

GOOD NEWS YOU CAN USE “Designed for Good”

We begin a new sermon series, “*Good News You Can Use.*” Based in part on the book “*True Story, A Christianity Worth Believing in*” by James Choung, this series looks at our gospel truth, our gospel story as good news. So often it is portrayed as bad news and certainly the world has evil, violence and lots of news that is awful. The gospel, begins, with the good news of God’s love and grace. Years ago, Frederick Buechner wrote a book in a similar vein called “*Telling the Truth, The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale.*” Buechner’s point was that there isn’t room in the gospel for some sort of sugary sweet concoction of story. The gospel is real about the heartache and tragedy of our lives and the almost unbelievable truth that we are loved anyway. In the beginning God created the world and called it all good. All of it, even human beings. The true story, the good news needs to begin with the goodness God created. In much of the Christian tradition the focus is on the “fall” which occurs in the second creation story. Yes, life changed, evil took hold in the world, but it was never supposed to be that way. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians he speaks of his gratitude and his faith that God will continue the good work already begun in the people of Philippi. Celebrating a baptism on this Sunday reminds us we can create community for this child and celebrate the good as well as encouraging the continued restoration of humanity and the world through Christ. May this week, you seek and see the good in the world as part of God’s creation and plan.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: “**Designed for Good**”

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <https://boxcast.tv/channel/f9yfyjzko2esfwfc5vkn>

Prayer for the Week

Holy One, untamed by the names I give you, in the silence name me, that I may know who I am, hear the truth you have put into me, trust the love you have for me, which you call me to live out with my sisters and brothers in your human family. Amen (Guerrillas of Grace, by Rev. Ted Loder)

Study Guide

Monday, September 21, 2020 Genesis 1: 26-31

Personally, in the creation stories in Genesis, I think these are the more overlooked verses. After everything had been created, God created human beings, “in God’s own image: male and female.” We love to pay attention to the fact that God gives “everything” to humans and encourages them to multiply, but we miss this first blessing. God created human beings and said that it was good, very good. Created in the image of God, we were designed for good. In the Christian Orthodox tradition, the understanding is that we were

created in the image and likeness of God, but when we chose our own path, the likeness of God was damaged and that is where we need Christ to help us restore that likeness. However, the image of God is still part of every human being. When we baptize someone, we are honoring that image of God helping them on the path to restore them to the likeness of God. Often in the Christian tradition we are so focused on the brokenness within us, that we miss the image of God within us. *How do you embrace the image of God within you? How do you recognize the image of God in others?*

Tuesday, September 22, 2020 Genesis 2: 1-4

This is the completion of the first creation story in Genesis. God rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and called it holy. Notice that the seventh day, the day of rest is the only day God calls holy and also good. Rest and relaxation is often considered overrated, particularly in a day and age when everything is available 24/7. However, one of the good things or blessings that has come from this pandemic is the goodness of rest. Even with the weariness and difficulty of balancing parenting and working and schooling, what the pandemic has given many of us is an opportunity to look at how we live our lives: the frantic crazy pace that is not healthy and is not biblical. We were created and designed for good and so was our time. That is why the sabbath is holy. The Sabbath allows for reflection, enjoyment of family and of God. *How do you keep your sabbath holy? How do you embrace rest and relaxation? Today, take a moment, and write down ways for you to be good with your time and with yourself so you can remember that God said: "It is good, it is very good."*

Wednesday, September 23, 2020 Philippians 1: 3-5

Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is one of his most beloved. The short epistle is filled with encouragement and with an eye to Christ and an eye to how we can grow into the likeness of Christ. Paul starts out with his gratitude for the people of the community of faith. Paul's prayers are filled with joy and thanksgiving for these people who have partnered with him in the ministry of the gospel. The word "gospel" means "good news." This good news had changed Paul's life and the lives of the Philippians. Paul is grateful for the relationship in Christ that allows this good news to be shared. *Who do you give thanks to God for their relationship, their faith, the good news evident in their life? Take a moment to share that with them: write a note, an e-mail, a text and tell them how thankful you are for the goodness of God that is evident in their lives.*

Thursday, September 24, 2020 Philippians 1: 6-8

Paul writes that he believes that "the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion." Paul refers to their faith in Christ and the new beginning we receive through Jesus. As we know that work began back during creation. God created all things and called them good. And the One who created is still creating, blessing, and changing lives and hearts. Some Christian theology believes that human beings are incapable of good and everything they do is tainted by evil. Even Paul says that occasionally. Jesus didn't though, Jesus prayed for his disciples and the world and believed the reign of God was here and now. God, who has created us for good and is continuing to bless us for good is using you and me to bring Christ's kingdom right now. *Where is God at work in you? How is good using that good work to transform the world?*

Friday, September 25, 2020 Philippians 1: 9-11

In our baptismal vows, the ones we take or the ones we affirm for an infant's baptism, we state that we will "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world" and "resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves." Those are bold statements and yet we affirm them again and again. In Paul's letter he says that his prayer is that our love might become richer with knowledge and insight so that we will decide what really matters. This is "kingdom" work, the work for which we have been created and called. We were designed for good and even though we break our promises and often look away from the good, it doesn't change the fact that we are created to be about transforming the world in the reign of Christ. *Today, say a prayer for our world and for the work that needs to be done. Take a moment and write down one way you can resist evil, in justice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves and then do it.*