

Where Good Things Come From

Revelation 11:19-12:17

#23 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

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Prayer

Lord God, we ask now that Jesus, who is the Word and who is the End, would be implanted in us. We ask that you would help us to preach. Lord God, speak your Word into our hearts. Implant the Eternal Seed into our temporal hearts that are in space and time. God, we ask you for a miracle. Now maybe we all can pray together: “Father, I would like to be begotten from above.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

We have been preaching through The Revelation.

The seventh seal has been opened. The seventh trumpet has sounded.

Rev. 11:19 *“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.”*

As we preached last week, the Ark had been lost for 600 years. And that was a big deal for the Ark contained the law—the Ten Commandments written on stone.

The Law is a description of the Good. It gives us knowledge of the Good. It describes what the Good looks like, what the Good acts like.

You’ll remember that the seven churches are called to conquer. To conquer is to know the Good and do the Good.

1. In Ephesus, it’s to find the love that they had at first.
2. In Smyrna, it’s to be faithful unto death.
3. In Pergamum, it’s to repent of idolatry and *porneia*.
4. In Thyatira, it’s to renounce false doctrine.
5. In Sardis . . . it’s to wake from the dead.
6. In Philadelphia . . . they must endure suffering, that’s Good.
7. In Laodicea . . . they’re lukewarm and need passion for the Good, which is Good.

The Law is a description of the Good, and the Law is in the Temple.

Quite naturally, this is the reason that most folks go to the temple or the church. They want knowledge of the Good, so they can choose the Good, and thus, make themselves Good.

“Good things come from knowledge and hard work”—that’s what we tell ourselves.

That’s why I went to college.

[Image of Colorado State University]

I wanted knowledge of good geology, so I could make myself a good geologist.
I even took a class on ethics, which is the knowledge of the Good itself.
I thought that if I knew *about* the Good, I could choose the Good and be Good.

So this is where Good things come from . . . a place like this . . .

[Image of a smiling professor teaching smiling students]

In fact, this is promotional material for the University of Colorado that I pulled from the website.

It's a classroom with smiling faces and the transfer of information in a controlled and safe environment, where personal dignity is honored, and each student has an equal opportunity to seize hold of the Good and make themselves "Good."

And I tried to make myself Good—I worked hard and got almost all A's...including my class on ethics

I got A's and was thrilled when my neighbors got "C's, "D's and "F's.

I rejoiced at their failure, for I thought their failure meant my success.

I had *knowledge* of the Good, and it actually made me bad . . .

Well, that was promotional material for the University of Colorado.

But it could equally well be promotional material for just about any modern evangelical church or discipleship and mentoring program.

Under the picture, you'd just have to add a line like:

"Grace Church"

Or *"New Life School of Discipleship—Where Good Things Come From."*

We naturally assume that we go to church to take knowledge of the Good, so we can choose the Good and beat our neighbors.

We assume that we can choose the Good because we assume that we have this thing we call "Free Will"—a will, that can will what it will, undetermined by any other will.

We naturally assume that you go to the temple to take the Law . . .

The problem is that you couldn't just go to the temple... and take the Law.

The Law was kept in a coffin (*awrone*), an Ark.

If you tried to take it—the knowledge of the Good and evil—you'd die.

You couldn't just go to the temple and take the law.

Instead, you'd go to the temple and watch or reenact a story.

Massive portions of the Old Testament are devoted to that ritual or story.

Most Americans are utterly bewildered and terribly offended by the story:

- Worshipers would bring sacrifices and offerings—primarily animals—that were slaughtered by priests, who would drain the blood into bowls, and then offer the meat to God, to each other, and to the worshipers in ritual meals— the meals were communion with God and each other.
- Once a year, trumpets were blown and the high priest would take the blood behind the curtain, and sprinkle it on top of the Ark, making atonement. The Top of the Ark was the mercy seat and throne of God on Earth.

In the Revelation, John is looking at the top of the Ark, where he sees a lamb standing as if it had been slain. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Will of God, and Judgment of God—as we discovered in our last sermon. Jesus is the Will of God in flesh. God alone is Good. Jesus is the Good in flesh. Jesus is the Good.

We can't take knowledge of the Good and simply *make* ourselves Good.

Once we tried to take knowledge of the Good on a tree in a garden.

We took knowledge of the Good, crucified the Good . . .

And we discovered we were not Good, but evil . . . and dead . . . and no longer free.

And you see? That's not just a story about something that happened in the garden on Calvary or the Garden of Eden, but the story that happens in the garden of your soul, and *every* soul, starting around the age of, what? . . . two, three, four or five?

We take knowledge of the Good and try to make ourselves Good.

But you can't just take the Law and *do* the Law.

Jesus summed up the Law—all of the Law—in this way: *"You will Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength."*

Well, as soon as Love becomes a law, you can't fulfill the law, for if Love is a law, it just reveals that you **don't** *love with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength*.

If Love is a law, your heart, mind, soul and strength are divided. Why? Because something is telling you that you should love, precisely because you don't love.

If Love is law your will is divided, and no longer free. When you take knowledge of Love to make yourself love, you learn that you don't love, Love.

God is Love.

Well, a Good Will is God's Will, and God's will is Free Will.

Free Will in human flesh is Jesus.

Jesus is Free Will.

God loves love, and God is the Love that always Loves. Nothing is stronger than Love.

God Loves in perfect freedom so God is Free Will. ¹

Last week I asked you, “Do you have free will?” And if so: “How did you get it?”

1. Did you conquer it, capture it, and nail it to a tree? Did you take it?
If so, you must be proud, and dead, and not free. You just crucified Freedom.
2. Did you take it? Or did you receive it as a gift?
If so, you must be grateful. Not proud of the Good, but grateful for the Good:
Grateful that you’ve been loved by Love, and now you get to love in freedom.

Free will is Good Will, and Good Will is God’s Will.
And God’s Will is Jesus.

You can’t *make* Good, and if you try, you will crucify the Good and discover you’re evil.
You can’t *make* Good and yet you must *be* Good.
Jesus said, “You *will* love.” That’s the Good.

So where do good things come from?
Where do good people come from?
That’s what every father wants, what every mother wants.
They want a child that loves them in freedom—a child that loves to love because they’ve been loved.

Rev. 11:19 *“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.”*

In the last sermon, we saw that the Ark was a picture of God’s will, which is Good Will, which is Free Will. And the temple is us.

Rev. 11:19-12:2

Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an

¹ My friend Mike shared a fascinating little Ted Talk with me recently.

In it a Dr. of Philosophy, Gregg Caruso, points out that recent psychological and sociological studies have correlated a belief in free will with increased religiosity, punitiveness, and faith in what he called “Just World theory”.

It’s the idea that people get what they deserve and so you don’t need to sympathize with the suffering and you shouldn’t have compassion on sinners. Basically, it’s the idea that we can know good and evil and each choose good and evil, which is basically the definition of a Pharisee.

He argued that giving up belief in free will would be Good.
And yet the Good is Free Will, God is Free Will.... And Free Will in flesh is Jesus.
Jesus is Free Will.

earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

Now if I lost you in my long and sophisticated introduction, this is what I'm trying to say: Truly Good things don't come from a place like this!

[Image of a smiling professor teaching smiling students is shown again]

Truly Good things come from a place that looks more like this:

Mother's Day Clip from *Saturday Night Live* "The Day You Were Born"

[On Mother's Day, a woman (Amy Schumer) is served breakfast in bed by her son and husband. She tells her son about the day he was born.]

Father: *Good morning honey!*

I'm sorry. I didn't make you breakfast . . . but our son did.

Son: *Happy Mother's Day Mommy!*

Mother: *Oh honey! This is so great. You are the sweetest.*

Thank you, sweetheart!

Father: *I helped a little bit with the eggs, but he did the toast all by himself.*

Mother: *Well . . . (reaching for toast and then taking a bite) Mmm . . .*

This is the best toast I've ever had.

Son: *Really?*

Mother: *Yes! Really! I am so lucky to be your mommy.*

The day you were born was the best day of my life.

Son: *What was it like?*

Mother: *(Concerned but trying to conceal it with a gentle voice and smile)*

The day you were born . . . (forcing a smile)? It was ... amazing!

[The scene changes to the labor and delivery unit of a hospital.]

[The mother is in the heat of labor, surrounded by nurses and screaming out in pain.]

Nurse: (Reassuringly) *Okay. Only a few more centimeters and you'll be ready.*

Mother: (From a hospital bed) *How much bigger can the hole get??*

Nurse: (Smiling with a relaxed and gentle smile) *Just breathe.*

Mother: *Why does my *&%\$ ing vagina hurt?*

[The scene changes back to mother and son at breakfast in bed.]

Son: *Were you scared mommy?*

Mother: (Confidently and reassuringly) *Oh no. I was excited!*

I had a big smile on my face the whole time.

[The mom looks at the father and gently nods "Yes") *Didn't I?*

Father: *Oh yeah.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

Nurse: *We're going to need to do an episiotomy.*

Mother: (Through sobs of fear and sadness) *No! No. Don't cut my asshole in half!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Son: *Daddy, Were YOU scared?*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

Mother: *Why does it look like that?*

Mother: *You're not a man!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Father: *No, bud, Daddy's don't get scared.*

Father: *I'm not ready!*

Mother: *You're not a man!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *The nice doctor came in and told us it was time.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

Mother's Day Clip from *Saturday Night Live* continued . . .

Mother: (Addressing the doctor as she enters the room) *Where have you been, you stupid whore?!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *And then . . . she told me to give one little push.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital where the birth is finally taking place.]

Doctor: *She's crowning. One more push.*

Mother: *Ahhh. Ohhh. Am I pooping?*

Father: *No. No baby. No.*

(The nurse nods "Yes" to the husband)

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *Then...one little push and you were born.*

And you were the most beautiful baby in the whole world.

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

[The baby is delivered and a yellow jaundice baby is lifted up into the air.]

Father: *Wait! Why does he look like that? Why is he yellow? Is that normal?*

Mother: *(Through tears) Why is he so ugly?*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *And that's what happened on the best day of my life.*

Understand? We can't make Good, but we must give birth to the Good.
And I apologize if you were offended by the video . . . But perhaps you were offended
because you thought the temple should look more like this:

[Image of a smiling professor teaching smiling students is shown again]

And less like this:

[Image of a mother struggling in labor]

You thought church should look more like a school, and less like a maternity ward.
You know? I really didn't *make* Good at the University of Colorado.
I've forgotten almost all that I learned, and it really wasn't that Good—I mean it wasn't
beautiful, heart warming, wondrous, and delightful.

I didn't make Good, but I've watched my bride give birth to Good... four times!



There have been moments when each of these children loved me in freedom, and it took my breath away when it happened. It was Good.

So, where do good things, and good people, come from?

Revelation 12:2-6

"She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains ("travail") and the agony

[This word is from *basanizo*, translated "torment" in every other place in the Revelation.]

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth

[Literally: "birth pains and tormented to deliver." Why "tormented". . . ? "To deliver". . . What? a baby. . . that's new life!]

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Which you'll remember is forty-two months, three-and-a-half years or in Bible lingo, *"times, time and half a time."* It's a broken seven. It's the time of trouble in which we live.

So who's the woman and what's being born?

Almost every commentator agrees that it must at least be Jesus that's being born.

And as we've seen Jesus is the Free Will of God, Jesus is the Good in flesh.

Jesus is being born.

But who's the woman?

Some Catholic theologians have argued that the woman is Mary. She must be at least Mary . . . but she's a rather large Mary. We'll soon read that she also gives birth to other children—*“those that keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”*

Some have argued that the woman is Eve. You'll remember that God's first command was *“Be fruitful and multiply.”* That is *“Don't make the Good; Give birth to the Good.”* Satan tempted Eve to take knowledge of the Good in order to make herself Good, and instead of Giving birth to the Good, She crucified the Good and everything died. Jesus is the Good.

Scripture also refers to Jesus as the *Eschatos* Adam, Which makes us the *Eschatos* Eve, for we are His Bride.

We crucified the Good, who is the *Eschatos* Adam. And yet . . . He rose from the dead and now produces fruit through His Bride.

Well, some say the woman is Eve, some say, Mary, some say she is the lineage from Eve to Mary, which is also Israel.

In Genesis 37, Joseph had a dream about the sun, moon and eleven stars... the family of Israel (Gen. 37:9). God referred to Israel as His bride.

So the woman is at least Eve, and at least Mary, and at least Israel.

And that lineage includes some pretty questionable women. Matthew points out four:

Rahab the Canaanite Harlot, who had been on the other side of the walls of Jericho; *Tamar*, who pretended to be a harlot in order to get her father-in-law Judah to have sex with her;

Ruth of the cursed nation of Moab; And

Bathsheba, who was an accessory to murder, through adultery with King David...

And then there's *Mary*: a poor unwed pregnant teenager forced to give birth in a stable...

Jesus is the Good Thing, but if you were to make an accurate movie of where He came from, there is no way I could show it in church.

The Woman is Mary, Eve, Israel and You.

In Mark 3:33-35 some folks say, *“Hey Jesus, your Mom is looking for you.”* And he says, *“Who are my mother and my brothers?”* And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, *“Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Now you may say, *“Hey I'm not the mother of Jesus.”*

Well if you do the will of God you are. . . Jesus is the Will of God.
And the Will of God is Jesus.
He's Good Will and that's Free Will.

You can't make Good, but you *must* give birth to the Good.

The Woman is Mary, Eve, Israel and anyone who submits to the will of the Father and then gives birth to the Will of the Father.

"Whoever does the will of God is my mother and brother and sister."
Brothers and sisters have the same mother. So, the mother of Jesus is the mother of us.
That means we are the woman and we too are born of the woman.
The woman is the people of God . . . giving birth to His Will in this world.

His Will is Jesus and anything that's Good is somehow Jesus.

James 1:17 *"All good giving and every perfect gift comes down from the father of lights..."* Jesus is the Light: "the light that enlightens all people" (John 1:9).

In Galatians 4 Paul wrote: *"The Jerusalem above is free. And she is our mother."*
We are born of the Jerusalem above.
And we *are* the Jerusalem coming down from above when we love in freedom.

We give birth to fruit that is Eternal Life: *Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith and self-control.*

You don't *make* the Good, you *give birth* to the Good.
However, you do make the evil. Paul calls that *"the work of the flesh"* as opposed to the *"fruit of the Spirit."* It's what we make when we take knowledge of the Good in an effort to make ourselves in the image of God: It's *porneia*—trying to pay for love; it's idolatry, jealousy, envy, competition and every other way in which we try to save ourselves because we don't believe that we're saved.

We can *work* evil, but we must *give birth* to the good.

In Galatians 4:19 Paul wrote: *"My little children, how I am in travail until Christ is formed in you."* Paul thought he was giving birth to Christ in the Galatians. I think he actually meant that.

You give birth to Christ in every good deed.
You give birth to Christ in people that you love.
And check this out, I think you give birth to Christ in you—the *NEW* you.

John remembered a conversation that Jesus had with a Pharisee—a conversation that the other Gospel writers don't remember. I suspect John remembered it because he saw it in the Revelation Chapter 12.

In John 3:3, Jesus said to Nicodemus the Pharisee: *“Unless you are begotten from above—gennatha anothē—you cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

Gennatha can be translated “begotten” or “born.” Jesus is “the firstborn (*prototokos*—different word) from the dead... and firstborn of all creation,” writes Paul. So, we must be begotten from above in order to be born out of this world and into the Kingdom of God.

In John 3:16, Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his monogēna”*—it means only begotten, which means only one is begotten of God.

So, for you to be begotten from above, means that Jesus, the only begotten, is begotten in you . . . He is Eternal Seed planted in the womb of your soul.

John 3:16 *“God gave his only begotten son, that all, the believing in him, might not be Lost, but have eternal life.”*

Understand? *Belief*, which means “faith” or “trust”—in you—is Christ Jesus rising in you; *Faith, Hope, and Love* in you is the Free Will that is God, in the temple of your soul.²

You are the woman, and you are giving birth to a New you, as well as an entirely new creation.

“Anyone in Christ” is a new creation writes Paul, *“the old has passed away, behold all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV).

Paul actually wrote that the whole creation *“groans in travail... waiting to obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God”* (See Romans 8:21-22). That’s Crazy!

But this is my point: All free things, all glorious and good things come from travail . . . and not from us and our efforts—not *from* us—but *through* us.

You can’t make the Good, but you will give birth to the Good, for in this way God is making you. God is Good and He is making you in His image.

Revelation 12:5-17

The woman gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of

² And this is the Judgment, says Jesus in the next few verses. *“Every one that does what is true comes to the light that it might clearly be seen that his deeds have been done by God.”* In other words, if you’re proud of your deeds, as if you made those deeds, by taking knowledge of Good and then creating the Good, they’re not Good. But if you grateful for your deeds, because God created those deeds in you, you will run into the Good, for the Good has made you Good.

the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

[In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says He saw this.]

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him...”

[...with a good education and trying really hard... No. It doesn't say that.]

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony,

[Jesus is the Lamb, and He is the Word, who stands on the Ark of the Testimony in the temple that is your soul.]

... they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

[They conquered by losing their lives... what a thought!]

Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold [to] the testimony of Jesus³.

That sounds like a temple containing The Ark with a slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne. He went off to war . . .

We'll talk about all of this later. But for now, I hope you see that we're the woman, and we're the offspring of the woman that, in turn, becomes the woman. In other words, we're the Bride of Christ, giving birth to the Body of Christ, fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth . . .With what? the Life of Christ?

³ Remember the Commandments are kept in the “Ark of the Testimony.” Those that “keep” and “hold” them are the temple—the temple that is the Body of Christ.

We're the woman in travail in agony, anguish, and torment, to deliver.
And we have an enemy who battles us with a river that comes from his mouth.
He is the father of lies, and the river is a river of lies.
He's been thrown down. He's in the maternity wing and he's lying to you—right now. If
satan were in the labor and delivery room with Amy Schumer in that Saturday Night
Live sketch, what would he be saying to Amy Schumer?. . . Because that's exactly what
he's saying to you.

What would he be saying?
How about: "Oh my Gosh, something's terribly wrong, you better seize control."

That's what he said to Eve in the Garden:
Something's wrong, you better take the Good and make yourself good.
You are your own helper, savior, and even creator.

By the way, I think that's how the earth swallows the river of lies.
You see a sunset, smell a flower or smile at a newborn.
You see creation and realize: you are not the Creator; you are the created.

A woman who's given birth realizes that she didn't create that baby. But the Creator
used her to make that baby and deliver that baby. She had to labor, but all the labor was
surrendering control, not seizing control. If she seizes control she only makes the
torment worse. ("I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing.")

And then, satan might say, "This torment will never end. This torment has no purpose. "

Basanizo, the Greek word for torment comes from *basanos*, which means: touchstone,
that is a stone used to test precious metals like silver and gold. In God's creation,
torment always has a purpose and comes to an end—a *telos*, a perfection. Jesus is the
telos—the End.

When a woman is in travail, her body is being tormented to deliver new life—that's the
purpose of torment. And the new life is being tormented to be delivered of her. Well,
satan would say, "This torment has no purpose. Why don't you quit."

There are many ways that we seize control and try to quit, all at the same time. They
are all the work of the flesh. We quit giving birth to Love. We attempt to save ourselves
from the torments of Love, by refusing to love:

By getting drunk, taking pills, telling white lies, buying junk—that's idolatry.
By attempting to purchase Love, rather than give birth to Love—that's *porneia*.
Even by crucifying Love, we turn Love into law—that's sin, original sin...

They're all ways of saying to God, "You can't fire me. I quit."
The good news is that no one can quit . . . forever.
The baby will come. The kingdom will come . . .

But you can't save your self, by seizing control of yourself with yourself.
You have to lose yourself to find it—your self, your new self, that is.

Well, satan would say, "Your labor, pain, anguish, and torment have no purpose, so you better seize control, and just quite." That's what satan would say, but what would the bridegroom say?

How about:

"Nothing's wrong, everything is right."

"You're having our baby."

"Don't quit... but, sweetheart, surrender control."

People say weird things to women in labor:

*Relax, rest, let go, and push, push, push, push; relax, rest, let go, push push, push...
If you can sweetheart, let all your pushing come from a place of rest.*

"Six days you shall labor and one you must rest."

Actually strive to enter that rest, such that all your labor is rest...

Surrender control and the Good will happen, and when it happens, you will be forever grateful for the Good.

John remembered another thing that the other disciples forgot.

In Gospel of John 16:20-22, the night Jesus died he said to the twelve:

Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a [person] has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Jesus is "*the firstborn of all creation, firstborn from the dead,*" and He says, "*I will see you again.*"

- Is that because he'll be unborn back into this womb of a world?
- Or is it because we'll finally be born out of this womb of a world, and into His world the forever new and eternal creation? If so, that would mean that the day you die is the day you are truly born...and all your sorrow turns into joy.

But even now, the Bridegroom might say, "*surrender your sorrow and it will turn into joy.*" I don't know if I'm saying this well, but I think we each have a body of sorrow, and for a believer, it's already turning into joy.

Recently, a friend sent me these pictures, painted by the Polish artist Igor Morski.

[Image of a girl inside a cage shaped like a woman, by Igor Morski]

See? I think we each have a body of sorrow, which we constructed ourselves.

[Image of a boy inside a cage shaped like a man, by Igor Morski]

We began construction when we first took knowledge of the Good and began attempting to make ourselves Good.

[Image of a naked man cowering inside the empty shell of a man in a suit, by Igor Morski]

It's a body of sorrow because we can't make ourselves Good.
We can only pretend to be Good.

[Image of a boy inside a cage shaped like a man, by Igor Morski]

It's not who we really are. Who we truly are is a little child of God.
The "body of sorrow" is the person we think we make with our supposed free will and our knowledge of Good and evil. It's a prison because we're trapped inside and no longer free.

[Image of a girl inside a cage shaped like a woman, by Igor Morski]

It's not true; it's false. It's not living; it's dead.
But if we think it's life and we think it's true, then the presence of Jesus, who is the Truth and the Life will feel like torment.

- We'll think He's tormenting us, when in fact He's setting us free.
- We'll think He's death, when in fact He's the death of death.
- We'll think that we're dying when, in fact, we're being born.

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree," writes Peter, *"that we might die to sin and live in his righteousness"* (1 Peter 2:24). You see the righteousness of Christ is who you truly are (the Father's beloved son, beloved daughter).

"Who will deliver me from this body of death," writes Paul, *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 7:24-25).

You are the righteousness of Christ, and at the cross, you are delivered from this body of death. So that, when you're finally born; you'll be forever grateful for who you are... not proud of your free will but forever grateful that you get to love in freedom.

- You will know Good and evil, but constantly choose the Good.
- You will love because you've been loved.
- You will be the image of God because you want to be the image of God.
- You will do what you will, and will what you do, absolutely.
- You will be entirely free and nothing will have been wasted.

You see? That old false self is the place where the true self is born.
For where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more. Do you see it?
Your old self is like a womb. And I think that's why we must each give birth in anguish.

When a woman gives birth to a baby . . .

- She knows she didn't make the baby, it's more like the baby made her . . . into a mother.
- She didn't make the baby, but God used her to make His baby and so make her.
- She didn't make the Good, but she gave birth to the Good and became Good.

And so more than anyone, she knows that the Good is a gift from God.
And so, no one enjoys a baby, and child, a then a full-grown person, like a mother.

Bride of Christ, your old man will give birth to your new man and you will be forever grateful for who you truly are... the image and glory of God. You won't be proud; you'll be grateful, in other words, you'll be free.

And did you know that everybody is somebody's baby?
Everybody is a gift from God.

- They didn't make themselves with free will.
- They are being made by the Free Will who is God.
- They can't make Good, and you can't make Good.
- But by the Grace of God you will give birth to the Good and Love the Good.

So where do good things come from?

- Well, it's not through "taking knowledge and working really hard."
- Good things come through "being known and then going into labor."

To put it in church lingo . . .

- It's not by works of the law in the power of the flesh.
- It's by the confession of sin and the renewal of the mind—that is repentance to change you.

To put it in the lingo of Alcoholics Anonymous . . .

- It's not by feeling really guilty and trying really hard.

- It's by admitting you're powerless to change and trusting in a power greater than yourself to change you.

In the lingo of temple ritual . . .

It's sacrificing your old self, your ego and . . .

It's receiving your new self—the righteousness of Christ

It's what we do every time we come to the communion table:

- We confess our shame—that we took the life of the Good on the tree.
- And we believe God's Mercy—that He for-gave His life in the garden on the tree.
- We confess our shame—that we cannot save ourselves and we crucified Him.
- And we believe His Mercy—that He let us crucify Him that He might save us from ourselves.
- We confess our shame, and we receive Eternal Seed in our place of shame through the sacrament of communion in the eternal covenant of Grace. We are the Bride and He is the Groom and that's where good things come from.

We don't make Good, but we give birth to the Good.

God is Good. God is Love. And God is Free.

Years ago, when I lived in Golden and worked on Lookout Mountain, I used to get gas at the Conoco at the base of Highway 40, and I became casual friends with this young guy that worked behind the counter—nice kid, but not terribly bright.

This actually happened:

One day I went in to pay for the gas and there were balloons and streamers and pictures taped all over the wall...

And I said, *"Wow, quite a party. What happened?"*

He said, *"My wife had a baby."*

And I said something like, *"Congratulations! I didn't know she was pregnant."*

And he said, *"Dude, neither did we. The other night we were just chillin' watchin' TV, and she started getting these terrible pains in her belly and lady parts."*

It was the worst pain she'd ever felt. We rushed her to the Emergency Room.

I didn't know if she'd live or die. I figured it was a tumor or maybe cancer.

*The doctors examined her and said, 'It's not a tumor; it's a baby. **She's having a baby!**' And they transferred her from the emergency wing to the Maternity Wing."*

And now this proud young daddy stood at the counter showing me pictures of his new baby.

Imagine how things changed when they heard: *"Nothing's wrong, everything's right. You're having a baby."*

Now some of you are in anguish—you are being tormented.

- Maybe because you had a baby and lost a baby.
- Maybe because you wanted to have a baby and never could have a baby.

- Maybe because you had a baby that turned into a man that broke your heart.
- Maybe you're in anguish because you've tried to make Good and always seem to make bad; you tried to be fruitful but your life feels barren (desolate) and now you think it's over (See Isaiah 54).

Listen closely! Bride of Christ, About all that agony, anguish, and torment that you feel—this is what it means: ***You're having a baby!***

Communion

For on the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to for you. Take and eat, and do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink of it all of you." He is our Bridegroom and He is Eternal Seed, and He is the One who is being born.

I have learned that it's not just the mother who experiences anguish, it's also the one being born, maybe even more so. So, I think He would say this to you: "I know your anguish. Don't quit, but *do* surrender. Surrender to Love and you will give birth to Love, and you will always and forever love Love. I am Love, and do you see? I love you!

Lord God, we thank you that you are Love and your Word is the Word of Love—our Lord Jesus. You are making us in your image and your Word won't fail. And now, I pray that you would help us to trust you so that when we see you we won't run into the darkness and hide, but rather we will surrender to Love. We sacrifice our old selves and receive the Truth that is our New self. Lord, thank you that we will love Love, forever with you.

I am asking and we believe. Help our unbelief. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

This whole message has been about the topic, how do we change? Do you understand? It's not by learning stuff and then trying harder, and harder, and harder. It's by confession and repentance. It's what we do each time we come to worship at The Sanctuary... We confess our sins and learn God's Grace. But it's also hopefully what you do in relationships throughout the week. So, I hope that you have a small group or friends; some of you have marriages where you do the same thing... When you confess your sins to someone you love, you are sacrificing your ego and you're receiving mercy (hopefully) and the knowledge of who you truly are. See? That's how you change—confession and repentance... Believe the Gospel.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

