

Genesis 1:31 *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.*

Theme:

Two unnatural things Happen

- death
- life

A couple months ago I was using Lowell's pickax and it broke. It reminded me of a story I once heard. I told him I had an ax that was several hundred years old. Lowell looked suitably surprised so I went on. "Oh yes, it is several hundred years old. But my great great great grandfather replaced the head and the handle has been replaced 4 or 5 times." Lowell thought that was pretty funny. Was it that same ax when every part of it was replaced? What about your car? If every single part of your car is replaced, is it the same car? What about you, if every single part of your body is replaced, is it still you? As a matter of fact, every single part of you is replaced. Your stomach lining is completely replaced every 4 days and some of those cells are replaced every 5 minutes. Your epidermis is replaced every 35 days. Your brain is completely new every 3 months. Your bones are replaced every 5- 7 years. There

isn't a single part of you from 7 years ago that hasn't been replaced.

Really makes you stop and wonder and realize how unnatural getting old and dying is. Yes, you heard me right. Getting old and dying isn't natural. Luella dying was unnatural. We tend to think of getting old and dying as natural. But that is simply not the case. We see people get old and die and think it is natural because we have seen it so often for so long, but that is not how God made us. When God made man and woman, he made us to live forever, as you heard in our text - "and God saw all that HE had made and it was very good". It was all very good. People did not get old and worn down. They did not get old and have their organs give out, too weak to carry out their jobs anymore. God made us with an immortal soul and with a body meant to live forever. Every organ, every part, was replaced. Don't let Satan deceive. Death is not natural.

So what happened? God told Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed him and rebelled against Him, then they would die.

They sinned and death came. What was unnatural became what was common. Death came and death reigned. Death came and took over the souls of men. Men no longer had the true righteousness and holiness of God that Ephesians 4 talks about, instead they were sinners out of whose heart came evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, jealous, lust, hatred... Men also no longer had an innate knowledge of the true God, instead they are born in the deadness of unbelief.

Death came and reigned too over and in our bodes. It reigned over all creation. What was once very good was not any longer. Sin and death brought disease and disabilities, weeds and weakness, pain and problems. And death reigned, down to the cells, down to the DNA of the cells. Every time a body part is replaced, the copy produced by your DNA is a little different and a little deficient. Those mistakes keep multiplying until you're old and achy and your arms and legs, eyes and ears, organs and brain, don't work like they use to and they give out and you die. Death is reigning.

That is what happened to Luella. Don't tell yourself that she lived a full life. That is neither comforting nor true. God made man and women to life forever not to live 7- 9 decades of tears and sorrows and pain. Don't pretend that what happened to her is natural. That is neither comforting nor true. What happened to her was not natural. It is a terrible rending of God's very good creation. It is the result of sin. It is the result of Adam and Eve rebelling against their God who had shown and given them nothing but good. We are here today because something terribly unnatural has happened.

And yet, while the reign of sin and death over this world and men's souls and bodies is reason enough for an ocean of tears, there is also reason for a continents worth of confidence and comfort. The waves of tears and sorrow over the terribleness of death, the loss of a loved one, do lap and sometimes pound at this continent like waves upon the seashore but they do not overrun it because when Luella died there was not just one unnatural thing that happened but two. Here is the second - Luella went to heaven!

Yes, Luella went to heaven. I don't mean that the way the world says it. "Oh, she is with the angels. She is looking down on us now. Your mother was such a good person, I'm sure she is in heaven." The world likes to say such thing and it is just a bunch of air vibrating your eardrum. Man saying such things, doesn't make it true. God saying it makes it true. And God has said it. This is our continent of confidence and comfort. **Romans 8:30** *whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

This is our confidence and comfort for ourselves and for our departed sister Luella. Confidence and comfort that she is not dead but living. She is more alive then anyone here for she is living in the glory of heaven, free from the reign of death. When she came into this world, death reigned over her soul in unbelief but God called her by the Gospel. In Baptism, in Scripture, God called her and taught her darkened heart and mind about Jesus and she believed that Jesus had died for her sins. She knew, as her and our ancestors Adam and Eve knew, that what she and all men deserved

was to continue under the reign of death forever as Romans 6 declares, the wages of sin is death. But she also knew and believed in her Savior. She knew what an unnatural thing happened at the cross and she knew it happened there for her and all mankind.

There God died. God who is life, who is holy, died. Such a shocking, stunning event that the earth shook and the sun in the sky darkened and the veil in the temple was torn in two. How could such a thing happen that the Almighty God who is life, who is eternal, died? Because Jesus, the true God, became man for the very purpose of dying, of dying in our place for our sin and rising from that death to end the reign of death. It was sin that put us under the reign of death long ago in the garden of Eden. And it is our sin that makes us continue to deserve grim, cold, uncaring death as king. But it was Jesus' act on the mountain of calvary that took away our sins and Luella's sins and put us under the reign of life, His reign so that at Luella's death and every believer's death, not just one unnatural thing would happen, but a second as well . A sinner would go to heaven.

Jesus canceled her sin and our sin and beat death and Satan at their own game and the Holy Spirit brought her to that faith and made that victory, Jesus' victory, her victory. This is why Luella could look death in the face, laugh, literally Laugh, and be unafraid with the words of the Holy Spirit in her mouth from **I Corinthians 15.** *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

You think we are here today because something natural has happened. You think we are here because nature has taken its course. Think again. That Luella died is terrible and unnatural but true. That Jesus would come into the world to save sinners, that He died and arose from death to give Luella and us salvation and that Luella is in heaven is unnatural, but it is true, amazing and true. God has spoken. Here is our continent's worth of comfort and confidence amidst the waves of sorrow. Luella is in heaven not because of anything she did but because of what the God the Father

did, because of what God the Son, Jesus, did. Because of what God the Holy Spirit did. She is alive. She, in many ways, is more alive than any here for she is living free forever from the reign of death. For her forever God has restored the very good. The very good that man once had in Eden. The very good, God has restored to her and us in Christ as we heard earlier. ⁴ *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* ⁵ *Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." Amen*

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