



## Genesis 2:4-25

### PRAY

On the internet there is a programme called 'Google Earth' which allows you to visit every place on earth by satellite picture. When you load it up it starts off with a view of the earth as seen from space. But then when you select a place on the earth that you want to see, it zooms right in until only that specific location is in view. Something like this is going on here in Genesis.

In Genesis 1 we're taught about creation on a grand universal scale. We've learnt big things about God, mankind and His purposes for mankind. We see that God is the one and only God. All other gods which people worship are in fact things which have been created by Him, whether it is the sun and moon like the ancients worshipped or footballers and pop stars, they have all been made by God. We also see that God is the careful creator. He made this world in such a way that everything works as it should. We've learnt that people have been made in the image of God, to reflect God, to represent God and to relate to God. No other thing created by God can say this! Also that people have been created to rest with God, to enjoy life in perfect relationship with God as His people and in His place.

Now in Genesis 2 we zoom in to a location somewhere in the Middle East – a place called Eden. This is where the action is going to take place in this next part of Genesis. Genesis 2 is a really important chapter because it will help us understand Genesis 3 which we will look at the week after next. Genesis 2 introduces us to Adam and Eve, to the Garden of Eden, to the 'Tree of Life' and the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil', to what life is like when people obey God and live the way He wants them to. It shows us what life was like before sin came into the world. Without reading Genesis 2 we won't see what a tragedy Genesis 3 is. We won't realise that the way the world is now, wasn't the way God intended it to be.

In Genesis 2 we are shown the goodness that come from living God's way. Moses wrote these words to persuade the Israelites who were just about to enter the Promised Land that living God's way, by following God's Word is the best way to live. He wrote these words to persuade us this too.

So let's dive into Genesis 2 and see why it is so good living God's way as we see three ways in which God has been so good to man.

The first way God has been good to man is by giving him the breath of life. That's the first point on your handout. God gave man the breath of life.

#### **1. God gave man the breath of life (v4-7)**

Look at verse 7: *"...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."*

In Genesis 1:26-27 we are told that God created man in His own image. Here we are given some extra details about his creation. The picture is of God being like a potter with his clay, carefully sculpting it so that it is just the way he wants it to be. God takes dust from the ground and carefully forms it into a man. But that's not all he does.

He breathes in him the breath of life. It's a divine 'kiss of life'. The man was dependent on God for life. The man only became a living being after God had breathed into the breath of life. We are alive because we have been given the breath of life by God. Your next breath is only possible because of God. When that breath is taken away from us we die.

Can you see God's goodness in giving life?

But that's not the only way God is good. God has been good to the man by giving him a beautiful garden, that's the second point on your handout. God gave man a beautiful garden.

#### **2. God gave man a beautiful garden (v8-17)**

The Garden of Eden is an actual place. It's not made up. We are told roughly where it was located, from the descriptions of the rivers in verses 10-14. Although we can't know for sure exactly where it was! The Garden of Eden was like a royal garden or park. It was a safe place that God created for man to live

in. Look at verse 8: *"Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed"*.

This garden God had made for the man to live in was paradise. The word Eden means delight. A few years ago I picked up a Kuoni travel brochure to choose somewhere to go with Kate for our honeymoon. As I was looking at the pictures and descriptions of the beach resorts in the Maldives or Mauritius or Thailand, it made me wish I was there. The description we have in Genesis 2 of the Garden of Eden would have had the same effect on the Israelites who were wandering around the hot, dry, desert wilderness. Moses was writing for that effect the Kuoni brochure had on me.

So straight away, we have to say that God is good in giving the man a beautiful garden to live in. Just think about some of the alternatives. It could have been a council estate in inner city Manchester<sup>1</sup> or some other equally grim place. Instead God puts him in this paradise garden where...

- **Good things to look at (v9)**

There were good things to look at. Look at verse 9: *"And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye..."* God didn't just care about the practical aspects of things; he cared about what they looked like. He wanted things to look beautiful not just be useful.

- **Good things to eat (v9)**

There were good things to eat. Look at verse 9 again: *"...and good for food"*. The trees in the garden were good for food. There was huge variety, and freedom to eat from just about all of them. God didn't just erect a couple of Golden Arches and a KFC! He wanted to provide the best food, not just junk food. We need to picture life in the garden as being like a banqueting table, full of lots of good food which is delightful to the eye. Just looking at this food would make you want to eat it!

- **Good things to do (v15)**

There were good things to do. Look at verse 15: *"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."* God gave the man a purpose, something to do, something to give him a sense of achievement. He was to protect and bring the best out of God's creation. God didn't intend him to just lie down on a hammock between two coconut trees; he was to be a gardener. Work is part of God's original design for us, so it's no surprise that people don't like to be out of work and unemployed.

Look at verse 9 once more: *"In the middle of the garden were the tree of life..."* God has put the tree of life in the middle of the garden so that the man can enjoy these things forever.

- **Good command to keep (v16-17)**

And God goodness is also seen in giving Adam one command. It wasn't a negative command, God wasn't being a spoil sport, it was surprise, surprise a good command. Look at verses 16-17: *"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 surely die."*

God tells Adam how to live in paradise, to enjoy life as it's meant to be. Adam had the freedom to do virtually anything and everything apart from this one command. God is so generous to Adam.

There's another way this command is good too. Think about it this way. God could have let Adam roam about the garden, and accidentally come across this tree, eat from it and be harmed. But he doesn't. Like a father telling their son not to cross a busy main road until it's safe, so God warns Adam not to eat from that tree because it will harm him. This command gives Adam the chance to show that he trusts that God knows what is best for him.

God is so good.

- **God was there!**

But the thing that made this garden so good was that God was there. Just jump with me to Genesis 3:8 for a second. *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden..."* When you go for a stroll in the Garden of Eden, you bumped into God.

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<sup>1</sup> I'm not saying that every council estate in inner city Manchester is grim, but you get the picture.

The description of the garden in verses 8-14 further emphasise that God was present in the garden, living with man. The tree of life, precious jewels, gold, and a river flowing out of Eden, in the context of the whole Bible are all symbols of God's life giving presence.

So God is living in this good garden that He had made for Adam.

I hope you can see already how good God is. He's given man life; he's given man a wonderful place to live where He is present. But there still one more way in which God is so good. He gave man a suitable helper. That's the third and final point on your handout. God gave man a suitable helper.

### **3. God gave man a suitable helper (v18-25)**

So far in this chapter it's all good, good, and good! It's no surprise really when we think back to Genesis 1 and that repeated phrase "*And God saw that it was good*". But then in verse 18 we come across something for the first time which is not good. Look at verse 18: "*The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

God had brought the animals to Adam to be named in verses 19-20. As Adam went about naming them; lion...zebra...cat...platypus... he would have noticed something. That there was no other like him. Something was missing.

Why was it not good for man to be alone? Why does he need a helper suitable for him? The reason isn't because he'll get lonely. Rather it is because the special job that Adam had been given to do of being a gardener in God's garden was too big for him to do on his own. God creates the woman who Adam names Eve, so that Adam wouldn't be alone in doing this job, he would have someone to help him. In fact the job was too big for just Adam and Eve. That is why God gave them the command in Genesis 1:28 to "*Be fruitful and increase in number*". Adam and Eve were to have children so that there would be more gardeners, more people to work in God's world, to look after it and get the best out of it, and as they do enjoy this paradise garden together.

God is good by creating a woman, a suitable helper. He's also good by creating the gift of marriage.

At the end of verse 22, God is the Father of the bride as He brings Eve to Adam. Adam response as God walks with Eve down the aisle is to poetically sing to her the ancients equivalent of 'I will always love you'. God has done a great job and Adam recognises it as he sings "*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man*".

God has created a companion, a helper fit for him. And marriage, which despite the impression that the world and the media gives us in is a good thing. In verse 24 we are told what marriage is. Look at verse 24: "*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*"

Marriage is between a man and a woman. It involves leaving and cleaving which means that marriage is to be permanent and private. It involves being united for ever, which means total commitment and sharing, even if the feelings of love or desire become weak. And we are told that sex is for marriage only, as it is part of two people being so close that they are one person ('one flesh') – a picture of intense physical and emotional love. This means that anything that hurts and attacks marriage is not good, it's evil.<sup>2</sup>

I hope you all see how good God is, and all he did for man at creation was good. God wasn't like a stingy landlord who provides the bare minimum, just the four walls and a gas cooker if you're lucky. He is a loving Father who provides us with everything for our good.

One diary entry of the son of the former US president, John Adams reads: "*Day spent fishing with Father. Best day of my life.*" That day did not last forever, nor did this perfect life in the Garden of Eden. When we look at Genesis 3 we will see why the world around us is in such a mess and why we need Jesus so much.

This picture of Adam enjoying God's rest, enjoying life as it's meant to be in the Garden of Eden, is a picture of the future for those who are Christians, who are trusting that by His death, Jesus has taken the punishment that their sins deserve and restored the relationship between them and God. This should motivate us to obey God now. Genesis 2 is teaching us that following Jesus, obeying God now is the best way to live. If you are not a Christian, this picture of life as it's meant to be is the future you are missing out on. Turn to Jesus and live God's way now before the hope of having this future is gone!

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<sup>2</sup> Divorce, adultery, homosexuality, sex outside marriage, pornography etc