A Word A Week: “Good”

Over the next 12 weeks we will be in a sermon series entitled, A Word a Week. We’ll look at one word from the Bible each week. Each word tells the story of God’s redeeming love for the world. Each word invites us into that story. Today we begin at the very beginning with the word GOOD.

*Genesis 1 (selected)*

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.*

5 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so.

9 And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.

16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.
25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 27 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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’

28 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 29 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

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Watching the news, one could easily come to the conclusion that the world is getting worse. Rebekah Simon-Peter (and yes, that is her last name!) asked that question in her blog. She answers,

If the world is getting worse, not better, this implies that churches have no impact. Worse, that the God we promote is ineffective.  [http://www.rebekahsimonpeter.com/](http://www.rebekahsimonpeter.com/) December 17, 2018.

Is that true? Bill Gates says it’s not. In his 2014 Annual Letter, he wrote,

By almost any measure, the world is getting better than it ever has been. People are living longer, healthier lives. Many nations that were aid recipients are now self-sufficient. [www.gatesletter.com](http://www.gatesletter.com)

He goes so far as to predict that by 2035 there will be almost no poor countries in the world, given our definition of “poor.” New vaccines, better seeds, innovations, technology, expanded education, are all contributing to this rise in the tide for everyone.

That’s not to say there is no corruption, violence, crime, poverty or hunger. There is, but not at the levels there were 50 years ago. Many things have actually gotten better!
Archbishop Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his leadership during South Africa’s apartheid era. Several years ago, he wrote a book with his daughter entitled, Made For Goodness. (Harper 2010). He points to the good in all creation. In fact, after the sixth day of creation, God calls everything “very good.” (Gen. 1:31).

The Archbishop writes,

*We are very good. How can we believe this when we see the horror and grief we inflict on each other? We can believe it because we know we are made in the very image and likeness of God.*

(Made For Goodness, p.10)

*There is plenty of pain and suffering in the world. It’d be easy to conclude that the world is getting worse, but is it? There are countless acts of kindness, compassion and generosity every day. That’s not “fake news,” that’s a fact. People are created good. It’s a part of our nature. It may be lost in some, covered up or wounded in others, but it’s there, not just in religious people, but in all people. When you accept that premise, you begin to look for it in other people. When you look for it, you see it!*

And the good in human nature has prevailed over much evil. We would not tolerate the slaughter of native American men, women and children in this day and age. We abolished the evils of slavery in this country. Good prevailed over the Nazi regime and 9/11. Good rises above evil. It’s still rising.

Segregation and other forms of discrimination are no longer blindly tolerated. That doesn’t mean they’re not there. It means the good in human beings is there too. The wrong is not left to run loose. The good won’t give up. You can’t kill it. We tried.

There’s no doubt that evil leaves its mark in mass shootings, violence, oppression, the misuse of power, and a host of other personal and corporate sins. We still have too large a gap between nations, races, social classes, and sexes, but the good in us will never be satisfied with those gaps, or with the pain and suffering in this world.

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The word *good* shows up seven times in the creation account. Everything is created good! Humans are not created evil. Why would God create something that’s *not* good? Though we sin, though we stray, though we get lost, we were created in God’s image. It’s in there! It’s still in there.

People forgive. People sacrifice. People are generous. People hope and love, feel empathy and compassion. People are dedicated and loyal. Hardworking, trustworthy, creative, determined people get up and make a difference in other people’s lives every day. It’s in our DNA.

Maybe that’s why Jesus could not cast off the poor, or the sinful. Maybe that’s why he could not turn his back on the lame or the blind, or those imprisoned. They were all created good! You can’t abandon that good. You can’t give up on it.

On our worse day, with our biggest mistake, we have good in us. That’s hard to grasp sometimes. But Jesus did. He saw it. He called it out. He washed their feet and ate with these guys. They would betray him, deny him and abandon him, but he saw it. He got up from the dead to come back and get it, the good that is created in all of us!

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Just three sentences into the Bible and you run into the word, *GOOD!* Or it runs into you. Creation is littered with it. It’s all good. It’s actually *very* good! Christ sees that in you and invites us to see it in one another. When that happens, the world will have peace.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. 
Congregation; *Amen.*