

THE GOOD GOD, Ps.145

What is God Really Like? #4

◆Intro: “God is great. God is good. Let us thank him for our food. By his”. Do you know it? (“By his hand we all are fed. Thank you Lord for daily bread.”) That’s an old and well-known table prayer full of deep theology. There are secrets to be found in that prayer. Secrets we often miss. Immediately it recognizes a connection between God’s goodness and the existence of all reality, between God and provision and enjoyment. So, if you are a person who sometimes finds life very *dissatisfying*, or if you are one who has been stuffing your stomach or your time with everything you can reach and still feel a strange emptiness, or if you feel busy and your time is filled full but you are not full-filled, –well then, I think you’re gonna like what we talk about today. We’re gonna talk about the Good God. It’s pretty hard to miss in the psalm, isn’t it?

◆“The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.”
Psalms 145:9, NIV.

◆And twice more in direct parallel (v13,17) it says the Lord is “loving toward all he has made.”

◆1. **Definition: what is God’s goodness?** That my friends is a broad and deep term. It captures many other things in the net along with it; adjectives like merciful, righteous, loving, kind. When we speak of God goodness we mean...

◆A. God is free from all maliciousness or unworthiness. In this he is very different from every other being or person you know. It is clear that we humans have within us an odd mix of goodness and evil. The kindest person you know can say the nastiest thing you can imagine given the right circumstance. And I know you can see this in yourself.

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I see it in me. It is not that way for God. Not only is God free from any form of darkness but ...

◆B. God is full to the brim of all that is praise worthy. God is good through and through, all the way to the bone. Even the word “good” is derived from the word “God”. He cannot be improved upon. He does not have any place where he needs to work on his personality. There are no character flaw to be noted on his evaluation. This makes him quite different from what pagans believe about their gods. Read the tales, the myths, and you discover that most, if not all, false gods humans conjure up in their minds are quite like humans really: they are angry, mischievous, and demanding. They plot disasters and must be lured into goodness with gifts and behavior. They rather like to use their superior power to demand the service of the mortal; something very “mortal”-like in nature, wouldn’t you say? This is not the true nature of the one true God.

◆“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.” Psalms 145:8, 9, NIV.

◆ And while God’s goodness means that he is committed to the destruction of all the is not good, it is paradoxically his love that makes him this way. (More on that in a minute.)

◆ *Ps. 31:19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

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◆Ps. 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

◆C. God's providence (his providing for all of created reality) is a supreme example of his goodness. We began to look at providence last week when we meditated on the omnipotence of God and how his power and ability is directed at providing for creation. Lets think about it more now, as it is because God is by nature good and loving that he uses his almighty ability to care for and sustain what he has made. The goodness of God spills out in creation and on creation. This attribute of goodness describes our Father's disposition toward us and our world.

◆Belgic Confession, Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence

We believe that this good God,
after he created all things,
did not abandon them to chance or fortune
but leads and governs them
according to his holy will,
in such a way that nothing happens in this world
without his orderly arrangement.

... his power and goodness
are so great and incomprehensible
that he orders and executes his work in the most excellent and just
manner..."

◆Providence is about ...

◆how God feeds, sustains, cares for, and befriends all of creation.

◆how in our world living color usurps mere black and white.

◆how water is fresh and cleansing, and not sticky or thick.

◆the majesty of a buck, the leap of a fox, the precision of a hummingbird

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◆ Providence is God's goodness smoothed across the face of the earth, over all people and over all things. (Did you notice how many times Psalm 145 said "all"? About 15 times in 21 verses!)

◆ v9 *good to all ...compassion on all he has made.*

◆ v12 *so all men may know your mighty acts*

◆ v14 *loving toward all he has made.*

◆ Even some Christians believe that God doesn't really love all he has made, that he has no love or grace for unbelievers. Many unbelievers also believe that God has no goodness for them. They think of God like the pagan gods. They see themselves as "too far gone" to obtain any real attention from God. Now it is true that verse 20 says that the Lord watches over all who love him, but destroys the wicked. Yet at least 5 other times David says that God is good to all, without a distinction. J.I Packer explains, "God is good to all in some ways and good to some in all ways." God's providence clearly shows God's grace common to every creature.

◆ *"But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Matthew 5:44, 45, NIV.*

◆ Now what about God being good to some in all ways? First a story: It was Sunday, Aug.16, 1987 when NW Air, flight 225 crashed just after takeoff from Detroit killing 155 people. There was one survivor: a four year old girl from Tempe, AZ, named Cecelia. At first rescuers who found her didn't believe she'd been on the plane. But sure enough, her name was on the passenger registration list. She survived because, as the plane fell, her

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mother Paula Chican, unbuckled, got down on her knees in front of her daughters seat, wrapped her arms and body around her child, and would not let go. And friends, this is a picture of the love the Father has for us. Jesus left heaven, in the descent to earth he lowered himself to our level, covered our sin-stained lives with his body on the cross, and saved us. God's gift of salvation's power and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ makes him good in all ways to all who believe. In fact, the Bible repeatedly tells us that when you are a follower of God, he will work absolutely all things in your life for something good somehow.

◆ *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

Romans 8:28, NIV.

◆ Again the our 16th Century brothers put it so well in the Belgic Confession when they wrote...

◆ *“Nothing can befall us by chance, but only by the arrangement of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who watches over us with paternal care...”*

◆ Everything will be bent by his love into something good for those who love God back and mean it. And so says our Psalm.

◆ *“The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him sincerely. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them. The LORD protects all those who love him, but he destroys the wicked.” Psalms 145:18-20, NLT.*

◆ And so I ask you, why not commit your life to Jesus Christ? You already enjoy his goodness common to all creatures. Why not add to it his everlasting and unending goodness to those who accept his salvation? Wickedness and those who stay in it will not last past this life. (v20) But

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his kingdom is an never-ending one (v13) and endures past every generation! Why not join it? David's very next song, Psalm 146 goes on to observe...

◆“Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there. When their breathing stops, they return to the earth, and in a moment all their plans come to an end. But happy are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the LORD their God.” Psalms 146:3-5, NLT.

◆With God in your life, Goodness lives on into eternity, and so do you!

◆2. What does God's goodness mean for me?

◆A. If I desire goodness, I can begin by observing God's laws. Now some will begin to ask, “If God is good, why does he punish evil? Isn't it good to be kind to all and to hurt none?” But this is irrational, and if we think about it for a moment, we do not want a benefactor who will not deter danger. How can one be a friend to goodness without being an enemy of evil? True love is to hate evil. To draw a line in the sand for all wrong. To seek and destroy that which seeks to destroy what is good. Just as a good father will keep a child from hitting his sister or swearing at his mother, so God, in the name of love, will not allow the endurance of sin. It is right and good to stop disease. It is right and good to promote life. It is right and good kill germs that cause bad breath! Some claim that a good God would not be hard on sin, but the reason God is hard on sin is because he is good. Goodness does not settle for anything less than goodness. That's the purpose of God's laws; to promote life, joy, and good in the world.

◆If you wear glasses would you mind holding them up for just a moment? (If you wear contacts just raise your hand.)... Jim Holm

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writes: “When I was in the third grade, I was condemned to live under a law, the law of near-sightedness. My eyes went bad and today I am legally blind. I am not free. I am in bondage to this law. There is no escape. But one day I discovered an even greater law. It is called the law of corrective lenses. When I submitted myself to that law, the law of near-sightedness was overcome. Did it go away? No. It’s still there. But it was overpowered by an greater law. Now here is the ironic thing: you’d think that if I want to be free, I’d throw the glasses away. But that is not freedom! Only by submitting to the law of glasses do I become free. God’s goodness means that it is always to my benefit to obey his instructions even when I don’t understand them. This is an act of faith.

◆ *“but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you.” Jeremiah 7:23, NIV.*

◆ B. God’s goodness means more. It means that I should put my hope in him alone!

◆ *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” 1 Timothy 6:17, NIV.*

◆ God truly delights in me and desires to satisfy me. This is hard for some to believe. They may have been conditioned to think of God as one who wants us to satisfy him! No. God does not need to be satisfied. He is the supremely happy being without our aid.

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◆“I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank-offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”” Psalms 50:9-15, NIV.

◆No, God does not need us to delight him, and yet he does delight in us! His delight in you and me comes from his love to our hearts, and not the other way around.

- ◆v16 *You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*
- ◆v19 *He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.*

◆So hope in the Lord, friends. Look for him in your day, in your life. Look for him harder than you look for tasty liquors, or entertaining movies to watch. Look for God more than you look for sex. As Pascal said so long ago, the empty place inside of each of us is a God-shaped vacuum.

◆“I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.”” Psalms 16:2, NIV.

◆“Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”” Acts 14:17, NIV.

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◆“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” James 1:17, NIV.

◆C. One last thing about what God’s goodness means. It calls me we to celebrate him. This is what David does in the psalm. It’s pretty hard to miss.

◆v2 everyday I will praise you.

◆In verse 4 he’s saying parents tell their kids, who tell their kids, who tell theirs. Look at the verbs in v4-7! Tell. Speak. Meditate. Proclaim. Celebrate. Sing. That’s why he wrote the poem! This is normal in Scriptures:

◆Ps 9:1 I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will **tell of** all your wonders.

◆Ps 71:24 My tongue will **tell of** your righteous acts all day long,

◆Ps 73:28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will **tell of** all your deeds.

◆Ps 75:1 We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks, for your Name is near; men **tell of** your wonderful deeds.

◆Ps 105:2 Sing to him, sing praise to him; **tell of** all his wonderful acts.

◆Goodness is a story to be told! Its normal. What do men do when they get together?

◆“Oh did you see the Packers game?”

◆“Yep”.

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- ◆“Did you see that one play where the guy jumped right over the other guy at the two yard line?!”
- ◆Why is he still going on? The guy said yes! They both saw it already. It’s called celebrating, sharing joy and pleasure with another. What do women do? Same thing.
 - ◆“Oh I see you’re wearing green.”
 - ◆“Why yes I am.”
 - ◆“You look good in green. It matches your eyes. And those redish (rouge?) tints in your hair, don’t you just love it when...”
- ◆What’s she doing. They both already know what color she’s wearing. It’s celebrating. Not quite like sports, but eh! It is biblically natural to celebrate the wonders of God. Take up the habit, my friend. Give it words. Connect the good you see to the God you know. It’s the word of testimony. It opens eyes of others.

- ◆**Conclusion:** We’re going to celebrate the Lord’s Supper now. To celebrate is to rejoice in the goodness of. In each row there is a pad of white sticky notes. You are invited to take one and write a good gift of God on it. How have you experienced God’s goodness lately? Could you share a gift he’s given? Had any victories? Rescues recently? Write it down and when you come forward to receive the supper, bring your note as an offering and post it on the sky-board. (If you look closely you will see there is a figure there. If you place your note inside the lines we will also create a piece of art in the process! If you are a believer in Jesus, come to his table. His body and blood have paid for your sin. He is good to you in all ways. If

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you are not his yet, give him your heart today. Ask him to wash you clean and he will, then you come too. Pray with me...

◆ Jesus I want to see the goodness of life the way you meant it. I want to know the freedom of what is righteous, right and clean. I understand you came to give me the goodness of salvation in this life and forever into eternity. Cleanse me. Lead me. Amen.