

## The Synergy of Good from God

✦ **saving purpose** (v.28)

✦ **glorious plan** (vv.29,30)

In the name of Jesus, “*the firstborn among many brothers,*” dear family of God:

Last Sunday we heard how God answered my kids’ prayers for a dog in spite of their father’s reluctance. Without realizing it, I was looking for what we call **Synergy**. I wanted my ten-year-old son to experience the other side of the discipline equation where he had to teach obedience and spend time training and caring. **Synergy** helped Joel to see the blessings of how we were raising him.

Another example of **Synergy** was how they would run the dog with cheese. Yes, Hunter loved good old fashioned cheddar cheese. It’s too much work running down the sidewalk with the dog panting behind you. So much easier especially in the dark, snowy Minnesota winter to have two people stand on opposite sides of the house. One calls, “Hunter!” He runs like mad and gets some cheese when he arrives. Then the other calls “Hunter!” and the dog runs. Why not just give him the cheese? Because he needs exercise. Why doesn’t God just give us blessings right away? Because our faith needs exercise. **Synergy of Good from God** touches the present and reaches from eternity, into eternity with...

✦ **saving purpose** (v.28)

Some people are sure God treats us like dogs. So they demand answers before they’ll run the way of God’s commandments. This is not a modern phenomenon. An atheist named Epicurus (ca. 300 B.C.) felt God is limited in power. Epicurus reasoned: “If God is perfectly good, he hates evil. If God is perfectly powerful, he would stop evil.” Modern philosopher / educators like E. S. Brightman have concluded: “Either God is perfectly good or perfectly powerful, but he can’t be both.” But all of us who have come to know God through His Son Jesus Christ see the cross as proof that cannot be argued away. There we see God so good that He conquered evil by dying for all sin. God is so powerful that He conquered death by rising again. Infinite power, infinite goodness – all good comes from God in awesome **Synergy**.

We almost lost it in the Garden with our first parents. Satan convinced Adam and Eve that the all-powerful God was not good to keep from them the knowledge of good and evil. They knew good by experience, but after they rebelled against God, they experienced evil to the core. Do I really need to know by experience the hard landing, or can I just accept the fact that jumping from skyscrapers hurts?

God’s **saving purpose** is not just running us for exercise. God wants to teach us that all **Good** ultimately comes from **God**. In all creation what can you point to and say, “That’s like God”? As we heard last Sunday, we’re too weak to even know what we ought to pray. Sometimes we’re not even clear on the problem. We need the Holy Spirit to intercede for us “*in accordance with God’s will.*”

Let’s be honest. Maybe you wondered all week whether Psalm 37:4 is true: “*Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.*” Why does it sometimes seem like God’s blessings are on a truck headed the wrong direction? My brothers thought they were so funny if you’d ask for the potatoes and they’d pass the opposite direction. It’s a long way around with a family of nine. When God seems to do the opposite of what we feel we desperately need, how can we “*know that in all things God works for good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*”? Do all things really work for good to those who love God?

This is why God tells us so many stories especially in the Old Testament. He wants us to see in the lives of real people like us how He is truly working His **saving purpose** to bring us home to glory. Remember Jacob? He had twelve sons from four different women. The oldest was Reuben, the youngest Benjamin and the favorite was Joseph. Talk about sibling rivalry! This story is so important that it takes

up the last twenty of fifty chapters in Genesis. Finally you get to Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37. How could brothers be so cruel? They hated how their father favored Joseph. Dreaming that his brothers and parents would bow down to him as some exalted ruler made them angry enough to sell him into slavery. They dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in blood to convince their father an animal ate him.

Read the story again in Genesis. It's one of the greatest illustrations of how God turned evil into good. It took nearly twenty years, but a famine forced the brothers down to Egypt to buy food. They did not realize their long lost brother Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and saved the world from famine. Even more, we see **The Synergy of Good from God** as He brought about His **saving purpose**. At the end of Genesis, Joseph, now the prime minister of Egypt, assures his brothers: *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* (Genesis 50:20 NIV84) God preserved His **saving purpose** to send a Savior through that family of Jacob. We are blessed for all eternity because *"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."* (KJV) This is why we love to hear God's...

### ✠ glorious plan (vv.29,30)

God's almighty power in a famine brought Jacob's family back together. God saved His promise of a Savior in spite of Jacob's wicked sons. God's infinite goodness saved not only His chosen family of Israel (Jacob), but blessed us with His love in Jesus who came through that family. How will we ever learn God's **glorious plan** unless He walks us through it? A good coach drills football plays until his team can see the plan unfold for victory. Even our dog had to learn that running around the house had its rewards. God's **glorious plan** always blesses our lives and the lives of others.

These last two verses of our text give a powerful example of how God's goodness teaches predestination in a context of comfort. Predestination is a doctrine for Christians. When I ask, "Why do I believe?" God answers, "Because I gave you faith." But wasn't I *"dead in...transgressions and sins"*? "Yes, just like everyone else." (Ephesians 2:1) "But didn't I stubbornly resist?" "Yes, read Paul in Romans: *As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.'*" (3:10-12 NIV84) "But why did you choose me?" "Only because I love you!"

Jesus told His disciples: *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."* (John 15:16 NIV84) God spells out His **glorious plan** in these verse. Though you and I are no better than anyone else, God says, "I knew you by name before time began. From all eternity I mapped out your life to become like Jesus – suffering for my Name, and rising with a glorified body to live with me forever in heaven. In time I called you by making you hear the Gospel. I personally justified you when you believed. My "Not guilty!" verdict became yours by faith. One promise remains: My **glorious plan** is to bring you to glory."

Early in my ministry, before there was a New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church, God gave a Vietnam veteran to show His goodness and power. God knew John Lunn from all eternity. He mapped out John's rebirth by Baptism in the Catholic Church, a God-fearing wife and children in Cross of Christ Lutheran school, Coon Rapids. God gave John a fellow railroad engineer to call him to repentance. Alcohol finally destroyed John's body, but not before God personally justified John Lunn with saving faith in Jesus as his Savior. John liked to say, "Don't give me them there crowns – ten crowns, twenty crowns, a hundred crowns! Just let me shovel up behind the last elephant!" Sometimes when I'm feeling down, I think of John Lunn, my first funeral, and pray, "Lord, keep all the glory for yourself. Just let me inside the door safe with you. Put me back with John Lunn, shoveling up behind the last elephant."

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again to fulfill God's **glorious plan**. God's **saving purpose** will bring everything together in glory. Whatever you still desire, God's glory says, "I'm not done with you yet. I'll never be done blessing you for Jesus' sake!" Let God's goodness and power stir your heart and life to shout: "Amen!" Yes, for Jesus' sake, Amen.