

“Human Life is Complex”  
Sermon for 10 February 2019  
Text: Gen. 1:26-31

Looking ahead, in our walk through Genesis, we are approaching the supreme catastrophe of the human race: the Fall of Man. Talk about depravity can be demoralizing. It is so overwhelmingly negative. If we did not know that the redemption story follows I do not think we could handle the discouragement that accompanies the Fall. I curiously find myself in an analogous situation to that Jesus faced with his disciples just prior to his crucifixion. It was also catastrophic to them. That moment is captured for us in John 16—between v 12 **I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now—**

and the critical doctrine which follows in verse 13, and verses 21-24. And I say “critical” as vital to the disciples’ encouragement then (and to ours now!). So as Jesus prepared his disciples for the bad news of his death on the cross, I want to prepare you for a study of the Fall. After the Fall, our Redeemer will appear and by his work, by his mission, by the shedding of his blood and resurrection from the dead, he will reverse the damage. He will bring supreme blessing out of a dreadful curse.

Turning to Genesis 1:26-31. Many things “instituted of God” are formed in Genesis 1-2. I will list nine of them:

1. work (farming and herding),
  2. one language (communication and story-telling)
  3. marriage (partnership in home life)
  4. unified worship (fellowship with one God in praise and thanksgiving, with one altar for sacrifice—there was no sin to be atoned for at first)
  5. morality (all good at first)
  6. technology (cultivation, animal husbandry and tools fashioned for productive lives and stewardship—including creativity and innovation)
  7. the sciences (taxonomy, animal names and classifications, engineering)
  8. family and kinship ties
  9. and sewn skin clothing (on the way out the doors of Paradise)

From our beginning (creation) we were (reasonable beings<sup>1</sup>) thinking, observing, learning and fashioning beings—these “faculties” being innate capacities just like in the God who created and formed us. *Our likeness to God is in our grain, our shape and our structure! We do have an endowment and we have the ability to develop our faculties.* God instructed, taught, explained, managed information—planned and executed his plans with man, and, taking our cue from him, we instruct and mentor each other—and train up our children after the divine pattern, expressing divine orderliness.<sup>2</sup> Man knew God dramaturgically (as if in dramatic interaction), and relationally—as person to person.

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<sup>1</sup> We were capable of rational and irrational thought. However as there are different kinds of intelligence, there are different ways of knowing—chiefly through our senses (as ports of observation) and our mental capabilities connected with those senses. We have memory, logic and calculating abilities as well as feelings, intuition and linguistic aptitude, all caught up in our human reasoning.

<sup>2</sup> I would love to include sculpting and pottery in my list but, just as with Adam’s first tools, we don’t have the artifacts, physical evidence, to validate these early activities in Paradise.

This list of nine divine provisions ought to dispel the notion of *original simplicity*. The list, moreover, suggests that innocence and primitive are *separable*: ***Simply put we never were sub-human!*** Life was originally complex, I assert, because it was “human life” from the beginning. The picture of easy cooperation, of intelligent interactions and shared proclivities between God and man mark the pre-Fall existence of man. That record is accurate. We were never just another primate—outward appearances and fantasized descent aside!

God gifted many of the things considered by philosophers necessary for social development, or communal life, to us right away—instantaneously, full blown and functional in Eden under ideal circumstances for *human thriving*! We are given this biblical picture of close and continuous communion between God and man and it was actually rich, full, complex and well-articulated interactions; all, again, in an original state of purity, of innocence. We were in contact, conversing with God face to face, daily, in our joint activities. We knew God our Maker and our Life-giver, and Life saver, both as companion and friend and lived together.

All these “*divine institutions*”, please note, were helpful, good and beneficial when the human race started out on this good earth. Adam and Eve were *unborn* in the beginning. Our one race began with a past-less-ness that dissipated rapidly (like a morning mist?) as soon as we began acting, making choices—even all good choices!. Scapegoating society was not even possible because there was no social past to exploit in that manner. I mean, we could not rationalize our behavior because of poor prior choices, bad decisions, or faulty socialization—badness didn’t even exist because evil did not, as yet, have a foothold in Paradise! How could non-existent evil distort our imagination, fill our thought life? Impossible, logically or existentially back then.

Next week we will discover/recover more from Gen. 2:4-25, while stopping just short of the Fall. Before we get to the Fall, and its consequences, we need to build up our faith, focus on all our many blessings—perhaps expanding both our awareness and our vocabulary. God is good, **he daily loadeth us with blessings!** So, let’s proceed with some scriptural encouragement from John 16 vv. 12-13 & 21-24:

**12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things to come. . .**

**21 Whenever a woman is in labor she has [anguish, grief] pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a [human being] child has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. 23 In that day you will not question Me about anything<sup>3</sup>. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He**

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<sup>3</sup> This suggest to me the possibility that we shall in the end be moved beyond hesitancy and doubt!

**will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.**

Amazingly bold promise! As well verse 21 is an excellent pro-life verse, all things considered; it assumes that the child is a “human being” that is brought into the world (not just a baby, or a potential person!) so “personhood precedes birth!” This passage ends with a marvelously paternal/parental impulse (**that your joy may be full**) attributed to God!

This passage establishes that truth comes from God! Now, some of you may recall, because it was raised in testimony time early this month, John 16:13, Meaning God himself is the standard of truth, being truth—the truthfulness of God is truth! Then the truth has to be shared, after it has been overheard as it were (***whatever he hears he will speak***). *What the Spirit hears, he relays to us in human language—from its source in God's truth.* What is “heard” is heard to be proclaimed! When the Spirit “speaks” we hear “truth conveyed”(much like information transfer). ***This gives new meaning to the assertion “life is information” whether we are talking about our genetic code, or divine revelation.***

There is an intriguing parallel here between DNA and God's inscription of the ten commandments—remember, God' wrote them in stone using an alphabetical system (Hebrew), encoding “the Law” (!) as one might infer that he encoded our triple coded DNA, storing it in our “life molecule.” Science has been searching for an apt metaphor to describe this phenomenon. I suggest “life is a literacy project.” In the end, ignorance shall pass away as we are perfected in knowledge and understanding—in the meantime we are both informed by God and instructed by the Spirit verbally.<sup>4</sup>

Why are the disciples *not able* to **bear these things** (alluded to in John 16:12)? Because they are human beings! We might surmise that they were stressed out, bewildered and confused. We speak of ministry burn-out, perhaps they were just exhausted from all the turmoil and going's on. Enormous miracles, enraged opposition, assassination plots. The level of hostility was frightening and they felt weak as well as worn, anxious to the point of dreading the next hour! So Jesus declares, regarding the Holy Spirit, ***He will lead you into all the truth*** which ties directly into 15:26: **But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.** Twice now, in verses 15:26 and 16:13 Jesus offers reassurance—the **Spirit of truth** will come. **He will come** and 1. **bear witness** and 2. **lead us into all truth.** *We are not clueless, we are not unable to know the truth—the Helper helps with all that.* For the times we are in, this is very good news. For the situations we are facing, this is very awesome good news.

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<sup>4</sup> However, all are not uniformly thrilled about this gift of language,

Caliban complains of it:

You taught me language, and my profit on 't

Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you

For learning me your language! (The Tempest 1.2.437-439)

And fortunately some other embrace with that gift the ability to demonstrate their devotion to God through praise! Cursing is a misshapen, sinful abuse of language.

It would appear that the “assisted living and assisted learning situation” that prevailed in Eden has been somehow, mysteriously restarted. Here is what I mean, the revelation knowledge that God gives us does not, apparently, come on its own. It comes with divine guidance (the **work of the Holy Spirit**). It comes with a witness (to the reality, the work and mission of Jesus—what he did, and said, and taught). And it comes with additional information, explanation even prognosis—insight into the things to come. It isn’t guess work but ***clear and cogent teaching on future things***. Consider the implications of this carefully. Because the Holy Spirit has come and works to lead us into all truth *there is no cause for anxiety—not anymore*. Knowledge is not limited by our skills of acquisition—because we have access to accurate, complete information. The Holy Spirit takes us beyond the goal lines of investigation, beyond the reach of questioning and doubt—even out of the ball park of human science!. In such a setting, under such circumstances! I suggest that it simply is not “reasonable” to be anxious about current knowledge, or about the future. The Spirit alleviates both sets of concern.

HOWEVER, our situation gets even better! First we have: ***When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things to come!*** (6:13) And it is followed by v. 23: ***Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.*** How does that promise work?! Well, there appear to be two tests, at least here, initially: the test of *appropriateness* and the test of *one’s prospect* of success.

According to Scripture the “reasonable” man envisioned must be “a believing man.” One who trusts that the promise of the Holy Spirit is secure. Therefore he is not anxious about either what he knows, or what he needs to know! ***If we are living an examined life, our consciences are clear and our hearts are pure***, our requests would be appropriate ones.

Now there are many *reasons, the irrationality of sin aside!*, that a man might be deemed unreasonable and so disqualified—anger, fear, jealousy (envy), lust, greed, hate, vengeance. His request might be refused because of the sin that drives it. By contrast, a “reasonable,” man searches his own heart to determine if his requests might be sin-impelled and then repents so as to clear the deck (Psalm 139:23-24) will be blessed:

**Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
24 And see if there be any [a]hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way. (NASB)**

I must say this is encouraging ***for repentance restores “reasonableness.”*** Second, at the very least, it increases the frequency of success in prayers of petition. The reasonable man asks for what is good, and the Lord gladly supplies it in answered prayer.

What “reasonable,” faithful man, who is right with God, could desire anything that is not good??

The answer is none. Surely the Holy Spirit is there to help us wvwn discern what is good!

Let's approach this promise of answered prayer a second way before we move on. Remember, "What reasonable man can desire that which is not good?" I suggest that question is right up there with "Do you do well to be angry?" *That is our second question.* Here is what God asks Cain? **Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?** (Gen. 4:6) And how about the indignant Moses (hot with infuriated rage), about to strike the rock for water at Meribah, **Do you do well to be angry?** It is the same question that God asked the prophet Jonah: **Do you do well to be angry for the plant?** Imagine: enraged over the death of a gourd plant! And do we recall Jonah's reply? He said, **Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.** *Not one of those mentioned did well to be angry.* Moses was excluded from the Promised Land. Cain was driven from home and family, cursed for his act of murder. And Jonah, possibly one of the most successful revivalists of all time, ends his story sad, sullen and pathetic.

Do I feel justified in holding on to any anger, any un-forgiveness?

Not even a smidgen of it! Am I a Jonah?

So we are being reasonable to ask good things of God? Absolutely. And then Holy Spirit is there to help us discern what is good? Yes. What reasonable man can desire what is not good? (PAUSE)

We might do well to broaden our net. Do I do well to be depressed, crestfallen, disgruntled? It seems to me that camping out on negativity opens anyone up to bad things . . . even to the place of plotting evil due to resentment, the tireless nursing of vengeful thoughts . . . I wonder how long one can be sullen, bitter and not realize how unhealthy, and insufferably ungodly it is? Why "insufferable"? Because of the strand of *self-righteousness* which runs like a petroleum pipe line through Cain, Jonah and Moses. If you think I am seeing something *that isn't there* in this charge of self-righteousness, please let me know. I do not wish to be party to "the Covington syndrome" by which I mean the pessimistic, or polarized bias which led many on social media and the uncritical news to paint a group of high school students as "racist" without evidence—on the basis of malicious prejudice and a brief video clip alone.<sup>5</sup> That's self-righteousness! If we see defamation as *bearing false witness* (no evidence, only made up stories aimed to hurt and harm), we might realize that freedom of expression actually has important limits. This should curb epithets and slurs in general. However, that's a negative instance.

Positively, why do we have such difficulty in seeing our actual situation as God's beloved children? As captured by **Daily the Lord loads us with benefits<sup>6</sup> God is our salvation.** (Psalm 68:19 KJV), loading us with *nothing but what is beneficial*. Are we too worldly? Daily he blesses our curses, our temptations, our afflictions— even sin and death prove, in the end to be "good" to us. It is possible to conclude that all his ways are "good" towards us. Yes, all the ways of God are good . . . and all the ways of our enemies, the ways of those who hate and despise us —whether reprobates, or devils!—

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<sup>5</sup>"I don't like you because I don't like your people group (white) because I've decided *a priori* that all whites are bigots—by definition etc."

<sup>6</sup> Better: **Blessed be the Lord; day by day he beareth our burden: God is our salvation.**

in spite of themselves (yes, in spite of their intentions, or hurtful purposes) shall prove good to those who love the Lord (Romans 8:28):

**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**

or, Gen. 50:17-21:

**17 ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph, “Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.” And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” 19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about [as it is this day] this present result, to preserve many people alive. 21 So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” So he comforted them and spoke [to their heart] kindly to them.**

We struggle as did Joseph’s brothers, or as Bart did, to see our happy situation. And we are reluctant somehow to acknowledge the bigness of our God (God is big enough to bring good out of evil, big enough to forgive the unforgivable where there’s repentance, big enough to redeem the most unexpected candidates, wealthy enough to afford our entire redemption).

*If it were not best for us, it would never have come about in the first place!*

Because some of us struggle with acknowledging either our blessings, or God’s great goodness, our vocabulary of praise might be a little stunted, or atrophied from disuse, I should “expand” on these “blessings,” or “benefits” They are not “few,” they are not “light” and God loadeth them upon us daily, *not intermittently*. And, further, he does this for all of us and not just the privileged few! If he brings sorrow, he brings the strength to bear it. If we are oppressed, our God will deliver us—he comes to our rescue. The Lord of our salvation is the One who saves us from ultimate, or final harm. All this is to be sounded forth as applause! As praise . . . which is the blessing of devotion.

We are laden with 1. a sense of *his love* in these benefits, 2. by the *weight* of them, 3. by *their delivery* to us (even us rebels) and, finally 4. by their *coming* on a regular basis (*daily*). They consist among other things, from the outside in, of a world to inhabit, a life to enjoy, air to breathe, earth to tread on, sleep to refresh ourselves, homes for shelter, water to cool, satisfy and cleanse, clothes to cover, by the supply of food and the company of the animals.

If we move to the next circle of blessings we come to the politeness and good manners, the dearness of friends and family, property ownership and assets management, degrees of honor, the honesty and dignity of vocation, the favor of princes, success, domestic comforts, outward peace, good reputation, preservation and rescue from dangers and evil.

Moving closer there's still more: coordination and integrity of body, our five senses, our strength, health, appetite, vigor of digestion, the wholesome seasons of life, freedom from cares, order, power, experience of intuition, memory and forethought, wisdom, art, learning, experience, style and self-expression.

And fourthly, nearest and dearest, the Christian benefits of everlasting love. rebirth, the word and sacrament, his merits, our blood purchase and forgiveness, his glory and his indwelling presence—the turning of our curses to blessings!

**20 Surely my soul remembers**

**And is bowed down within me.**

**21 This I recall to my mind,**

**Therefore I have hope.**

**22 The Lord's lovingkindnesses [that we are not consumed]**

**indeed never cease,**

**For His compassions never fail.**

**23 They are new every morning;**

**Great is Your faithfulness.**

**24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul,**

**"Therefore I have hope in Him." Lamentations 3:20-24(NASB)**

The Lord is our portion:

light to my soul,  
power to my weakness,  
goodness to my moral necessity,  
mercy to my pardon,  
beautify for me to delight in,  
a glory that lifts me to wonder, and to awe,  
my fullness and satisfaction.  
health to my sickness,  
wealth to my poverty,  
bread for my hunger,  
everlasting drink  
a balm for my wounds.  
he is ease to my torment,  
freedom to my bondage  
and pardon to all the condemned . . .

All this and more does the Lord provide in blessing us always and in making us whole.

**Amen.**