

“Home-Rethinking Faith: Life Is Good”
Genesis 1

As we begin this sermon series, reflecting on our home here on Earth and the invitation to rethink life, we are called to reclaim the wonder of life's inherent goodness. While much around us seems to deny this goodness, we recognize its presence, drawn to it in countless ways.

Consider, for instance, the viral video from the San Diego Zoo a few weeks ago. During an earthquake, elephants instinctively formed a protective circle around their young. [<https://youtu.be/9pFK8BcymNM>] Such videos resonate deeply, affirming our experience of life's profound goodness and reconnecting us with the miracle of existence.

We often hear the phrase, "it's only human nature," suggesting an inherent inclination towards negativity. However, the Bible presents a different perspective on God's creation. Genesis 1 emphasizes the inherent goodness of all creation, repeating the word "good" seven times. Each day's creation, including humanity, was pronounced good by God.

A common misconception is that God's creation is finished and perfect. However, Genesis 1 suggests a continuous unfolding, with God still actively involved. Embracing the idea that God is still creating goodness can transform our lives. If we truly believe in the inherent goodness within ourselves and others, not perfection, but essential goodness, we can unlock the potential for good in ourselves and in the world around us.

Let us read together from Genesis 1:

Leader: In the beginning, when God began to create the skies and the land, the land was wild and waste, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.

People: And God saw that the light was **good**.

Leader: And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 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. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. 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. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.

People: And God saw that it was **good**.

Leader: Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.

People: And God saw that it was **good**.

Leader: And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.

People: And God saw that it was **good**.

Leader: And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” 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.

People: And God saw that it was **good**.

Leader: And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. 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.

People: And God saw that it was **good**.

Leader: Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in God’s image, in the image of the divine, God created them; male and female. 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. See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

People: God saw everything that was created, and indeed, it was very **good**.

The historical context of the creation story reveals an intentional proclamation of God's creation's goodness, contrasting with other creation myths that emphasized violence and fear. Although Genesis is the first book in the Bible, its creation stories were written later, around or after the exile (587 BCE). During their exile in Babylon, the people of Israel, having lost much of their identity, faced challenges to their faith. In defiance, they recorded their reflection on God as the creator. Their creation stories affirmed a radically different view of God and the world. While the Babylonians believed in a violent beginning, the Israelites proclaimed creativity and goodness as the origins of life. This perspective transformed their understanding of God, not as a distant, supernatural being, but as a covenant partner walking with them daily. Consequently, they recognized their potential for good and envisioned a world rooted in blessing and love, seeing their purpose as mending the world and guiding it towards God's goodness. To reclaim this powerful affirmation of faith in God's creation's goodness, we must reconnect with our sense of wonder daily.

In his book, *Rethinking Life*, Shane Claiborne urges us to bridge "the wonder gap." He observes, "Not many people are going to argue with the fact that life is good, but life is more than just good, it's miraculous! And yet we tend to lose a sense of wonder at the miracle of it all." He suggests bridging this gap "by studying and contemplating how truly marvelous the world is." Consider these facts that inspire awe:

- A hummingbird's heart beats over 1200 times a minute, and its wings flap sixty to eighty times a second.
- Bees visit five million flowers to produce one pint of honey.
- Whales mourn audibly and visibly when another whale dies.
- There are approximately ten million forms of life on the planet.
- There are forty thousand kinds of rice.

Today, we are invited to remember and reclaim the goodness of our home on this planet. Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." To maintain or regain our awareness of the divine breath within us, remember that the name for God given to Moses in Exodus 3:13 was "I am," or "YHWH" in Hebrew, the sound of breath. Claiborne highlights Jason Gray's song, "The Sound of Our Breathing," which proclaims that "we are designed to say God's name simply by breathing in and out, which means that none of us can go very long without calling upon the name of the Lord." Here are some of Jason's lyrics:

Everybody draws their very first breath

With Your name upon their lips
Every one of us is born of dust
But come alive with heaven's kiss...
So breathe in
Breathe out
Breathe in
Breathe out...
'Cause the name of God Is the sound of our breathing." Amen.