

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 15 Jul 2019)

Read - Psalm 33:1-5

"For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice." v 4-5

We continue our journey through the Fruit of the Spirit and this week we look at Goodness.

The word 'goodness' does not occur often in the Bible and mostly it is used to refer to the character of God, and at other times refers to how we, as Christians, should be.

Last week we looked at kindness, which refers to the way we look at and deal with others, but goodness talks to the nature of our moral character.

In the Bible, the word goodness is a general quality related to righteousness, purity, truth and justice. These are the words that the psalmist uses to describe God's goodness in our reading.

The dictionary defines goodness as 'the quality of being morally good or virtuous'. In our modern world, 'good' sounds so much less noble than righteous, pure or just, so it is important that we interpret this word using the Bible and not the modern context.

Goodness is a profound and deep characteristic that is very lacking in our modern society, where everyone's focus seems to be on themselves and their needs and where so many people are desperately in need of a little goodness in their lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help us to understand goodness this week. Speak to us and remind us of Your example.

DAY 2

Read - Luke 6:27-36

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you ... Do to others as you would have them do to you." v 27 and 31

William Barclay explains that in this passage Jesus tells us two important aspects of goodness.

Firstly goodness is a positive ethic. It is not about not doing bad things, but about doing good things. Many others have written about this in the negative form - Confucius wrote: 'What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others'. Jesus uniquely spoke about doing good to others.

The second thing is that goodness is based on doing the extra thing. Jesus talks about what normal people would do (love those who love them, do good to those who do good to them) but real goodness comes from going beyond that to doing something special.

So we can't be good simply by abstaining from bad. In order to show goodness, we have to do something unusually good to others who don't deserve it and/or can't repay us in kind.

In this we are following the example of Jesus who went beyond the normal to sacrifice His life for us, who did not deserve it and are not capable in any way of repaying Him in kind. This is the essence of the gospel.

This is the same gospel that Jesus calls us to take and show to others.

Prayer: Father, please help me to be a suitable witness to Your goodness.

DAY 3

Read - Psalm 119:137-144

"You are righteous, Lord, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy." v 137-138

The Psalmist declares God's goodness (righteousness) and affirms that we discover goodness in God's statutes. This is Old Testament phraseology and is a New Testament context we would say that we discover goodness through God's Word and the working of the Spirit within our lives.

That is what it means to say that goodness is a fruit of the Spirit – it is the result of the Spirit's work in our lives. So how does the Spirit work in our lives in this way?

Jesus sent the Spirit to be our guide, to remind us of what Jesus said, and to lead us into righteous living. So each of us has the Spirit living within us and the Spirit guides us through promptings, through pointing out things to us and through reminding us of Jesus' words.

The problem that we all have is that we are the ones who make the decisions about what we do and how we do it, and we so often ignore the promptings of the Spirit and do our own thing!

God never forces anything on us, so unless we listen to Him and follow the leadings of the Spirit, we will not discover the life He wants us to have, and will not bear the fruit that He wants us to bear.

In Deut 30, God gave the law to the Israelites and urged them to "Choose life!" [v19] – so should we!

Prayer: Lord please help me to choose life by following Your guidance.

DAY 4**Read - Luke 4:16-21**

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." v 18-19

This passage which Jesus read from Isaiah 61 is a key passage for us as Christians. When we ask "what would Jesus do", this is the answer.

Note firstly that the things that Jesus said He was going to do are all acts of goodness. They are not good feelings towards needy people but actual acts that change the lives of the people – people who are not in a position to repay the favour.

Secondly, note that Jesus says He has come to do these things because 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me'. These acts come from a pure heart and righteous life (goodness) but also because the Spirit bring love and kindness.

It is just the same with us. The anointing of the Spirit upon us (that is His moving within us) should lead us to goodness – right living and acts of truth and justice to change the lives of those in need.

So we don't need to be worried about whether we can do what is needed or what we will say, because it will be the Spirit moving through us that does all that. All we need to do is to be moving towards acts of goodness.

We hesitate when we focus on ourselves and our inadequacy. Focus on God instead.

Prayer: Lord help me to always remember that you are able to work through me.

DAY 5**Read - Rom 13:11-14**

"So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light ... Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." v 12, 14

We have spent a few days focussing on doing acts of goodness and need to remind ourselves that goodness also involves righteousness and justice.

There are many in this world who do good deeds out of their altruistic nature, There is nothing inherently wrong in this, but it is not Christian goodness.

We can't just focus on doing good things and forget that our moral character needs to be good as well. Neither can we focus just on character and ignore doing good.

Jesus and all the New Testament writers urge us to look very carefully at our lifestyle and actions to ensure that what we are doing is right and just (goodness). The nature of our modern world is to focus on my rights as a person and this seems to translate into doing whatever I want, no matter the consequence to others.

As a Christian, we don't focus on our rights, because we know we deserve nothing good, but rather to focus on the goodness of God and what we can do with God to bring goodness to the world – moral and social justice.

Keeping those two in balance can be difficult, especially when social pressure tries to change us.

Prayer: Lord work in me to show goodness.

DAY 6**Read - Matt 5:3-10**

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God". v 6-8

The beatitudes, our reading for today, are the complete opposite of what the world considers good and worthy of praise. In fact, the world tends to mock people who are poor in spirit, thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart and persecuted.

But as we journey through the fruit of the Spirit we find that it is exactly these characteristics that the Spirit develops in us that has allowed 11 simple Disciples and many since to change the world in ways that bring peace, love and joy to the troubled world.

Jesus says that these are the people who are truly blessed, but the world would scoff at that. However, when we look at the lives of so many followers of Jesus, from Mother Theresa to Nelson Mandela, we see that they had real life and joy and peace, not the others.

In fact we have probably all noticed that when we seek goodness, righteousness and actions, we discover a real joy even when things are tough.

This is the promise of God, from Genesis to Revelation, that if we walk in His way (doing the things He wants), we will discover real life.

Choose Life!

Prayer: Father please help me to discover true life in You and Your will.