

God Made The Thistle

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June 25, 2023

INI - SDG

Genesis 1:9-13 NKJ 9 Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day.

God Made the Thistle

When I ask kids to list what God made on each day of creation, the one they forget the most is that God made the plants on day three. What we all often forget is that on day three God made the first thistle. The same God who made the trees and the flowers also made the thorns and the thistles.

On January 30, 2009 Pastor Ohlmann and I went up this mountain to this Nepali village. We held a short bible class with the residents and headed back the next day. We had to get down this valley and back up this other mountain to this village here. We left early in the afternoon. We didn't get to the next vilalge till around midnight. As we finally came near the village, there was one last steep bank to get to the road. I was tired and hungry and out of water. I reached out my hand to help climb up onto the road and put my hand right on top of a stinging nettle. At that moment I was not very thankful for nettles.

It's hard to appreciate a thistle, especially at one in the morning, but our text reminds us that the same God who made peaches and apples and flowers made thistles as well. Each according to its kind, each in its place and each for its purpose. And "it was good."

When was the last time you thanked God for mosquitoes and thistles? Job reminds us that it is foolish to thank God for those things we like and not for those things that we dislike it.

Job 2:10 NKJ 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

When Job talks about evil in this verse he isn't talking about Satan or sin. Those things are not from God and certainly are not things we should be thankful for. Rather he is talking about the things on this earth which we may not like so much. Whether we understand their purpose or not, God says, "it was good." The goodness includes the nettles.

Now I don't care if you ever say a prayer of thanks for weeds and thistles and I'm not sure that God is really expecting it either. We learn to pray from the examples in the bible and I don't remember any examples of anyone giving thanks for mosquitoes or thorns.

But what God does care about is people. That is where we really have a problem. We have a tendency to judge one another and to forget that the same God who made the tree made the flower and the thorn.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18 NKJ 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

Why should the eye think itself better than the foot, or the foot feel shame for being a foot. God made them both, and He saw that it was good.

It is good that someone people are strong enough to do what needs to be done. It is good that some are sensitive and cannot stand to see others in pain. This is from the Lord, and this is good. It is good that some are full or laughter and some are serious. It is good that some like to take charge and other like to follow. We call the one bossy and the other indecisive and try to make both a bad thing, but God made them both. It is good that some like to plant and some like to count and some like to make things with their hands. The world is a better place for all that God has made.

Yet we like to label things good and bad. God has already called them all good. Again, I speak not for the sake of plants which do not care what you think of them but for the sake of people who were made in the image of God. God has already labeled all things as bad or good. He doesn't need our help.

Paul reminds the Romans:

Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

In the context of Romans 14 there was a division in the congregation. Some were despising others in the congregation. I'm better than you because I don't eat meat. I'm better than you because I go to church every day and you only go on Sunday.

Paul reminds the Romans that each is judged by God and not by one another. We go around labeling good, bad, bad, bad, bad, good, bad. We forget that the God who made the tree and the rose also made the nettle. Who are we to tell God the peaches are good, but the thistles are bad.

It is not our place to label those who God created and for whom Jesus died.

And God saw that it was good.

I am not sure what purpose the nettle serves, but on day three God also separated the water and the dry ground. He gave water the purpose of cleansing the earth. In the same way the waters of baptism cleanse our hearts of the sins of partiality and arrogance. We indeed are often tempted to pick favorites, but the waters of God's grace wash away the sins of all people without partiality.

Romans 2:11-12 NKJ 11 For there is no partiality with God. 12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law

At the end of that long hike the one thing I really needed was clean water. It is water of God's grace that we desperately need today and have been freely given through Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:11 NKJ 11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

Christ died equally for all. All are sinners. All are equally guilty under the law, and all are equally saved only through faith in Christ.

Romans 3:23-24 NKJ 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

This too God called good, that Jesus died for sinners of whom I am chief.

On day three God created the nettle and it was good. It is not our place to judge what God has made. Yet because in our sinfulness we do often judge one another, God made the waters of baptism to cleanse our hearts.