

Do you remember the movie *Castaway*? Tom Hanks was all alone on a deserted island and was going insane. So what did he do? He made an artificial companion from a volleyball that had washed up on the beach, naming it Wilson. Day and night he talked to Wilson, laughed with Wilson, cried with Wilson, even getting angry with Wilson and tossing him away. In a strange but understandable way, Wilson helped him get through his time on the island. We are not made to live without companionship. God has created us for relationship—first and foremost with him, and then with each other. Others need us, and we need them.

We might look at what God reveals to us in the second chapter of Genesis, shrug our shoulders, and say, “So what. I’m not Adam. I’m not Eve. I’m not perfect.” How true that is. We all fall short—far short—of God’s perfect plan, a plan that’s been so warped by sin. Men mistreat and abuse their wives. Women rebel against their husbands. Homosexual and lesbian relationships prevail. Having multiple partners in life is the norm. Children are beaten, aborted, and rejected. Humanity rebels against humanity, one race and color against the other. What possible good does it do us to study and learn what God reveals in Genesis 2?

My friends, it’s our need for relationship. As we’re going to learn in greater detail next week, God has perfectly provided for that, too. Four sets of relationships are established as being “good” by the time we reach the end of Genesis 2: 1) that between God and Adam and Eve, 2) that between Adam and Eve, 3) that between Adam and Eve and nature, and 4) that between the individual and self. All four of these relationships were destroyed when Adam and Eve sinned and, sadly, we’re still reaping the results of that today.

But in Christ, God restored the plan. After Adam and Eve sinned, rejecting their perfect relationship with God and with each other, God confronted them, called them to repentance, and promised them a Savior. Addressing the devil (in the hearing of Adam and Eve, by the way), he said, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gn 3:15).* God kept that promise some 4000 years later when his Son, the offspring of the woman, Jesus, referring to God’s plan for our salvation, announced from the cross, *“It is finished” (Jn 19:30).* In other words, “sin has been paid for. God is appeased. You and God are one again.”

May we repent for all the ways we’ve mistreated God’s precious gifts of property and possessions, companions and friends. And may we render to God our thanksgiving and praise for restoring the plan and reconciling us to himself in Christ. Amen.

Genesis 2:1-25 – Pentecost Potential – 194, 538, 501
06/21/20 – Pastor David M. Kuehl – St. Paul’s, Muskego, WI

For the past two weeks we’ve been studying chapter one of Genesis under the theme *Pentecost Potential*. The first week we learned that God is the only Creator, the Lord over time, and the perfect Planner. Last week we marveled at the climax of God’s great creative work, Adam and Eve, and noted especially that they were created to be just like their Father: holy, just, and loving.

Today we turn the page to chapter two of Genesis. Some see this chapter as a second or an alternative version of God’s creation, but that’s not the case at all. Chapter two shifts the emphasis from God as powerful Creator to God as tender Provider. It reveals how the heavenly Father lovingly takes care of everything that Adam needs. On this Father’s Day, how fitting it is that we are reminded of this beautiful characteristic of God, namely:

God Is the Perfect Provider

- 1. He provides a beautiful home.**
- 2. He provides an honorable responsibility.**
- 3. He provides a compatible companion.**

1. Six times in the first chapter of Genesis, God announces that what he has created is “good” and once that it is “very good.” Today we read in verse 9, *“The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.”* What goodness the Lord God displays in giving things that are both good for the body and pleasing to the eye. He provides four rivers in the garden, so that there’s an ample supply of water. And he provides beautiful treasures in the form of gold, aromatic resin, and onyx.

How about a place to worship? Did Adam and Eve have to go church-shopping to find a tabernacle or a temple? Of course, not! The garden itself was a beautiful place for them to worship. In addition, God put into the garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree, situated in the middle of the garden, gave Adam and Eve a place to worship God intentionally, obeying his command not to eat of it, so that Martin Luther would describe this tree as Adam and Eve’s *“altar of worship to the Lord God.”*

As we’ll see next week, it wasn’t long before sin caused Adam and Eve to lose the perfection of Eden. And the beautiful home that God had created for them was no longer a blessing but a curse, producing thorns and thistles, droughts and floods, sickness and disease. And the worst curse of all? The perfect relationship that Adam and Eve had enjoyed with God—even walking with him in the garden in the cool of the day—was completely severed.

But none of this changes the fact that God is still the perfect Provider. Now he uses the thorns and thistles, the droughts and floods, the sickness and disease in life for a different purpose: to humble us, to drive us to our knees, to bring us to repentance. The Apostle Paul, concerned that his being given revelations from God would cause him to become arrogant and proud, said this: *"Because of these surpassingly great revelations, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me" (2 Cor 12:7).* Paul thanked God for his "thorn in the flesh," whatever it was, because he knew it was for his good, to keep him humble and penitent before God.

My friends, when you suffer hardship, do you look up or down? Do you raise your fist at God or do you fall to your knees and cry out to him for help, for mercy, for strength? Life's crosses and difficulties have a way of sifting us. They lead us to repent for all the ways we've disobeyed God. As we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, he'll never fail to be our perfect Provider, giving us everything we need for body and soul.

2. God also gave Adam an honorable responsibility, namely, taking care of the Garden of Eden. In verse 15 Moses writes, *"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."* Moses already told us back in chapter one that Adam and Eve were commanded by God to *"rule over the fish in the sea and over the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (v. 28).*

Do we appreciate the great honor that God gave Adam and Eve to be in charge of everything he had made? Do we appreciate the awesome responsibility that he put into their hands to care for his beautiful creative work? And do we appreciate the same honor that the heavenly Father has given us and the same responsibility that he has placed into our hands? We call this work of caring for God's things "stewardship." And to this point, retired WELS pastor and professor, Daniel Deutschlander, says, *"God always takes a calculated risk when he gives a gift—that we'll love the gift more than we love the Giver."*

God is the Owner of everything, but he puts the care of everything into our hands. That means that our bodies are on loan to us from God. Are we taking good care of them? Do we love the Giver more than we love the gift? Our property and possessions are on loan to us from God. Are we taking good care of them, maximizing their use for God's purposes? Do we love the Giver more than we love the gift?

What about the world in which we live, or at least our little corner of it—the rivers, the lakes, and the parks? Everything is God-owned. We don't worship nature; nor do we serve it, but we want to care for it as belonging to God. *"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,"* the psalmist says, *"the world, and all who live in it" (Ps 24:1).* Do we love the Giver more than we love the gift?

I could mention so many other things, like time and work and recreation, our talents and abilities, even our children, but you get the point. Someone much wiser than me defined stewardship this way: *"Stewardship means that life is a big ship loaded with a rich cargo of products to be delivered to many people in many places. God is the Owner of the ship, but I am the captain. Everything I have aboard—all my possessions, my talents, my health, my strength, my personality, my privileges, my money—everything is a cargo to be delivered. God has entrusted it to me for his people in every place. I don't own what I possess; I owe it. God has made me the captain of his ship, his steward, his caretaker, and it's my job to bring the ship to port and discharge the cargo. Everything I have aboard is for delivery."* What a perfect Provider God is, entrusting to us the stewardship, the care, of all his gifts!

3. Finally, God gives Adam a compatible companion. In verse 20 Moses describes how, in naming all the living creatures, Adam realized that for him *"no suitable helper was found."* Adam wasn't meant to be alone. *"So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man."* What a pinnacle of creation Eve was—the last of all to be made. The Hebrew language distinguishes her creation from all the rest. It uses a word that means "to build," in contrast to the animals, who were "formed." God took both the time and the effort to create Eve in a very special way, in a sense, getting down and dirty when he did so.

When Adam woke up, rubbed the sleep from his eyes, and saw Eve, he just burst with excitement. In poetic language, language that Martin Luther believed to be directly inspired by God, Adam cries, *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."* The animals, the birds, the fish weren't enough for Adam. He could talk, but they couldn't. He possessed the image of God, but they didn't. The companion that God provided for Adam was compatible to him in every way.