

God's Good Plan  
Andrew Kneeland, July 11, 2021

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

"The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

Those words were written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns over 230 years ago. But we can all relate to them, right? Have you ever had one of those days where nothing seems to go according to plan?

It happens to me every time I pretend to know how to fix something on my car. Spark plugs, brake pads, a/c compressor. I'll read manuals and watch tutorials and order parts... and get everything ready to go. Then I pop the hood or lift the car, take that first bolt off... and all my plans fly out the window. There's always a stripped bolt I can't get off, a tool I forgot to get, or an angle that I just can't reach.

So don't expect to see me working at a Jiffy Lube anytime soon. Nothing goes according to plan.

The pandemic changed a lot of plans, too, didn't it? Plans for traveling, plans for vacationing, plans for visiting family. The best-laid plans of mice and men indeed often go awry, don't they?

But there's Someone who had a plan that DIDN'T go awry. In fact, everything has gone exactly according to His plan. Not even a missing tool or a global shutdown could stop God's Good Plan from happening.

Open your Bibles with me this morning, or go back in your bulletins to Ephesians 1. These verses that Pastor Wesley read for us earlier are all about God's Good Plan. They're all about what God has done for us.

So we're not going to talk about our plans this morning. We're going to talk about God's plan. God's plan for us in the past... in the present... and in the future.

But let's start with the past. Verses 3-5 talk about **God's plan in the past**. Things that God has had planned from the very beginning. From before the very beginning! This is just amazing to me, I don't know if you caught it when we first read it. Let's just look again at verses four and five:

*"Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ."*

Isn't that crazy? God loves you... and He's been loving you since before the creation of the world! He's known you by name and loved YOU.

You have always been a part of God's plan. You are not an accident, or an after-thought. God

has known all about you. He's known -- he's always known -- everything about you. He's always known exactly how many hairs are on your head, he's always known how many times you would take His name in vain, he's always known how many times you would lose your temper with your wife or your children, he's always known how often you would doubt him and turn to another god, or idol.

Our omniscient God has known -- has always known -- every one of your defects and imperfections. Your failings and your struggles. Your problems and your challenges. He's always known that you wouldn't measure up to His standard of holiness. Not by a long shot.

He knew every sin you would commit, and every sin you are still going to commit. But still... He loved you. And He chose you! "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family." If you believe in Christ this morning... you have always been a part of God's Good Plan.

And that's because your salvation -- your adoption into God's family -- doesn't depend on your performance. You didn't earn this adoption... God decided to make **you** a part of his family, a part of his Good Plan, long, long before you were even born. The end of verse five: "This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure."

But look what else verse four says! You have been "chosen to be holy." You have been "chosen to be without fault." God, in his perfect wisdom and foresight and omniscience, chose **YOU** to be holy. That **DOESN'T** mean that He looked into the future and saw that you **WOULD** be holy, one day. That when you were born you **WOULD** live a perfect life and never do anything wrong and be totally without guilt or fault. We know that's not true, don't we?

This verse is telling us that God decided to **MAKE** us holy. To **DECLARE** us holy. From before the beginning of time, God knew you by name, He loved you, and His Good Plan was to make you one of his holy and precious children.

Before God's heavenly throne of perfect justice, you were standing in the defendant's seat. You were absolutely guilty of every crime in the books, and they had indisputable evidence. You were guilty. But Jesus stood up, walked to the judge, and told him that he would take your place. All of your guilt... he would take. All of the punishment... he would take. Instead of you.

You might not feel innocent this morning. You might *feel* sinful, unclean, unworthy, imperfect. But if you've been baptized and if you are trusting in Jesus this morning... you have been **MADE** holy. God has declared you as holy, because of what Christ did for you. And this has been his plan since before the beginning of time.

This is good news, isn't it? Nothing we've done can change the fact that God loves you and has chosen you! He's loved us and chosen us and decided to adopt us since before the creation of the world... but that doesn't mean that God's Good Plan was simple.

God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1 to be sinless and enjoy being in his presence for all eternity. But we know what happened when Eve and Adam ate that

forbidden fruit and disobeyed God: they had become full of the disease of sin and could no longer be in God's presence. They had to leave that perfect garden and go out into the cold, harsh world to wait for God to fix the mess they'd made.

God was heart-broken to lose this relationship. Like a father watching his young child in the hospital struggle with cancer and slowly and painfully pass away. Like a father burying his child, tears streaming down his face as he imagines the memories they could have had together.

God's heart was broken as he watched Adam and Eve leave the garden. But he wasn't surprised. Even though extremely painful, this was a part of his Good Plan. And he had a plan for dealing with this brokenness and separation.

Look at verse 7:

*He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.*

The separation and brokenness that Adam and Eve introduced into the world could not be fixed by Adam and Eve. No amount of money, good works, blood, sweat, or tears could repair the damage they had caused. Only God's Good Plan could make the way for sinful humanity to be reconciled to the sinless God.

And God did that when the time was right. On a chilly evening outside Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago... the eternal and all-powerful Son of God was born as a delicate, precious little baby boy. That little baby boy grew up without ever breaking His Heavenly Father's standards for perfection, but he was accused of sin and put to a violent death on a cross between two criminals.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says: "God made him who knew no sin to BECOME sin... for our sake." Jesus endured the full and complete punishment for sin, the verdict that we deserved, Christ took. It wasn't easy or simple... it wasn't without tears and blood... but it was a part of God's Good Plan. And this had been part of God's Good Plan since the very beginning. Verse eight says: "He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding." Another translation says: "He has *lavished* his grace upon us, in wisdom and insight."

Since before the beginning of time, God knew you. God loved you and He chose you... knowing full well what it would take to forgive you of your many sins and reconcile you back to Himself. That's good news, isn't it?

**God's good plan for the present** is seen in verse 10. It says: "And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ -- everything in heaven and on earth."

God's Good Plan is that Christ will be King of everything. Our true king isn't our current president, it isn't our past president, it isn't our military strength. It isn't capitalism, it isn't sports

or politics or entertainment. Our true king is Jesus. Jesus is the true king of everything!  
“Everything in heaven and on earth” ... which includes us, doesn’t it?

Verse 11: “Because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.”

God’s Good Plan isn’t anything like our plans. Something as silly as a stripped bolt can ruin our plans. A sudden rainstorm can change our plans to go to the lake. But can anything stop God’s plan? No! “He makes everything work out according to his plan!”

Another part of God’s Good Plan is giving us an inheritance. Verse 11 says that we, as Christians here this morning, have received this inheritance because we are united with Christ.

What this means is that not only are we adopted as children of God... we are also heirs of God! Just as the nation of Israel was God’s chosen people in the Old Testament, every one of us who trust in Christ today are also God’s chosen people! We are heirs, just as they were. Every promise to Israel -- to God’s people -- is a promise to us.

Verses 12 and 13 say: “God’s purpose (or God’s plan) was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.”

This inheritance that God gives to you is God’s plan for the present, but it’s also **God’s plan for our future!**

The Holy Spirit is our guarantee. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity and probably whom we talk about the least, lives with us. He lives in us, he lives through us. And verse 14 says: “The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people.”

If it weren’t for God, where would we be? All alone, surrounded by darkness, failure, and misery. It reminds me of those verses in 1 Peter 2: “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

God’s Good Plan in the past was to choose you and to love you and to redeem you. God’s Good Plan in the present is to name you and make you his child and his heir and give you all of the promises that a child of the Heavenly King deserves. And God’s Good Plan for your future is that He will save you and he will give you eternal life.

This is God’s Good Plan, and it’s certainly good news, isn’t it? “The Good News that God saves you.”

But maybe you’re like me, thinking, “Okay great, but I already knew that.” I know that God loves me and Jesus died for my sins... I’m a Christian, check. Let’s move on.

But here's the beautiful thing: We never stop needing to hear the Gospel. We never move beyond the Gospel to "more advanced" things. It's just as important for you to hear the Gospel this morning as it was for you to hear the Gospel before you believed in Christ.

Why do we need to be reminded of the Gospel so often? Because we sin so often! Because we get prideful so often! Because we despair so often! Even after putting our trust in Christ, we are never able to go through life on our own. We are always totally dependent on the grace and mercy of God and every time we forget about that grace... we slip into pride, doubt, or despair.

That's why God -- through the Apostle Paul -- wrote this letter to the believers in the city of Ephesus. Not to teach them *new* things... but to remind them of the Good News that saves them.

Jerry Bridges was a Christian author who wrote this: "Your bad days are never so bad that you are outside the reach of God's grace. And your good days are never so good that you are outside the need of God's grace."

Ephesians 1 is all about God's Good Plan. It's a plan to bring you back to himself, at great personal expense. We all need to be reminded of this Good News over and over and over again. Because it's good news that we can't go without.

To close, listen again to the Good News in verses 5 and 6:

*"God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son."*

Amen.