



Sermon Transcription

Title: God is Always Gracious
Text: Genesis 1 - 42
Preacher: Dave Talley
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All right, you see what we're going to be doing in the next weeks ahead. We're going to be reading through God's word together throughout this year, and then every Sunday morning when we gather together, we're going to open up God's Word especially related to what we'd been reading in the past week. So you can see in your bulletins, there's a little insert for what we'll be reading this next week. Next Sunday morning, Erik will be preaching from Genesis 43 through Exodus 12. This morning, because we're a few weeks behind, I'm going to be going from chapter 1 through 42 of Genesis. Yeah, we're going to be here a while. Hope you brought your lunch.

Every week you'll find we're doing something different. Someone might take a verse or a passage or a few themes and just whatever God is really laying on that person's heart for the week, and God is going to be working in your heart and life too. Every week you'll see that all we've put on is one week of reading. That's to encourage you, because maybe this last week you thought you would jump in and do some reading and you failed miserably. Just tear that one up, throw it away and you can get on with a new one. You get on with the new one and you've got a whole new week in front of you. And we just want to encourage you to jump in and be a part of what we're doing here, because we want to see God teach us throughout this year.

So there's a bulletin insert and it's got a sermon outline in it. There are four points we want to look at, and we will not be able to make our way through all of those, probably. We're just going to touch on them as we are able with the time that we have this morning. There are so many things that take place, if you've reading with us through this book, and so many things that do not make sense. We've got men with multiple wives, and the biblical text doesn't tell us anything about whether that's good or bad, but we see the problems that roll out of that. We've got sibling rivalry, we've got deception. You talk about dysfunctional families, if you think that's a new term for these days, no. Just go back and read Genesis and you realize, okay, it's all the way back. Sin causes all of this. And so we actually see things that we battle with, things that we struggle with, in this text. There are so many stories that are there.

And in these first chapters of Genesis, we see a big picture of what God intended for this world to be, as He created this incredible world and put humanity in it, and what relationships were going to look like with one another and also with God. We see very quickly that sin enters the picture and it messes up relationship with God and relationship with one another. In fact, it gets so bad so quickly that all you have to do is get to chapter 6 and already God is looking down, and He sees that man's heart is only evil continually. And then we have the flood, and humanity is destroyed and Noah is the one on that ark where life is preserved because God is going to continue to move forward His plan. None of this catches God by surprise. None of it is out of His control. He's at work. He's moving forward His plan.

And what I want us to focus on this morning is that God is always gracious. I want us to see just a short glimpse – we'll probably visit this a number of times throughout this year – just real quick pictures of how God is gracious. Now I can be a gracious dad. I've got a family entrusted to me, children entrusted to me, and I can be a gracious dad. I've had moments in my life where I've been really gracious. There's other moments in my life where I haven't been so gracious. Let me tell you about a good moment of being gracious with one of my children, Andrew. He's here today.

Andrew played baseball. He's a good athlete. You know that now I look up to him. I mean, he's 6'2" and strong. There was a day, though, when he was a punky little kid and I had to help him learn how to play things. He was a good athlete, good baseball player. When he would step up to the plate to hit, he very rarely struck out, very rarely walked, because he could hit the ball wherever it was thrown. I mean, he just had a good, hand-bat coordination and he could get the job done. He had one problem though, and that was generally, although he would connect, the ball would dribble down to second base, the second baseman would pick it up and throw it to first, and he would be out. And so I tried to get Andrew to swing through the ball. He's got to hit it hard. And we did a lot of different exercises in trying to get him to hit the ball

harder. So one day we were in the front of our house and I was throwing him tennis balls, and I'm saying, "Andrew, you've got to swing hard. I mean, you've got to get it." And so he's swinging the bat. And I'm saying, "Andrew, come on, swing! Swing hard!" And you know Andrew can get really intense and he's just swinging. Then all of a sudden the bat goes flying out of his hand. And so I'm standing out here with a tennis ball in my hand. Yeah, swing, swing! And all of a sudden that bat just takes off. My car is parked right over here, and it is like a torpedo flying through the air. Bam! Right into the driver's side door. And I look over and the bat clangs down onto the driveway, there's a dent in my door. I look back at Andrew and his eyes are this big. "What have I done? I'm dead." And it's a moment I'm very proud of in being a dad, because in that quick moment – and this is all thanks be to God – in that quick moment, I looked at the car, I looked at Andrew, and I said, "That's exactly what I want you to do. Swing hard like that. Now go pick up the bat and let's do it again." And then I was going to throw him tennis balls, and the whole time I'm looking over at my car and going, oh my goodness, what just happened to my car? "Come on, keep swinging, son." My car. I mean, I was just caught in this dilemma.

Now if you would have told me ahead of time that was going to happen, and I could plan out what my response was going to be, I don't think it would be any different than that. I mean, I was a really gracious dad in that moment. Now I think about how I can extend that kind of graciousness to my son, who's a ten year old, who just made a mistake and was being clumsy and let go of the bat, that's nothing compared to God being gracious toward humanity, in our sinfulness, shaking our fists at Him, walking away in rebellion, despite all that He's given to us. There's no comparison between the two. But yet God reaches down toward us and He's gracious to us. Even in our rebellion, He's gracious to us.

There are just four quick points we want to look at. First of all, in Genesis chapter 1, verse 1 to 2, verse 3, God is gracious in creation. When you step back and you look at all that God has created, it's phenomenal. And we read through that this morning, 1:1 to 2:3, and it's so easy, especially if you grew up in the church, to understand creation's story: day 1, day 2, we can yawn as we read it, and just, ah, yeah, whatever. Let's get onto something exciting, something I haven't read yet. And we can lose the power of what's happening in these verses. This is unbelievable what takes place. John 1:1 to 3 tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." In other words, there was nothing before the Son the God stood up and began to create.

Colossians Chapter 1 verse 16 talks about that same thing: visible and invisible, rulers, powers, authorities. It's all created. We read that passage earlier in Hebrews. It says by faith we believe He created. And it goes on to say it was out of nothing that He made these things. And Genesis chapter 1 and 2 is where we see -- especially chapter 1 -- where God spoke, then it came into existence. God puts His glory on display right away in the Bible, right away. Psalm 19 tells us, "The heavens display the glory of God." This is who God is. This is what God can do. Nothing, and now there's something.

Now I'm amazed at what even humans can create. Every time I get into a car and start it up and drive down the road, I'm just amazed. I mean, how do people take substances out of the ground and find that which is hard and somehow find a way to put it all together into things we call metal. And then they can shape that into a car and put an engine in it that you pour gasoline in and something happens, and it pushes pistons up and down and causes the engine to go like this, blows smoke out the back, causes the drive shaft to turn and the wheels begin to move, and all you do is push on the gas. I mean, I don't get it. Every time I get onto a plane and it goes up, I'm speechless. I don't understand that. But that is nothing compared to God, eternal God being in existence and there being nothing, and then He speaks and there's something.

You see, God wants to put Himself on display right from the very beginning. And the reason I wanted to camp here just a little bit is because if we don't get this right, we're going to get a lot of other things messed up. Because when you see what happens in these verses right here, where God creates, our response is one of worship. It's one of, wow! Unbelievable! And if we don't get that right, we're going to get a lot of other things messed up. In Jeremiah chapter 5, when Jeremiah is talking to the nation of Israel, he uses creation pictures to make a point. God is the one who put the sand in the place so the waves could not roll over that point. That's the stopping point. God did that. So why have you walked away from Him? In other words, when you see God in His glory, why would you walk away? So God sets it right up from the beginning, this is who I am. And everything in Scripture from this point on flows out of this, because when God says this is who I am, He deserves everything that we give. Everything should go back to Him, all praise, all honor, all glory, because this is who He is. Wow! And so if God speaks, we listen. If God points the way, we follow, because this is who He is. This is His glory.

Romans 1 makes it very clear that because God has set His glory in the heavens for all to see, everyone is without excuse. And the problem with humanity – Romans 1 clearly lays it out – is rather than worshipping the Creator, they worship the creature, created things. And when people start worshipping created things, it leads them away from the One to whom all glory is to be given. Genesis chapter 1, if we don't get that right, we're going to get a lot of other things wrong. It becomes a central point throughout all Scripture. We can't just move through this. We've got to realize how gracious God is in creation. And we see that God creates a wonderful world. And as if that isn't enough, He also plants a

garden in it. Then He creates humanity and puts him in there. God is doing everything. He's thought of everything. He's providing for humanity in amazing ways.

When I was in Kenya in 2003, I was visiting Benjamin Musyoka, one of our missionaries there. Then there was another guy there from Talbot, Joe Muchekehu. Some of you might remember him. And so I also spent some time with Joe Muchekehu, and he had to go on an emergency business trip. He said while I'm gone, I want you to spend time with my brother-in-law. His marriage is falling apart. Would you disciple him for a few days? He's going to take you up Mount Kenya. Oh, okay. And so he dropped me off at Jenga's house and I spent the night there. And the next day we started heading up Mount Kenya. And he knew everywhere he was going. You couldn't see the top of the mountain, but we just kept walking and somehow we were getting to where we were supposed to be. All of a sudden there was a cabin there and we were going to spend the night. And so we had quarters, they made us dinner, we ate and went to bed. And I crawled into bed that night and I realized, I had no idea where we were going all day long today. I just followed Jenga. Who's Jenga? Who am I with right now? I've entrusted my life to someone whose name I don't even know how to spell. And I just laid there and I was afraid. I thought, man, this is crazy, Dave. Who's going to contact Joanie when you never come back? This is it. It's over. So the next day we got up, and I'm trying to work through it. I'm just following Jenga, and I began to realize Jenga knows a lot about where we are, how many climate zones we're going through, every plant, everything. We run out of water, he finds it. And so we come to our second camp site after a full day of hiking. And there's this long row of picnic tables inside this building and there's all these Europeans and Americans, and then there's all these Kenyans down here. And Jenga goes down to the Kenyans. And when we get down there, the Kenyans just part, and Jenga sits down. And I sit down across from him. And everybody huddles around Jenga. I'm going, whoa, something just happened here. I'm in the presence of someone and I don't even know who it is. And I begin to watch, and they all huddle around Jenga, and they listen to everything he says. People would get all the information they need and they would leave, and then another group of people would come huddling around. And they kept asking questions, listening to everything he said.

In order to climatize, you have to go up a couple hundred more feet, spend some time up here, and come back down and then go to sleep. And so we went up and we were sitting beside this lake. And I said, "Jenga, who are you?" "I'm Jenga Mongai (ph). Why do you ask?" "No, back there at the picnic tables. Who are you?" And after a while it began to come out from Jenga that if anyone was ever lost or stranded on Mount Kenya or Kilimanjaro, the first phone call was to Jenga. If anyone was lost, hurt, anything, Jenga Mongai was the one that they called. And I mean, I slept good that night after knowing that. I thought, okay, this is no problem. This guy could carry me down Kenya piggyback. I mean, he's one of the few guys who could go from top to bottom, no water, no rest, no food. He can find the person, get them out of there. I mean, he's the guy. I just rested knowing that.

And here in Genesis chapter 1, God is saying, I want you to know who I am. I don't want you to lay awake at night worried about whatever is going on in your life. I don't want you to fret when you encounter various situations. I don't want you to be caught off-guard and feel overwhelmed, and just fall apart, because you know Me. You know the Creator of the universe. This is who I am. And God sets that out for us, a beautiful world that we can inhabit. He shows us who He is. All praise to Him, all trust in Him.

God's not only gracious in creation. He's also gracious in showing His people how to live. He didn't just throw people onto the earth and say, figure it out. All along the way, God gives clear instructions to His people. We see that immediately in chapter 2, verses 15 through 17. God says to Adam, enjoy all the things in the garden. It's all for you, Adam. But this one tree right here, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, don't eat from that particular tree.

Now what we need to realize about God is that God is not exercising His authority. "I'm God. I can make the rules. Arbitrarily, don't eat of that tree." No, God is looking out for His creation. He's got Adam's best interests in mind. And God does not even give a demand to Adam until He's already poured out grace on him. "All things, Adam, you can enjoy. It's all yours. But this tree right here, you leave that one alone." And that's a pattern we see throughout Scripture. Before God asks anything of His creation, he pours out grace on them. And Genesis 1 and 2 is a beautiful example of that. "All things for you to enjoy, Adam, but don't eat of this tree."

Mount Sinai is another example. God takes these people who were slaves in Egypt, distraught, their lives were just pushed down into the dirt by an oppressive ruler in Egypt. And God rescues them out of there, pouring His grace on them, brings them to Mount Sinai. And then he says, "Let me show you how to live." See the law is not this burden demand that's to weary us and wear us down, and make our lives miserable. God is always gracious as He points us to how to live. It always follows His grace.

When you want to go somewhere, you want to hear from someone that knows where you're going. That's why we like maps. Once we were up at Lake Tahoe with the family and we decided we wanted to go to this mountain. And so we got to the starting point, big sign, and there was the name of the mountain, there was this big path there. And so, you know, don't worry about the details, let's get on the path. Follow dad. And so we're just marching down. We're going to get to the top of the mountain. Let's go. Water. Candy bars. We're all ready -- I mean granola bars. We're all ready, we're all

ready to get up to that mountain. We'll find it. Eventually we started getting up and we think it looks like the mountain is over there. And we keep going this way, trusting the path, you know, follow dad. And all of a sudden we end up on this mountain peak and we're looking over, and we're thinking, yeah, we're pretty sure that's the mountain we want to be on over there. So we asked a few people. Yep, that's the mountain over there. So we go back down the mountain, and go back up. We finally get to the top and then go dragging back to the car. And I'm trying to figure out what went wrong. So I go back to the starting point, big sign, there it is, that's the trail. Oh, yeah, but also if you want to go this way, take this trail. If you want to go to that mountain, go up the stairs and then get on that trail. It's like, I didn't follow the map. You see, if you want to get where you're going, you need to talk to someone who's been there, or you need to see a map that points the way. That's why God is so gracious in giving us His Word, because He's the creator. We're just creation. And He wants to pass onto us what we need to know. And that's why we're inviting you to jump into this reading program, because we've got page after page, and story after story, and we're going to learn all kinds of things about God. And He's giving it to us because He's gracious to us.

And then the other two points you have in your bulletin there -- I wish we had more time to talk about them, but let me just give you the big pictures of it. Even in humanity's rebellion, God is gracious. He is gracious. He doesn't let them walk away from Him in the midst of the rebellion. He sets up clear consequences for them because he loves them, much like a father and a mother do their child. Consequences. God does the same thing to us. And the unique thing about God's consequences, when you look at Genesis chapter 3, there's a judgment to the man and a judgment given to the woman, the commonality between the two its difficulty. It's a judgment of difficulty and God is being gracious in doing that.

In other words, when we live in this world as fallen individuals and we walk away from God, God has rigged the world so that we will encounter difficulty when we do that. And you know what? That's God being gracious to us. Because when we get ourselves in all kinds of difficulties and we come to what we call the end of ourselves, then there's a turning back to the Lord. And that's where life is found. It's God's gracious act toward us that He allows in this world difficulty to abound, so our hearts are constantly being turned back toward Him. So even in our rebellion, God is being gracious to us.

But then you see the last point there, that God is gracious to make a way for reconciliation as well. Even when humanity sins -- let's go back to the very first sin of Adam and Eve. God doesn't say, "Ah, I really messed up on this one. What did I create now?" No, God doesn't do that. What does He do after Adam and Eve sin? He comes to the garden. "Adam, where are you?" "I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid myself." "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat of the tree?" And God hangs in there with him.

And then you've got Cain and Abel. Cain started to concoct this story in his mind about Abel, and God comes to Cain, "Cain, what are you thinking? This isn't good thinking, Cain." God is moving toward humanity. And even in the flood, one of the most awful scenes in the Bible -- it's found in Genesis -- God continues to move toward humanity. "Noah, I want you to build an ark. I'm going to preserve your family. I'm going to continue My work in this world." God pursues. He's gracious in His pursuit of people.

And not only does He pursue, but He makes a covenant. Even back in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, right in the context of that very first sin, God talks about the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. And He says, "The seed of the serpent is going to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman." There's going to be a lot of damage done along the way. But the seed of the woman is going to crush the head, the death blow to the seed of the serpent.

Already in Genesis 3, verse 15, we see that sin is not going to stop God having relationship with humanity. He is going to make a way. And that seed of the woman is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and already there we're looking forward to Jesus. He's the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Him. And because God knows all of that, He's able to relate to humanity graciously. Why? Because Romans 3 tells us He was able to pass over those sins previously committed, because in His justice, he was going to pour out His wrath on Christ. Everything is looking forward to that.

And so any covenant that God sets up -- we see the covenant with Abraham. That was probably the most impacting part of this reading up to this point for me, where in chapter 17 God says to Abraham, "My covenant is with you." That word "you" just jumped off the page. It's so personal. It's so intimate. That's God moving toward sinful people and saying, "My covenant is with you." And the only reason He can do that is because of Christ. All of this is moving toward Christ. That's why we've entitled this series God Makes A Way, because that's what we're going to see.

Now I'm going to invite the Grace Group Shepherds to gather around the room and ask Walt to come up here. We've got a few more minutes to close our service. But as the Grace Group Shepherds gather around, these are pastors, they want to pray for you, whatever God is stirring in your heart, however He's moving in your life, whatever point this morning God has spoken to you. That's something you need to hear. It doesn't matter how sinful you might see your life, God is pursuing you. He's pursuing you. He wants to be in a relationship with you. He's making a way through Christ. And you might want to have someone pray for you.

Or maybe you're just neglecting God's word altogether, much less being a part of a reading service, and you have lost sight of the fact of how gracious God is in giving you His Word so that you can learn and so that you can grow. And you want someone to pray for you, or you want, right there where you are, to commit yourself, that you would feed on the words of life that God wants to give.

Maybe you've just lost sight of the fact that God commands all of your attention. Genesis 1, that's who He is. He deserves all your worship, deserves all your praise, deserves all your attention. Maybe you need to have your heart again recaptured by God's greatness and His majesty, and you want to turn back toward Him this morning.

Maybe you've never met God in a personal relationship and you've heard something about Jesus Christ being that Way. Any one of these people around the room can help you with that. But let God work. Let me pray.

Lord, we pray that you would work in each of our hearts to accomplish the work that you want to do. Thank you for being so gracious to us. Thank you for the beautiful picture we see of this world in the way you pursue your people in these chapters. And we pray that you would move in our hearts. We pray this in Jesus name, amen.