

Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage
FCUCC
July 29, 2021

It Is Good

Please pray with me: Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be faithful and pleasing unto you, for you are our rock and our salvation. Amen.

In reading the creation story again this time, did you happen to notice how much work God does each day? Somehow, God takes nothing—literally the void—and turns it into...something—a swirling mass of water, land and darkness. Then, in the same day, God creates light, then day and night. On another day, God creates land and sea, all of the plants, trees, and fruits with all of their seeds to create more plants (because God is thinking ahead). I sometimes imagine this scene, God striding across the land, hands and arms reaching out to all corners of the earth, urging the plant life forth. Or I see God as a gardener or farmer, gently kneeling in the soil, planting seeds, singing softly to them, and watching them grow into trees, then moving on to the next section of land. Those of you who are farmers or gardeners know the time it can take to do this; you're out from before the crack of dawn until the sun goes down. It's a lot of work.

And what amazes me about all of this is not just how much God does all at once, but God's attitude about it. You know how you feel after a day like that. You go back inside, sunburnt, achy and hungry. Now imagine if you knew you had to get up the next morning and create the sun, moon, stars and all of the seasons. It might seem a little daunting or maybe overwhelming. But God isn't focused on the next day's work. Instead, God take a moment and experiences Their work as a blessing, realizing that it

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all is good. And the story tells us that God does this every day during the creation.

In this way, this story models for us what Rachel Naomi Remen suggests we all need to do in the first part of her book *My Grandfather's Blessings*. In the first chapter, she notes that most of us fill our lives with busy-ness. Some of us have to work more than one job just to make ends meet. Others need to work long hours in the office, in our homes and families, or in our volunteer work, because that's what is required. Others actively choose to fill their lives with non-essential work in order to keep busy. The dominant culture in the United States demands constant work and busy-ness. The result, Remen notes, is that we may not notice, or take the time to experience, the many thousands of blessings that fill our lives.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he urges them to live a life full of gentleness, forgiveness, and peace. Live up to your calling as Christ's disciples, he says, remembering to seek unity with one another in Christ's love. But it can be difficult to live into this calling if we are weighed down by exhaustion or just busyness. One of the many lessons we have learned from the pandemic is how very important it is to rest and to try not to overfill our lives with busyness, so that we can see and experience the blessings that surround us.

But we can supplement that lesson with this lesson from the book of Genesis: Sometimes, we don't have a choice, we are just busy. Our families need us, justice work needs us, the things we volunteer for need us, our jobs need us. So in those times, we can follow the model of God in this story. We can, and really must, set aside some time of rest, as God

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does at the end of our reading. And throughout the day, we can stop and notice the way that we are blessed. In particular, notice the ways that the work you do is good.

The Executive Board heard this from me already, but I need to share it with you all as well: The work that this church has done in the last three months, really, even in the last one month, has been incredible. In this short period of time, you created a new tech team. Volunteers shared their own equipment or quietly bought parts for the church, and they figured out how to make sound and video work for live-streaming while conducting in-person worship. They studied video and sound systems, and the executive board voted on purchasing a new video system. And when they found out it was needed, Craig, from Good Fruit Video, and Joe, from Over the Ledges, donated time and equipment to help our church get through this transition. Look at this work and know that it is good.

Our musical staff has not only made the difficult transition from playing at home to in the church, but they have gathered volunteer hymn singers and special summer musicians, so that we can still worship God through music, even if we cannot ourselves sing the hymns. Listen to this music, and know that it is good.

With the help and monetary donations of multiple volunteers and custodial staff, our church grounds were spruced up, and the inside of the church underwent a deep cleaning. The cleaning company we hired generously donated extra time when they found out it was needed. Kim Dible and Chris Cypher redecorated our communal spaces, with Chris painting and donating the beautiful painting of Jesus in the back parlor and

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the rainbow sign in the narthex. Look at the beauty of these spaces, smell the fresh clean scents, and know that it is good.

Several of you have attended school board meetings, written emails, or called them to offer support to them and for the push for equity, diversity, and inclusion. You have also attended Grand Ledge United meetings and events, and worked for racial justice in your work place. Many of you also volunteer your time to support the food insecure and underhoused in our community and beyond. Remember the words of scripture calling you to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. Then, looking at your work, know that it is good.

Out of the spotlight, I know many members of our congregation are making calls to their calling circle members, sending cards to people in need, and reaching out to one another when you hear their prayer requests, and many of you have fielded multiple calls from me and other members about many, many different things. See the peace in your siblings faces, hear the relief and thanks in their voices, and know that your work has been good.

Many, many of you have answered the call for volunteers to be liturgists, greeters, ushers, preachers, and fresh perspective leaders. Many of you are serving on boards and teams in our church, all of which have worked especially hard these last few months. For example, our congregational life board has spent time finding and purchasing our new communion elements, and organized and implemented all of our new Covid procedures. Eat the bread, drink of the cup, see the unity of our congregation as we work together, and know that it is good.

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My Dear Ones, in this church and in your daily lives, you are already living into Christ's example of a life of gentleness, forgiveness, unity and love. Let yourself see and experience the blessings that your good work brings, for God is good...all of the time. Amen.