

Lesson Six

Goodness

Introduction

In Luke 8:4-8 Jesus tells the parable about the sower distributing seed over four kinds of soil. He compares the seed's growth in rocky soil, hard-packed (path) soil, and weed-infested soil to its growth in "good" soil. The good soil, Jesus says, produced a crop of up to one hundred times what the farmer sowed—a bumper crop, a crop of good things.

God, of course, is good (Mark 10:18). And since the Spirit of God has moved into our hearts along with faith in Jesus, he has brought his goodness into our lives. Let's search the Scriptures for evidence of God's bumper crop of goodness and then discover how his goodness will show itself in our lives.

Studying God's Word

God's Goodness

When God evaluated his freshly created universe, he pronounced it "good," in fact, "very good." The Hebrew word for *good* was translated into Greek with the word that is used in this parable. A number of times in the Old Testament, the Lord is called good. Read Psalm 118. The characteristics of God's goodness are described in this psalm.

Psalm 118

¹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

² Let Israel say: "His love endures forever."

³ Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever."

⁴ Let those who fear the Lord say: "His love endures forever."

⁵ When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; he brought me into a spacious place.

⁶ The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

⁷ The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies.

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.

¹⁰ All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

¹¹ They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

¹² They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

¹³ I was pushed back and about to fall, but the Lord helped me.

¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"

¹⁶ The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"

¹⁷ I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.

¹⁸ The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.

²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

- ²² *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;*
²³ *the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.*
²⁴ *The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.*
²⁵ *Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!*
²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.*
²⁷ *The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.*
²⁸ *You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.*
²⁹ *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

1. Verse 1 declares that God is good. The remainder of the psalm provides examples of his goodness. List as many examples as you can of how God’s goodness produces a bumper crop of benefits for us. From that list, what do you consider the top three benefits of God’s goodness?
2. Psalm 118 also suggests a number of ways grateful believers will respond to God’s goodness. Identify six of those ways.

His Word in My Life

God’s goodness has provided us with the same “very good” verdict he pronounced on the universe six days after the beginning of time. His goodness has provided us a Savior in his Son. And, since his goodness never changes, we can be “*confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 1:6).

1. Comment on this statement: I know God is a good God, but I don’t expect him to be good to me because I don’t deserve his goodness.

Studying God’s Word

Living God’s Goodness

The Spirit’s goodness empowers and motivates us to demonstrate God’s goodness in our lives. “*We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do*” (Ephesians 2:10).

But living out his goodness is a struggle. For example, Paul describes the struggle between his old Adam and new man, “*I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing*” (Romans 7:18,19). The New Testament frequently notes that the opposite of good is evil. If we are to understand how the Spirit’s goodness will exhibit itself in our lives, it’s helpful to understand what the mirror image of goodness is, as well as what good is.

1. Read Mark 7:21-23.

²¹ *For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder,* ²² *adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.* ²³ *All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”*

Agree/disagree: Evil comes from inside of humans.

2. Romans 12:21 tells us to use good to defeat evil in our lives: *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Comment on how these passages urge us to live out that principle.

Romans 12:9

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Galatians 6:9-10

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Ephesians 4:28-29

²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

3 John 11

¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

3. Review your list of ways God’s goodness is demonstrated in Psalm 118. Offer everyday examples of how you might translate those words about goodness into how you live your life.

His Word in My Life

A poem challenges us Christians to think about how God’s goodness to us in Christ is reflected in our lives.

You are writing a gospel,
A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do
And the words that you say.
Others read what you write,
Whether faithful or true.
Just what is the gospel
According to you? *Author Unknown*

1. Evaluate: A person who does what he agreed to do for another is a just person. A person who does more than he agreed to do is a good person.

2. Someone has observed that goodness is easier to recognize than to define. In the book of Acts, we are introduced to two good people: Barnabas (4:32-37; 11:22-24) and Dorcas (9:36-39). What was it about them that people recognized as good?

Acts 4:32-37

³² *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. ³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.*

Acts 11:22-24

²² *News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.*

Acts 9:36-39

³⁶ *In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" ³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.*

3. Evaluate: There are so many needs in this world that I find it hard to determine where to start. So I've adopted as my guideline: Does this person deserve my good works? (See Galatians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:15.)

Summary

The Spirit planted us in the soil of his goodness when he brought us to faith in Jesus. We now experience a bumper crop of his presence in our lives. We yearn to reflect his goodness in everything we do and with everyone we meet.