

THE DIVINE DESIGN: COMPANIONSHIP,
MARRIAGE, AND CHRIST
Genesis 2:18-25

There are many people in this world who are lonely. Do you sometimes feel alone, isolated, disconnected from others, lonely? The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.”

God had laid the foundations of the earth, divided entire oceans from continents. And it was good. God had set in place the sun, the moon, the vast array of stars in the heavens. And it was good. He had brought forth plants, and flowers, and fruit bearing trees, the creatures that go about the earth according to their kinds, the birds of the air according to their kinds, the spectacular creatures with which the waters teem. And it was good. And on the sixth day, God had created man, everything good, and very good. All of it.

God planted a garden, and God took the man, whom he had formed from the earth itself, and he put the man in the garden and up out of the ground, from that same earth, God caused to sprout forth fruit and plants for the man, good garden, good rivers branching out from it, good lands, even good gold, Genesis tells us, and God gave the man both rest and blessed work in the garden. His task was to work in and to watch over the garden of God. And God gave a single good commandment. “You may eat from any tree that is in the garden, but from the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, you must not eat...lest you die”—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

And God brought to the man all kinds of animals and birds which he had also somehow formed right up out of the earth itself, so that the man could give them names, everything good, and very good. All of it. But among all these creatures, God did not find a single companion, a single helper who was perfectly comparable and complementary to the man. And so it was that even amid all this goodness, God is lovingly attentive to the one remaining deficiency in the creation. God looks the situation over, and he declares, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Not good as in something missing (not as in evil). And so, from sleeping Adam's own side, God takes a rib, and from that rib, God builds the woman. God brought the woman to the man and gave her to him. And Adam's exclamation is clearly one of wonder and joy—a loud Amen to God's intention to make a helper perfectly suitable for him. “This is now bone of my bone,” Adam says, “flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, for she was taken out of man.”

Now the creation of the woman, as recorded in Genesis 2, was not just an afterthought on the part of God. Genesis 1 has already witnessed that God's creation is male and female, both and together, bearing the very image of God, both and together, reigning and ruling in dominion over other creatures. You see, the creation account in Genesis 1 is from God's point of view, and in Genesis 2 we have the account of the same creation from an earthly (man's) view. Like these other creatures, God commands them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” All of this clearly has in view a humanity that consists of man and woman and the generations which will come from them.

So why does the Holy Spirit testify to us here in this scene of the garden... and of this parading of animals before Adam to receive their names... and of the lack of a suitable companion for Adam... and of this pronouncement of not good upon Adam's loneliness... and of the special creation and delivery by God of Eve? Well, among other things, the garden narrative from Genesis 2 reveals that God is not content to leave man in loneliness. It also reveals how tightly bound together God created and intended us to be. Adam was taken from the ground—the man from the earth. So also, the plants and growing things in the garden, God brought them forth out of the ground. Even the animals and the birds in Genesis 2 we're told the Lord God formed them from the ground... but not so with the woman.

From Adam's own side, out of his rib, from his own self, his own being, his own flesh, God brings forth the stuff out of which he builds the woman, this belonging to, this belonging to one another, this being rooted in a shared flesh and a shared origin, rooted in the creator's design of maleness and femaleness, divinely suited for one another, designed by God that they should be of help one another. Marriage, the lifelong union of a man and a woman, stands upon this foundation, the text tells us—the creator's wise design.

“For this reason,” the Holy Spirit reveals to us and instructs us, “a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” ... “because it is not good that man should be alone.” God provides marriage to replace not good loneliness with very good belonging, sharing, mutual work and mutual help. Through the union of the man and the woman, God would bring forth more lives—sons and daughters to live within families, because “it is not good that man should be alone”, father, mother, sister, brother, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, all to replace not good loneliness with very good love, belonging, sharing, mutual help, and mutual work, and as the man and the woman were fruitful, multiplied and filled the earth, God would provide us with blessed communities, the extended family of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all mankind, a perfect sense of belonging to one another, rooted in our shared flesh and shared origin, our divine purpose, that we should be of help to one another, because “it is not good that man should be alone.”

So, let's summarize: God saw something still not good in his creation, but by creating us male and female, by placing us in communities, families, and marriages, He turned not good into very good. But you know the rest of the story. Soon... very soon... too soon... things went very wrong. Sin changed everything in our world. Adam and Eve began with the safe, joyous intimacy of the garden serving God shoulder to shoulder, but soon they're ashamed and hiding. Adam accuses Eve before God, the son, Cain murders the son, Abel. Sin spreads and mushrooms and infects all of creation so that by the time of the flood, the earth is filled with violence and discord and the loneliness that comes in the wake of sin is back with a vengeance.

Still today, the loneliness brought by human sin haunts life in this world. Many have called loneliness a modern epidemic. I don't know whether the loneliness of our age is anything particularly new in the history of the world, but it is an epidemic. Just Google loneliness epidemic and you can see all of the articles that have been written, all of the statistics about human experience, or just take some time and listen to the people around you, or just take a look in the mirror, which is sometimes the loneliest experience of all. “At least I have my family,” some can say, but for many, the strains within their own families bring deep and aching loneliness. “At least I have my spouse,” some can say, but for many in struggling marriages, they return home at the end of each day to a place which should be a shelter from the world... and a place of peace and harmony but instead a very lonely indeed. Even in a sea of people, life can be very, very lonely, but here's the GOOD NEWS: The days of loneliness are numbered!

This is God's world, and he is not content. Our Creator, God looks upon me, and he looks upon you, and he says, “It is not good for man to be alone,” and he has designed the end of our loneliness. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the fractured and isolating world of men. Crowds followed Him, but then soon departed. Jesus knew loneliness! The crowds shouted that first Palm Sunday as he entered Jerusalem, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” but soon “Crucify him. Crucify Him.” Lonely Jesus, alone in Gethsemane, because his disciples couldn't keep watch with him... Lonely Jesus alone in Caiaphas' house—yes, Peter was there but denied him... Alone before Herod... Alone before the Roman soldiers... Alone on the cross, surrounded by crowds. Crowds who shook their heads and mocked him—He was the loneliest man in the world. And he cried, “My God, My God, why have [even] you forsaken me?” Your Savior knows what it is to be lonely. And Jesus knows your loneliness. He is risen. He lives forever, and He's planning to do something about it.

Today He promises you, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ...and "I will not leave you as orphans... "Even in the valley of the shadow of death," where no one else can walk with you. He will be with you... "His rod and his staff... they will comfort you." And as we await the dawning of His eternal kingdom, we can know this... We've known this since the ancient garden that in the sight of our God, "it is not good for man to be alone," and so the coming Kingdom of Christ will have no loneliness. Your aloneness will be swallowed up in togetherness. On that day, we will be with the Lord forever. We will be reunited with those whom death has torn away—the strains, the pains, the barriers, and the fences which restrict and limit and bring pain to our relationships on Earth, with spouses, with family, with one another. It will be hard to even remember these things in the togetherness and the love and the mutual helping and working and worshiping of his kingdom in the very presence of the God who says, "it is not good for man to be alone." Mother Teresa once said, "the most terrible poverty is loneliness." If the most terrible poverty is loneliness, then today, we share together in great wealth here at this altar, together, shoulder to shoulder with brothers and sisters in this place, but also with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven and not alone, in this foretaste of the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end. It is not good for man to be alone, so come and taste His coming Kingdom. Amen.