

God's Bountiful Provision for Man at Creation

Genesis 2:4-25

Halifax: 22 June 2014

Introduction:

As we resume our sermon series in Genesis today, let me take a few minutes to remind you what we have already seen in the three sermons we have already heard.

- In Genesis 1:1-2:3, we have revealed to us the seven days of the creation of the heavens and the earth.
 - We saw that the Lord began by creating out of nothing a formless barren watery blob which He then formed into a beautiful habitation for man that was teeming with life.
 - We learned from this that this is how our Creator operates concerning us—not bringing everything to perfection at once, but by a process.
 - It encourages us that in our fallen, broken, sinful world, He is the God who takes what is a barren blob and makes into what is lovely and fruitful.
 - That is what He does with our lives when He creates us in Christ Jesus out of sin and death.
- We saw in this account of creation that man was the climax of His creation—the last to be created after the earth had been shaped to be his home.
 - We saw that he was made in the image of God—having the ability to commune with God, to think God's thoughts after Him, to live a moral life of love and service, to be holy as one who worshipped God.
 - As God's image, he was, as it were, a reflection of God—not as to His physical appearance, for God is a Spirit and does not have a body,
 - but as a creaturely representation of God on a creaturely scale—having power, wisdom, goodness, justice, knowledge—and ability to do what his Creator does on a lower level...
 - God can call the earth into existence, but we can build a house or paint a picture and hang it on our wall.
 - The Father can give things to the Son that delight Him and the Son can please the Father; and so we can give gifts and service to one another and take delight in each other.
 - What God can do in great and mighty ways, we can do as His image in creaturely ways.
- We also looked at the seventh day, and saw how God rested from His work of creation because He had completed His work of creation—it was all done.
 - And we saw further how He blessed and sanctified the seventh day—not for itself, but for us, because on that day He had finished His work.

- The seventh day is His gift to us, a day for us to celebrate with Him His wonderful work of creation...
 - and of course now that He has done other works that are even greater than creation—like redemption—it is a day to celebrate these works as well.
 - We are, with joy and gratitude, to keep the day holy—to keep it special as a day of celebration and thanksgiving before God, not a day of ordinary labour or of ordinary recreation and amusement.
 - We are most privileged to have such a day given to us and we ought to make the most of it for the purposes for which it was given.

Today, we come to a new section in the creation account that begins with the heading found in Genesis 2:4 where it says:

- **Genesis 2:4: This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,**
 - The word *history* (Heb: *to-led-aw'*) is more literally *generations* and refers, as it were, to that which God brought forth in the heavens and the earth...
 - There are, in fact, ten sections that begin with a similar heading using the word *to-led-aw'*—the next occurs in chapter 5 which opens with:
 - **Gen 5:1: This is the book of the genealogy (*to-led-aw'*) of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.**
 - In my opinion, some exegetes have gone too far in seeing these headings as the principle divisions of the book of Genesis, but they do introduce new material at certain pivotal points in the narrative as here.
- What we have in Genesis 2:4 to the end of the chapter is a look at creation from the perspective of man...
 - We have here a record of the situation into which God placed him.
 - It supplies us with additional details that are not covered in chapter 1 about the providence of God toward us before the fall.
- And today it is my intention to look at this chapter in an overview fashion, noting how God graciously provided for us when He made us...
 - As we did with chapter 1, we will begin with a broad overview and then I will focus on a couple of particular points in future sermons—
 - we will have additional sermons on the covenant of works and then on marriage.
- But this week is the general overview—so let's proceed with the reading of this section—Genesis 2:4- 25.

Gen 2:4-25: This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For

the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no man to till the ground; ⁶ but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. ⁷ And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils

the breath of life; and man became a living being. ⁸ The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. ¹¹ The name of the first *is* Pishon; it *is* the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold. ¹² And the gold of that land *is* good. Bdellium and the onyx stone *are* there. ¹³ The name of the second river *is* Gihon; it *is* the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river *is* Hiddekel; it *is* the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river *is* the Euphrates. ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not

eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” ¹⁸ 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.

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy Word.

As I said to you in the introduction, this passage shows us the situation in which God put us when He first created us.

- We may think of a wise and loving parent making provision for his child, carefully setting up a place and furnishing it with good things for his dear little one...
 - providing for the child’s health and happiness, stimulation and education, training and maturity, companionship and concord.
 - Nothing is overlooked.

I. We will spend the bulk of our time looking at five ways that God bountifully provided for us when He first made us.

A. First, that He took special care in providing us with a body and a spirit.

1. We have already seen (in a previous sermon) how He made us in His own image...
 - That was presented to us in chapter 1, verses 26-28.
 - We were given god-like characteristics on a creaturely level—

- the ability to know and understand the things around us and to figure things out and to the ability to know God and to commune with Him...
 - and we were given the desire and ability to do good for each other and to be a blessing to each other...
 - and the desire and ability to manage things for God in the earth—to rule and have dominion over the creatures...
2. But in chapter 2, verse 7, we are given additional information about the special way God made us...
- a. We are told that He formed the man (*ha-adam*) out of the dust of the ground (*ha-adama*).
- This speaks of our material aspect—our body that is made out of the same stuff the earth is made out of.
 - We understand this even better now with modern science than ever before.
 - All things are basically made out of the same raw materials, but in such a way that they are very different.
 - This is very important in the whole scheme of things because it enables us to engage with all the material things God made.
 - We could not do this if we were not material beings...
 - As it is, we are able to touch and taste and hear and see—
 - God made us such that we could interact with all the marvellous things He has made—and with each other.
 - Of course He made all of these things with this in mind!
 - The Bible does not speak of our material aspect in a disparaging way, as the Greeks do—as if it is something we wish to be free of!
 - Yes, the Bible mentions the contrast between us as mere creatures who are made of the dust compared to God who is a Spirit, but not as if there is something wrong that needs to be corrected or grown out of ...
 - No, the scriptures rather hold out to us the promise of immortal bodies that will be ours in the resurrection if we are in Jesus Christ.
 - We are fearfully and wonderfully made with all of our physical senses and marvellous bodily functions like eating and drinking and having sex and breathing and walking...we could go on and on...
 - God carefully and wonderfully formed us. Our bodies are incredible masterpieces that allow us to interact.
- b. Secondly, we are told here that God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life!
- The LORD imparted to us life—He animated our bodies so that we could have consciousness and could take everything in and use our bodies according to our desires.

- We are told in John that Jesus Christ is the one who enlightens every person that comes into the world...He gives us the light of life...
- By this impartation, we became living beings as it says in verse 7—*living souls*—the word is *nephesh*, which is often translated *soul*.
- We are more than mere material beings having mechanical, chemical reactions...
 - We are more than mere machines—we have life—desires, motives, dreams, imaginations, affections... aspirations for God—a richness of soul!

TRANS> All of this was God's doing—His design—He came up with the idea that we should be body and soul, and He carefully and personally constituted us as such.

- That is the first of the five ways He is said to have bountifully provided for us in Genesis 2.

B. Second, He provided us with a beautiful garden in which to live and prosper.

1. Verse 8 sums this up when it says:

- **Gen 2:8: The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.**

- The garden was in Eden, Eden means *delight* or *pleasure*.
 - This was where He put us when He first made us—it is where He situated us and set things up for us to flourish.

a. Notice that it says that God Himself planted this garden.

- We are told that on day 3, God formed the dry land and caused it to bring forth trees and plants.
 - This was what He did all over the world...but something more was done in Eden—a garden was planted!
 - You see in this how chapter 2 is centred around man...
 - This was how the LORD cared for man when He made him...
 - He gave him a cultivated garden to start him out—
 - Adam was able to move onto a farm with flower gardens and fields as if they had been planted by an experienced farmer...
 - He did not have to start from scratch—God set things in order the way men do when they plant—the LORD God did the planting.

b. Verses 5 & 6 make much of the uniqueness of what was done here...

- They remind us that when God first made the plants, there were as yet no natural processes by which to cause them to come forth...
 - There were three things that were lacking...
 - First, there were no old plants to provide seeds or roots for planting new ones—God had not made them yet, so there were none...

- A farmer would be helpless to plant his garden if he had no pre-existing plants to work with—even to enrich the soil!
 - Secondly, there was no rain at first.
 - Usually the rain moistens the ground for planting and germination, but God Himself moistened the ground by causing a mist to come up...
 - The translation is difficult because the word translated *mist* is just a guess—all we know is that the ground was watered by some way other than rain...
 - Perhaps it was simply from the rivers that are mentioned in verse 10-14 that appear to provide irrigation, but in that case, God arranged for it.
 - It was all done supernaturally by the LORD because natural processes were not yet in place.
 - Thirdly, we are told that there was no farmer—verse 6—no man to till the ground.
 - How can you have a garden with crops and flowers if there is no man to prepare the soil and sow the seeds in an orderly fashion?
 - Verse 9 explains that without a farmer, the Lord simply caused the trees and crops to just come up in their places—He simply brought them forth in an orderly fashion.
 - So you see that when Adam was put in the garden, he was brought into land and gardens that were already cultivated!
 - There were crops that were already ready for harvest.
 - Perhaps there was even a shed with tools in it!
 - This is how the LORD God graciously situated Adam.
2. And there are several details mentioned as to God’s provision in the garden that should not be overlooked...
- a. We are told that some of the trees and plants that grew were for beauty.
 - It should be obvious to us that God made many things simply because they would be lovely for us to look upon—
 - Think of all the trees and the flowers that do not necessarily serve to feed and nourish us—but are there to delight our eyes!
 - God is into that—He did that for us!
 - b. But then we are also told that He made trees (and presumably other plants of course) that were good for food.
 - How His goodness is seen in this!
 - What a great variety of tastes and smells there are for us to enjoy—and for us to be nourished by!

- Just think what these foods must have been like before the fall—the best oranges, the best pistachios and almonds, the best melons, the best wheat and barley, the best garlic and onion!
- c. And look—there is still more that is mentioned here...
 - There was this river that watered the place—that divided into four rivers...
 - The language is uncertain here—some think the rivers divided in the garden, but in any case,
 - these rivers were a great mercy from God because they provided irrigation and refreshing water for drinking and bathing to Adam and Eve.
 - A lot of people have tried from this description to identify the location of Eden, but we need to understand that the flood would have changed everything drastically...
 - There are places that bear the same names, but this is no different than the fact that in Nova Scotia we have places that are named from the Old Country—like Dartmouth and Liverpool.
 - And in connection with these rivers, we are told that there was gold and precious stones...and the gold is said to be very good...
 - Scientists have demonstrated that these can be formed rather rapidly, but at creation, God made some of these precious things when He formed the earth—just as He made mature trees and plants—trees with rings we would presume.
 - And what did He make gold and precious stones for?
 - He made them for us to enjoy!
 - He made them to delight our hearts!
 - He is a giving, generous God.

TRANS> So He provided us with a body and spirit, and with a beautiful garden to live in...now let's look at the third thing He gave us...

C. Third, that He provided us with work to do.

- This is mentioned in verse 15...
 - It says, **Gen 2:15: “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”**
- 1. Yes, it was a beautifully fully furnished garden of delights, but God did not create man to be idle...
 - He made us to be like Himself—busy serving and blessing and delighting others by our labour.
 - The Lord God had planted the garden, but He did not intend to maintain it or even to plant other gardens as man began to fill the earth.
 - He gave that task to us...

- Future plantings were to be done by man.
 - It was Adam's job to look after the garden now—to tend it and to keep it.
2. Before the fall, there was no curse on the ground or on work, so this task would have been a very pleasant one.
- Work is a tremendous blessing in itself, and it is something that we were made to do.
 - Caring for the garden is representative of other work that man was to do.
 - We are to be busy making things, organising things, exploring things, teaching things, producing things, distributing things, inventing things, making music, cooking.
 - This was given to us from the beginning and is part of who we are as human beings—it is part of how we bless each other.
 - What a blessing it would be for Adam to harvest things out of his garden and bring them to his dinner table to share with Eve.
 - And of course, as his helper, she would be sharing with him in the work, preparing food, planting crops.
 - There were so many wonderful things for them to do and to be occupied with.

TRANS> So work is the third thing that God provided...

D. Fourth, He provided us with an established relationship with Himself

1. In His great mercy, the LORD God did not leave Adam in the dark about how he stood in relation to God.
- Of course Adam was made a moral and intelligent being, so he already knew a lot from creation.
 - He knew from the creation itself that God had made him—he was not blind and confused the way fallen men are today until God opens their eyes.
 - In creation, he saw the greatness of God and the goodness of God and the wisdom of God, and he knew that God was to be worshipped and he wanted to bring Him the worship that was due to Him.
 - He wanted to be guided by the LORD his God—he knew his place before Him.
 - But how could he know what God intended to do with him?
 - How long would he live? What did God expect of him?
2. But in the garden, the LORD came to him to establish a covenant with him.
- I am sure that God communicated a lot more to him than what we have, but we are given the essential things that we need to know...

- We are shown here that the LORD God gave Adam the privilege of proving to God that he loved Him...
 - He promised life to Adam if he continued—as shown by the tree of life that was in the garden...
- I will say more about this covenant next week—
 - but for now I just want you to see that it was part of God’s gracious provision for us when we were first created...
- 3. Our father Adam and his wife Eve were given this test by which they could show that they were committed to doing the will of God.
 - a. In verse 9, we were told of two significant trees that were in the midst of the garden:
 - the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - And then in verse 16 & 17, Adam is given clear instructions about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:
 - **Gen 2:16-17: And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”**
 - b. With this prohibited tree, Adam was given a way to prove his fidelity to God.
 - 1) This, in itself, is a blessing.
 - When you love someone, it is a wonderful thing to have ways to show them that you love them and trust them—to demonstrate your love.
 - I remember shortly after I was married and Mary had done something about which she needed forgiveness—I don’t even remember what it was—but what I remember is what a privilege it was for me to forgive her—when she thought I might not!
 - I remember how she smiled and hugged me and shed tears. It was a way for me to show her I loved her.
 - We may think of Abraham after he had matured in his love for God—and how God told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice...
 - It was a test to see if Abraham loved God and trusted God.
 - Though the Lord stopped him, Abraham showed that he was willing to do that for the LORD—and the Lord said, “Now I know that you love Me.”
 - It was a privilege for Abraham to be tested so that he could show the LORD his love and trust and commitment.
 - 2) Well, in a similar way, God provided for Adam to do that.
 - You see, in a way, Adam was not tempted the way we are because he was a moral, righteous, holy, being.

- He was not drawn to sin and corruption and defilement the way we are.
 - Sin was not attractive to him.
 - nor did he have the shortages and hardships and the corrupt environment that we have to tempt him.
 - So God gave him this command not to eat from this one tree to see if Adam would submit to His authority...to test him...
 - In other words, would he obey just because God is God!
 - Would he obey in a something that was not reprehensibly immoral and repulsive to him.
 - He knew that immoral conduct was evil, but would he also consider it to be evil to do what was contrary to God's will?
 - It was a way for him to affirm that he was going to be subject to God—or that he was going to branch out independently of God.
 - By severing himself from the will of God, he would then be left on his own to determine what he thought was good or evil to do.
 - And of course the decisions he would make on his own would be foolish and destructive.
- c. But this might raise a question—will we always be in need of such tests?
- For all eternity will we need tests to prove our love?
 - No we will not!
 - Once we are restored to God in Christ, then we are convinced that the will of God is what we want.
 - We still struggle as long as we are in this life with the old ways, but once we get to glory, we will be relieved to be freed from sin.
 - We will not then need to be tested about the will of God because we will be convinced from experience that the will of God is best.
 - Christ was so convinced of this—(and we learn from Him)—He was so convinced that He went the cross to fulfill the will of God!
 - When His work in us is finished, we will be as convinced as He was that the will of God the only way to go.
 - Presumably, if Adam had continued to the will of God, he would have learned this and been confirmed in eternal life...
 - That is what the tree of life was about—but Adam, of course, did not continue in God's will and so the human race died—we were separated from God until—and only if—we are restored in Christ.
 - It would have been a great blessing for Adam to prove his love for God if he had continued in obedience to God's will...
 - That was the arrangement that God made with him at creation.

TRANS> So now we have seen how at creation, God provided us with a body and spirit, with a beautiful garden, with work to keep us busy, with a test to prove our love—and now fifth...

E. Fifth, He provided us with companionship.

1. This too is a matter that we will take up in much more detail in a future sermon—probably two weeks from now...
 - but we have read the account of how the LORD declared that it was not good for Adam to be alone—
 - and how He enabled Adam to go in search of a suitable companion among the beasts...
 - And with the purity and intelligence of his unfallen mind, God enabled him to see clearly that none were suitable and to agree that it was not good for him to be alone...
 - And then with Adam seeing his need, the LORD God put him to sleep and divided him—taking an actual piece of him...his rib...
 - so as not to form a new being, but a being that was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—of the same substance as Adam...
 - but yet different in very significant and important ways—as a female instead of a male—and as having a different sort of personality.
 - As soon as God brought her to Adam, he began speaking poetry!
 - **Gen 2:23 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.”**
 - A poem about his wife is his first recorded words!
 - And there is the institution of marriage that follows:
 - **Gen 2:24: Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**
- There will be a lot of more to say about this in a couple of weeks, but for now...
2. Just consider the goodness of God in providing this kind of companionship!
 - How ingenious—to make us male and female—to give us intimacy with each other—to enable us to bring forth children—to give us language and the ability to communicate with each other and to share joys and work!
 - This was God’s provision for us to make us complete and that we might lack nothing!

II. In all five of these ways that God provided for us, we ought to see His marvellous kindness toward us!

A. His natural disposition toward us is a disposition of giving and of blessing!

- He delights not in depriving us, but in blessing us in every possible way and in bestowing happiness on us!
 - He goes all out to impart riches and good things to us.

- When we look at His treatment of us at creation, there is no denying of this!
 - All that He did, He did for our happiness and well-being!
- B. How wrong it is for us to question the goodness of the LORD—as we so often do in our present fallen condition.
1. Our misery did not come about because we remained loyal to God, but because we severed ourselves from Him.
 - Had we simply continued in our proper place as His obedient subjects, we would never have known all of this misery...
 - But as it is now, we fully deserve all the misery that we have and much more besides.
 - How could it be that we would depart from Him and then complain to Him about our misery as if He were being unfair to us—
 - as if He were unkind toward us in nature and at heart!
 - It is horribly unjust for us to think such a thing.
 2. Just look at how, even now, we abuse all that He gave us at creation...
 - We abuse His gifts in one of two ways—
 - Either by defiantly rejecting them—
 - or by demanding more than what He has given to us!
 - a. We defiantly reject His gifts when we do not receive His gifts...
 - 1) There are those who deface and destroy the things that He has made by violence—they abuse their own bodies and pursue altered states of consciousness—they tattoo their skin and pursue ugliness—they even murder and maim...
 - 2) And of the garden—they have no use for the beautiful things that God has given us—they deface them and trample them and do not care for His creation...
 - 3) And with work—instead of engaging in their work as God’s good gift, they try to get out of it—and when they do it, they do it with bitterness and do not really try to bless others or honour God with their work.
 - They live for the weekend...
 - 4) And with God’s covenant—they do not come near to hear what He says—to learn of His relationship to us—or His promises and of His will—they rather reject His gracious offer of salvation.
 - 5) And with companionship in marriage—they want nothing to do with such a relationship—they look upon marriage as a distracting thing, a worthless thing...
 - 6) In the passage we read in 1 Timothy 4, Paul speaks about this wickedness that is sometimes seen the church...in the name of piety!

- He calls it a doctrine of demons—where men, in the name of the Lord, reject His good gifts as if they were evil and live as hermits!
 - This was a huge problem that arose in the early church from the influence of Greek philosophy...
 - Everything from food to marriage was despised and even forbidden in various ways...
 - This is a doctrine of demons because the devil wants you to despise God's good gifts and look at them as evil instead of good.
 - No my brothers, we are to enjoy and receive God's gifts with thanksgiving!
 - We are to enjoy His goodness to us!
- b. But then there is the other error where we complain that He has not given us enough—we in our fallen rebellious state!
- Of course He must withhold many things from us because of our sin—but we ought to receive what He gives us with gratitude instead of complaining that it is not enough!
 - God gives us life and health, but we complain that we don't have better health...
 - He gives us food and abundance of beautiful things, but we always seem to feel that we don't have quite enough of this world's goods...
 - He gives us work and if we learn to delight in it, we turn it into an idol and act as if we don't get enough time for it—we abandon our families and the Sabbath to do more and more of it...
 - He gives us a relationship with Himself, but we are not content—we branch out to worship other gods—or we try to add to Christ as if we must have more—we delve into magic or strange worship...
 - He gives us marriage, but we want more than one partner—or we want sex with children or with those of the same gender.

TRANS> My brother and sisters, it should not be this way!

C. Let us rather receive all of God's good gifts as He gives them with thanksgiving!

1. Let us enjoy the good things He has given us, not rejecting them and not craving more of them, but delighting in them!
2. His good gifts ought to draw us to Him...
 - They ought to fill us with praise and thanksgiving and trust and love and obedience and generosity and greater dependence on God...
 - Yes, we are fallen and we are under a curse, but the goodness of God still shines through in the gifts He gave us from creation!
3. Most of all, that He has not left us to grope about in the darkness of our fallen condition, but has come to us with another covenant...

- A covenant in which He promises to restore us so that He is our God and we are His people...
 - A covenant in which He atones for our sin through His only Son Jesus who came in our flesh and died for our transgressions!
- God has spoken to us through His Son!
 - Have you any reason to reject this gift that saves you from sin and misery?