered to our doorstep by the next day if not the same day. Virtual becomes reality, and reality seems far away and unnecessary. Such a culture can make people forget just how dependent they actually are on God for their very survival. It is a dangerous place to be.

Romans 1:20-21

**20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **21** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

So how can we cultivate genuine gratitude that is more than just feasting together on the fourth Thursday of November with a bit of tacked-on thanks? How can we remind ourselves just how good we have it because of God Himself and what He has done for us? The verses in Romans 1 about the danger of being ungrateful to God point us the right direction. The very creation around us testifies to God's existence, kindness and power.

So to fire up the gratitude of our hearts, travel with me to the beginning, when nothing that we enjoy today even existed. The only reason it is here at all is God.

Genesis 1

**1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **3** And God said,

“Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. <sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. <sup>9</sup> And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. <sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for

days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. <sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. <sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was

good. <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

A lengthy passage that led to the natural observation this week from one of the other pastors, "that's a lot to cover in one sermon!" So let's think of this passage along these lines: when God created the universe, including planet earth, He gave us—

1. A Place to Live (1-25)
2. A Purpose to Fulfill (26-28)
3. Provision to Sustain (29-30)

And it was all good, very good.

## **1. A Place to Live (1-25)**

Rather than reading through the first 25 verses again, I'd like you to look down through them in your copy of the Bible. Look at the subjects and verbs. Over and over again God is the subject. He is the One taking action.

God created.

God was hovering.

God said.

God separated.

God called.

God made.

God saw.

God set.

God blessed.

## **Light**

Visible light is electromagnetic radiation that the human eye can perceive from long wavelengths of infrared to short wavelengths of ultraviolet. Without visible light we perceive no color. There is electromagnetic radiation we cannot see—gamma rays, X-rays, microwaves, radio waves—all of which have value and uses.

Think about the difference light makes in your life just in terms of how it cheers your soul, how it protects you from stumbling and groping along in the dark. It is necessary for plants to grow. It is necessary to life itself.

But for God we would grope in darkness. In His light we see light. Remember how John introduced Jesus the Word in the prologue of his Gospel?

John 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

### **Skies (Heaven)**

Different from the heavenly city, Genesis 1 is talking about the atmosphere around the earth where clouds hold water to be distributed upon the earth, where birds and airplanes fly.

Every time you look to the skies to check the weather or enjoy the beauty of a cloud formation or just the peaceful calm of looking up on a clear day, remember that all of that God put there the first week of creation.

### **Earth and seas**

Currently 71% of the earth's surface is water, but there was a time when it was all water—at the very beginning as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters, and at the worldwide flood of Noah's day when God judged the earth for its wickedness and started over with Noah's family.

Genesis 1:9

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

We do most of our working, moving, sleeping, and living on the 29% of the earth that is land. *Every step we take, every furrow we plow, everything we build, depends on our having solid ground on which to do it. The only reason it's there is that God made it so.*

And when we head to the rivers, lakes, and oceans, they have boundaries. We travel over them, fish them, explore them because they have been gathered to defined places by God.

### **Vegetation and fruit**

All reproducing after its kind, think of all the variety, the shade, the food, the landscapes, the forests, the fields.

### **Stars, planets, sun, moon—times and seasons, day and night**



Get out away from the lights of the city and look up into a night sky. Even with no telescope it is awe-inspiring. "What is man that you are mindful of him!" we cry. You don't have to be an astrophysicist or know much about astronomy to be amazed. And if you do study and explore more, the wonder only increases. The vastness of our universe is mindblowing. Yet God calls the stars by name and at the same time tenderly tends the needs of the broken hearted.

Psalm 147:3-5

<sup>3</sup> He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.

<sup>4</sup> He determines the number of the stars;  
he gives to all of them their names.

<sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;  
his understanding is beyond measure.

God set the sun, moon, and stars for times and seasons. The magnetic pull of the moon sets the tides. The rotation of the earth round the sun and its own rotation, both day and night and the seasons of the year. God holds all things together by His power (Colossians 1). He is Lord of history, the eras and seasons, and the rise and fall of nations, peoples, and kings, that they might seek after Him (Acts 17). He is Lord of every day you live.

**Sea creatures and birds**

Think of whales and sharks, fish great and small, of every variety and color. Consider the way an aquarium sets you in awe, and what it's like to watch the sea gulls at the beach and the dolphins surfacing along the shore. There are sea creatures so deep in waters so dark where the pressure is so great that we have yet to discover them. There are living beings in the sea and air that once were everywhere but now are extinct, still stunning in their design and beauty.

All of this from God. The turkey you'll eat this week. The chicken you eat all year, along with the fish and shrimp and crabs and scallops. Living beings of air and sea, gifts from God to us.

Strikingly, the text says God blessed them and caused them to multiply and fill the earth, just as He will later bless human beings.

**Livestock and land animals**

The first farm equipment was living. Animals that worked alongside man to cultivate and develop the earth. Farmers, shepherds, cattlemen all make their living in part because God created these land animals. Angels announced to shepherds the birth of the Messiah child. Jesus calls Himself the Good

Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. We who believe are His flock. We learn who we are and who God is in part from the land animals.

Milk, eggs, beef, venison—hungry yet? But the value of all these animals is more than just for food. The earth teems with land animals. It would not seem like home without them. Horses, dogs, cats—best friends for many a family and many a person left alone.

Psalm 104:24

O LORD, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom have you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

Take some time this week to thank God for His gift to us of light, the skies, solid land, seas, fruit trees and vegetation of every kind, sun, moon, stars, birds of the air and fish of the sea, livestock and land animals. *Every where you look every day you live, you benefit from what God put in place. All this filling the earth so that it is the perfect place He custom made for our good. To be grateful to Him, all you have to do is pay attention.*

## **2. A Purpose to Fulfill (26-28)**

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the

livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

*We have purpose because of our identity as those made in the image of God. Everything we do on earth is an expression of God’s having handed over to human beings the responsibility of managing the planet well.* Much of our history we’ve done a pretty poor job of that, with abuse and destruction following in our wake. Because of our sin, the earth resists yielding to our cultivation, generating thorns and thistles where crops are supposed to grow. Before our rebellion against God, before the curse of death came down on us for our sin, we had the power to subdue the earth and exercise wise dominion over it. Now such management brings toil, sweat, and pain—until our bodies drop and return to the ground from which God made us.

Still though, even though twisted and torn by sin's curse, much remains that brings us good.

God made us in His image so that we could have a relationship with Him. We were cut off by our willful sin, but He has made a way through Christ Jesus for us to be reconciled to Him. Those who have trusted in Christ have begun to experience once again the closeness to God we lost in the Garden of Eden when we listened to the snake.

Furthermore, He made us male and female in His image. He is the triune God, with a relationship among the Persons of the Godhead of steadfast love. He made us for community as well. The close, loving union of husband and wife, each distinctive, designed to complete one another. Male is good. Female is good.

Only two human beings could not possibly subdue and exercise dominion over the whole earth, so God gave them an enclosed garden—a paradise—at first. But they would have children. The community of two would expand to family of more. In time they were to fill the earth with human beings who would manage the entire planet. *Male is good. Female is good. Marriage is good. Children are good. Family is good. Community is good. Our joy as humans requires loving*

*relationships with others. The work God has given us to do means we will have to work together.* It is our sin that disrupts relationships and tears them apart. But when we are made right with God, the relationships of love emerge and grow.

Think of all the good ways human beings have managed the earth—all the farming, all the road-building, all the civil engineering, all the tools and technology, all the ways we work to make a better life for ourselves and those around us. It's all because God gave us capacity to work together, to create, to cultivate, to imagine what is not and make it happen, to make it productive and beneficial. Every legitimate job any of us have finds its roots in the command and blessing of God given to us as a human race at the very beginning.

### **Applications**

- Who are the human beings, male and female, young and old, God has placed in your life for your good? Thank God for them!
- What work capacities and opportunities has God given to you? Thank God for them!
- What successes have you enjoyed through your labors? Thank God for them!

You have a blessed identity and a high purpose all because of God. Thank Him every day you live. You created none of it on your own.

### **3. Provision to Sustain (29-30) Food!**

<sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

We don't live to eat but we must eat to live. Every good thing you put in your mouth that gives you strength and nourishment comes from God's making it so. We live because He has decreed it so. Every day is a gift from Him. Every meal like manna from heaven.

Many of us are in the habit of giving thanks for our food before a meal. But let me encourage you not to make it merely a formality. *When you savor the food you love, when you are filled with the food you need, think of the truth that you have food to eat because God has blessed you with it.* Even your capacity to earn a living comes from Him. So literally, every bite you eat calls for gratitude to Him.

By the way, the OT warns us not to complain about the food He provides. God fed the vast multitude in the wilderness and gave them drink where there was no food or water. And He judged their ingratitude for it.

When you eat think on Him, on His great goodness to you. Find joy in knowing He loves you enough to give you food and the ability to digest it so that it gives you energy and health for your daily work and high purpose.

### **Applications**

- What foods do you enjoy eating, and how did you end up getting to eat them?
- In what ways can you express thanks to God and to others for God's provision of food for you?

### **Conclusion**

Because of the trials of life in a sin-cursed world, you may be struggling with whether God is truly good to you. Open your eyes and your heart. Even now much good still fills your life—and the best is yet to come when the curse is gone because of Jesus.

*What God has given to us is good, very good. Because that's what He is—good, very good.  
A Place, A Purpose, Provision*



## **Applications Summary**

- Take some time this week to thank God for His gift to us of light, the skies, solid land, seas, fruit trees and vegetation of every kind, sun, moon, stars, birds of the air and fish of the sea, livestock and land animals.
- Who are the human beings, male and female, young and old, God has placed in your life for your good? Thank God for them!
- What work capacities and opportunities has God given to you? Thank God for them!
- What successes have you enjoyed through your labors? Thank God for them!
- What foods do you enjoy eating, and how did you end up getting to eat them?
- In what ways can you express thanks to God and to others for God's provision of food for you?