

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

GENESIS 1:31

GOOD  
SEED  
SUNDAY

A long time ago, in a far off country, a young man with a passion for art and sculpture began to work at his craft. His name was Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, more simply known as Michelangelo. He created some of the most beautiful paintings, sculptures and architecture that the world has ever seen.

Even today, his work is exquisite. There is widespread recognition of the value of Michelangelo's art. Thousands of people take time and energy to see his work. Countless funds are spent to restore his artwork and keep it in such a way that future generations can also enjoy it.

There is artwork all around us as well. There is the achingly-blue sky of a crisp winter day, the orange and red flames of sugar maples in autumn, the soft smoothness of a baby's skin, and the music of waves rocking back and forth over smooth pebbles on the beach.

Who created these works of art? God, the LORD, the Maker of the Universe. He created each of these beautiful works for His and our enjoyment. They are very good, each and every one of them. And we know this because He told us so.

Those who love Michelangelo's work are willing to spend a great deal of time and effort caring for it to ensure future generations can enjoy it. They want their children and grandchildren to be able to enjoy his brilliance, his tremendous abilities with paint and with stone.

If we love God and His handiwork, we have the same opportunity when it comes to creation. Just as a work of art is preserved, how can we tend to the creation God has entrusted us – the people, resources and land, as well as the environment as a whole?

Let's work to keep the beauty of creation in a "good" state, so that our descendants can enjoy God's brilliance as we have.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

JAMES 1:17



## GOOD SEED SUNDAY

The painted landscape of autumn highlighted by the sun at your back. Reds and yellows; faded greens with shades of orange. Perched on a hillside, you look down across a valley. The silver blue of a river contrasts with the richness of the sky. Puffs of cotton drift aimlessly along. You could stay here for a very long time. The glass surface of the lake yields to the ski. You glide across the water. Mist rises. A loon calls. No one in their right mind is up this early. Few know the grandeur of the morning. The thrill, the need to grasp what will soon be gone.

The crunch of the snow. Ice castles sparking, dancing in reflected light. Stopping, the warmth of your breath dissipates into the crispness of this winter land. Bows bend beneath their burden. Tracks reveal the abundance of life. Silence. Silence. The wind touches the bones beneath your cheeks. Worries fade. This is another world.

The smell invades. Its rudeness violates. Death is here. Garbage litters. Gravity claws at soiled, stagnant refuse. Drawing it down, down through guttered alleyways. Life struggles to survive. All is black and white with shades of charcoal brown. In the midst of all of this—a planted daisy. White with life, reflecting a soul who knows a secret. Hope lies in the heart, not the circumstance. Steam fills the room. It's moisture filters up my nose and into my lungs. Sweat and grime replaced by water from a shower head. Tip your head back. Open your mouth. Drink. Without thought. No parasite. No risk to health. Water. Clean. Pure. Abundance unappreciated. At times wasted. A sign of blessing. Underserved yet ever present. Drink. Remember. Enjoy. Be thankful.

Every  
Every good  
Every good and perfect  
Every good and perfect gift  
Every good and perfect gift comes from your Father in heaven.  
Every good and perfect gift comes from your Father in heaven...  
and He loves you.

“4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

JEREMIAH 29: 4 – 7

## GOOD SEED SUNDAY

It is confusing and difficult to live well in the world today. So many problems; so many challenges! This is especially true when we consider the creation groaning under the strains of pollution, extinction, and destruction. How are Christians to live faithfully to God and engage the world around them? Should we expect our efforts to make the world a better place to make any difference? In Jeremiah 29, we find a remarkable word from the prophet Jeremiah to the exiles living in Babylon. Jerusalem had been destroyed, King Josiah’s efforts to turn the hearts of the people back to Yahweh in repentance were ignored, the people of God were scattered across the land in diaspora. This was a confusing time for the people of God. They had lost their land – the land promised to their ancestor Abraham; they had lost Jerusalem and their temple – the place of worship and encounter with their God; they had lost confidence in God’s presence and protection.

Their question must have been simple but urgent: how do we trust God when we have seen our entire livelihood fall apart and are now living in a strange and foreign land?

Jeremiah’s instructions to the exiles took many by surprise. “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters... Increase in number there, do not decrease.”

“Ugh!” they must have thought, “We’re going to be here for a while!” After all, building houses and planting gardens takes time! You don’t waste such precious energy if you only plan to be there for a handful of years.

Similarly, they were told to “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you.” Seeking the peace of the city involves a certain posture towards it – a posture which would not have been the most natural to a persecuted and enslaved people who had been ousted from their homeland. Furthermore, they were to seek the prosperity of the city where they were living. Why? “For if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

In seeking not merely the peace but also the prosperity of the city, the people are called into relationships with these foreign people in this foreign place to have a vested interest in its success and ultimate fortune.

The NASB translates verse 7: “For in its welfare, you will have welfare.” This points us to a basic ecological fact: the welfare of human communities is dependent on the welfare of the non-human community, the Creation. In seeking the welfare of the city in which the people were called into exile, they were being oriented towards a faithful and godly way of life. Similarly, in seeking the welfare of the places where we live – not just our cities but the rivers and soil, the air and water – we are oriented towards faithfulness and righteousness before God and before our neighbours. We invest more deeply in relationships and in the community when we recognize our welfare is tied into them. We are led to “Build houses and settle down, to plant gardens and eat what they produce.” We are oriented, in other words, away from the fears and concerns which consume us and towards a deeper love of neighbour and of Creation.

**Prayer:** May we seek the welfare of our place, and find our own welfare in it. Amen.

“And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”

MARK 16:15

GOOD  
SEED  
SUNDAY

What a strange passage! Preach to the whole creation? How can we proclaim the gospel to something that can't understand it? What is the point of preaching to creation when humans are the ones who need saving? That's as crazy as believing that the sun and moon can praise the LORD, that trees can clap their hands. It's as ridiculous as supposing that hills can sing for joy (see Psalm 148 and Isaiah 55).

Why does the Bible tell us to preach the gospel to all of creation? First, the Bible teaches us that creation is in pain. Because of us, it is groaning, subject to agony as strong as the pangs of childbirth (Romans 8:20-22). Creation needs the restoration of the Kingdom of God to release it from pain, just as we do. This is the gospel of the Kingdom.

Second, the Bible teaches us in numerous places that creation yearns for the LORD to make things right. Consider the closing words of Psalm 96:

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

The entire creation is praising, shouting, roaring, and rejoicing! Why? The LORD is coming to bring his justice. He will arrive to set things right!

The New Testament reveals to us that the LORD who comes in justice is Jesus. When we proclaim his gospel, it is a gospel of freedom; freedom from sin, from bondage and from pain. This freedom is not limited to humans, but is for all of creation.

And this is why Jesus calls us to proclaim the gospel to all of creation. It is not just good news for human beings, but for all beings. It is good news for everything that God has made. Jesus calls us to, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” Perhaps this is less about preaching to animals as it is a perspective change. If all of creation will be redeemed, as we will, we will approach all that surrounds us with more intentionality and care.

**Prayer:** God, may we have eyes to see how you would lead us in our role to care for creation, and to proclaim your gospel in a wide variety of ways. Amen.



25"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

MATTHEW 6: 25–34

Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life." These are powerful words that drive us to focus on our way of operating in this world. Many have interpreted this passage to imply we need to move away from "worldly" concerns (food, drink, clothing) toward "heavenly" ones (the Kingdom of God). However, this view instantly gets turned on its head when we realize Jesus teaches the chief exemplars of such "heavenly" character are down-to-earth creations – the birds and the lilies.

With these strong words, Jesus calls his disciples to a new Kingdom way of life that is connected to Creation and the Creator. The reference to the birds of the air has a close echo to Psalm 104: "All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time." Every created being depends on the gifts of Creation – its abundance of food, water, and shelter – to live a blessed, healthy life.

But worry consumes us: "What will we eat?" Worry causes us to forget our God and begin to see ourselves as the centre of our world. Jesus' words are a potent reminder and a reorientation to the world God has made, in which He is at the centre.

"But what about our clothing?" Well, says Jesus, "Even Solomon in all his splendour was not dressed like one of these little flowers."

## GOOD SEED SUNDAY

Our anxieties about life are not "natural" at all, but are the consequence of living as though God does not exist.

"For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Why bring the pagans into this? Because in a world absent of God it is sensible to "run after all these things." But in a world "Charged with the Grandeur of God," to use Gerard Manley Hopkins's phrase, God's creatures are called to receive His gifts and not to worry.

Is Jesus calling us to move away from "earthly" matters toward "heavenly" ones, as so many have suggested? Well, in a way, yes! Jesus calls his followers to be reoriented from a self-centred universe (the worldly) toward a God-centred one. Food and clothing are important and necessary for survival, but when we are self-focused we will find ourselves on the path to worry, doubt and relational brokenness.

On the other hand, God's "heavenly" universe is the way of righteousness – living rightly in His Creation. Seeking the Kingdom does not mean we will escape the worries and concerns of this world. Rather, it means that we are reoriented towards the world in ways that reflect God's love for all creatures, and that set aside the self-centred preoccupations which deprive our neighbours of their needs.

"Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,  
no mind has conceived what God has  
prepared for those who love Him.”

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

GOOD  
SEED  
SUNDAY

Periodically I ask myself three important questions:

1. “Why do I exist?”
2. “What’s important to me?”
3. “If I died today, who would be impacted?”

I want my life to have counted for something; that I brought pleasure to God; that I invested my life wisely; that I cared for our world. Nothing can be done to change our past – dwelling on it only causes us to live life looking backwards. Yet God is prepared to take all our decisions – good, bad and indifferent – and weave them into a beautiful canopy that covers our life with meaning, value and worth (see Romans 8:28).

Second-guessing our past produces little, but we can step into our future with confidence. In 1 Cor. 2:9, Paul says something profound, if we have the ears to hear and receive. God has given us freedom to explore the unknown with him, and to experience true wisdom – that which is inconceivable by human efforts.

We are moulded by our past – our accomplishments and failings – but not fully defined by it. Who you present yourself to be, and what you have done in your life, are important when looked at from the human timeline of 80 years, but God has a much grander perspective.

In 1 Cor. 2:6, Paul promises that God’s Spirit will unveil true wisdom. It is not wisdom that can be gained through worldly efforts. It has been hidden, but is the true reality God has destined for us before time began. The efforts of politicians, law enforcement officers, legal and financial advisors and the academia of our nation can not understand this kind of wisdom through pursuing their field alone. The “inconceivable” is imparted only by the Spirit, and in relationship with the Divine.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.” Notice the relationship in this sentence. In the midst of the promise that God will open our eyes, ears and mind, we are confronted with the same question Jesus asked of Peter: “Do you love me?”

Our experiences do mould us – the choices we make and the circumstances we face – but when we are in relationship with God, we have the opportunity to be moulded by divine love and wisdom. God’s Spirit calls out to our spirit, convicting us of truth. Throughout our journey we have encountered joys and experiences that we never dreamed would happen. We have endured heartaches and pain, and times we wondered whether we would survive.

In a loving relationship with God, whatever the circumstance, God will reveal to us how He is shaping our lives and we will begin to see the wonder of it all. With that sense of wonder comes a willingness to walk the path without resisting. We join God’s efforts, we agree to pool our energies with His, and we enter the battle of the ages – bringing honour and glory to God in a world that forces its will, agenda and morality on us.

In Colossians 1:20, Paul says that Christ is in the act of reconciling to himself “all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” And he invites us, as his body on this earth, to participate in that reconciliation. All life is God-breathed. God cares for all of creation – the environment, living creatures and people. The wisdom of caring for that which is outside of ourselves is not something that can be gained through worldly wisdom. God desires to impart to our eyes, ears, minds and hearts a better path – the path of reconciliation of all things. Let’s choose to join Him.

15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19For God was

pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

COLOSSIANS 1:15–20

Colossians 1 is a powerful portrayal of the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Though human, and born of a regular person, he somehow also existed before creation, for “all things have been created through him.” As if this isn’t puzzling enough, we see that, in this passage, God uses Christ to reconcile “all things” to himself. “All things” is quite the all-encompassing phrase. Typical Christian doctrine often looks at the sacrifice of Christ as being blood shed for all of humanity. Whether Jew, Greek, male, female, free or slave, Jesus died for our sake. But, according to this passage, Jesus died for far more than us. He died for everything – planets, stars, angels, demons, trees, lakes – everything.

And, in the midst of all of this reconciling, we are confronted with an amazing insight: Jesus, with “all of God’s fullness dwelling in him,” is the head of the body, the church. We, God’s people, are the arms and legs of Jesus. Our primary calling is to live out Jesus’ mission here on this earth!

If we trace God’s mission through Scripture, we see a climax in the life of Jesus. Throughout both the Old and New Testament, we read how God is working toward the reconciliation of all people and all creation – a new Heaven and new earth

## GOOD SEED SUNDAY

What an amazing privilege, and responsibility, to be included in this mission through Jesus!

In the meantime, all of creation – including us – is groaning. Sin and suffering continue to abound everywhere we look. Thankfully, we have hope through Jesus that our trials on this earth are short-lived, but let’s not live only for that future union with Jesus. Our time on earth is precious and short. Every day we have the opportunity to live as Jesus’ arms and legs and carry out his purposes to reconcile all things to God.

In a world of brokenness, it can be overwhelming to know where to begin. Thank God we aren’t responsible for changing the earth – God will do this with or without us. But how much better will our lives and future be if we play an important role in that mission? Thank God for the Spirit, who will empower and guide us, and without which our efforts would be in vain.

God desires to have a deep relationship with us, which in turn will develop our relationship with other people and with creation. It is time for us to turn to God for our own redemption, and thus be empowered to play a role in the reconciliation of all things.

**Prayer:** God, how do you want to start reconciling my relationship with your world?