

Text: Gal. 5:22; Mark 10:17-22

Title: "The fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ – goodness"

Time: 9/15/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: *Goodness* is one of those virtues that we have to spend little time defining. In Scripture, things that are good are the opposite of things that are bad and evil. So when the Bible teaches that God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, it means that He does so for everyone – those categories cover everyone, because you are either evil or good.

I read a story about a Kansas Highway Patrol state trooper whose name was Bill Goodness. Trooper Goodness died recently of cancer, and the story I read was from 2014, about a fundraising effort his fellow officers had put together to help him with his medical bills in his fight with that disease. They had a chili-cooking contest and charged \$5 for a bowl of chili, which went to this good cause. We recognize the goodness of a cause like that, and the goodness of the public service that first responders provide for our community. [<https://www.hayspost.com/2014/10/24/chili-fundraiser-for-goodness-sake-set-for-saturday-tailgate/>; accessed 9/13/2019].

So there is a goodness in the world that we would understand to be simply part of being human, part of being made in the image of our good God. One would hear around Camp Northfield often the adage, "God is good all of the time." That is right, and we are made in His image so that we can be good and do good things in ways animals cannot.

But Galatians 5 speaks of a goodness that is a fruit of God's Spirit in the heart and life of a believer. Like the love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and gentleness mentioned here, this goodness is a power that is available to a person only as he walks in the Spirit. Paul encourages believers to do this, for when they do, they shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. We have been learning about these forms of virtue from the life of Christ, the Anointed One, whose life bore perfectly the fruit of the Spirit in complete victory over the lusts of the flesh. We want to become more like Him in our battle with our own flesh.

The goodness of Christ is noted in three passages in the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament that focus on His earthly life. In John 1:46, Jesus is the exception to the rule that no good thing can come out of Nazareth. In John 7:12, some of the crowds of Jerusalem conclude that Jesus is a good man, while others believe that He is leading the people astray. In our passage, a rich young ruler of a local synagogue runs to Him, falls on his knees, and calls Jesus the "Good Master" or "Good Teacher." As Christ responds, we see 3 things about His goodness.

I. The goodness of Christ is His deity (vv. 17-18; 20a; *deity* means *Godhood*).

Illustration: A riddle can be a fun teaching tool. Sometimes riddles can take the form of what we call "trick questions." I found a website that listed 114 trick questions. My favorite was, "What word would you use to describe a man who does not have all his fingers on one hand?" The answer is "Normal, because people usually have half their fingers on one hand." I liked that one because it is very similar to a question that I have always used while coaching basketball when one of my younger players gets hurt and needs to be

cheered up. I show him my hand with fingers spread and ask, "How many fingers am I holding up?" If he says 5, he is wrong because a hand has four fingers and a thumb, but if he says 4, he is wrong because the thumb is often called a finger too. Eventually, players learn to say, "four fingers and a thumb which can also be called a finger," which takes the fun right out of my riddle.

Application: The young man of our passage asks a question of the Lord that is the most important question a person can ask – "Good Teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?" You and I need to ask the Lord that question, and we need to understand and believe His answer.

Which is why the answer Jesus gives is a bit perplexing. He answers with a question that is a bit of a riddle: "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but God." Notice that the next time the man address Jesus, he drops the word *Good* (v. 20).

The Scripture actually speaks of many things that are not God but yet are good (people on whom the sun rises – Matt. 5:45; the gifts evil men give their children – Matt. 7:11; the soil of some hearts – Luke 8:8, 15; sitting at Jesus feet and hearing His word – Luke 10:42). Joseph of Arimathea is called *a good man* by God's Word (Luke 23:50). Jesus knew of these things. *Good Teacher* was an appropriate and even biblical use of the word *Good*.

But Jesus wants this man to see that as the God-man, He is good in a way that is different from every other good teacher. His goodness is an attribute of deity. He is the "Good Teacher" because He is the good God.

What does this mean for us when we consider the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives? I think it has two lessons for us.

The first is a lesson about who Jesus is, which Jesus is trying to get across to this man – He is good in a way that this man and the rest of us are not good. This man failed to see that about Jesus, and he failed to see that about himself. He believed he could do something good enough to be worthy to inherit eternal life. He did not see that in this sense, there is none that doeth good, no not one (Rom. 3:10). He did not see that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). He did not see that the wages of his sin was death (Rom. 6:23).

His thought was Jesus is a good teacher like I am a good Jew. Jesus wanted him to elevate his understanding of “Good Teacher” by placing Jesus in a different category of goodness than himself. Evidently, the man failed to grasp this (v. 20).

The second lesson has to do with who the Holy Spirit is. Since there is none good in this sense but God, and since this goodness is only the fruit of the Spirit, it follows that the Holy Spirit is God. So although there are a lot of things in this world that the Bible might call *good* in a lower sense, the goodness that is the fruit of the Spirit is a goodness that is in a special category all of its own. It is God’s goodness, not our own.

We must see that there is no good thing we can do to inherit eternal life. We need God’s goodness for this, the goodness of Christ and His Spirit.

II. The goodness of Christ is His righteousness (v. 19).

Illustration: It was the job of Trooper Goodness to enforce the law that governs the highways of Kansas. Those who remember the job he did recognize that it was a good job. Although we live in a world that is losing its ability to distinguish between right and wrong, we can still see the importance of laws and law enforcement and conformity when it comes to defining what is good.

Application: God is good, so His law is good. Because His law is good, keeping His commands defines goodness. The original sin was Adam and Eve's decision to become a law unto themselves – to conclude that their own personal assessment of right and wrong was more valid than what God's law says about right and wrong (Gen. 3:6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.>"). God's Word never said these things about this tree.

It is the fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ that recognizes the role of God's law in the definition of goodness. His goodness was His righteous conformity to that law, and through His righteousness imputed to us lawbreakers, we can be justified in spite of our sin. Once saved and indwelt by God's Spirit, we can obey God's law only when we are walking in the Spirit bearing His fruit of goodness. Obeying God's law through the Spirit's power should be the goal of every Christian. We do not obey God's law in order to be good, but we become good through the Spirit's power in order to obey God's law.

III. The goodness of Christ is His truthfulness (vv. 20-22).

Illustration: We find an important companion to the virtue of goodness in the Lord's parable of the soils (Luke 8:11-15).

Note the need for the good heart that is also honest in order to hear God's word like good soil receives a fruitful seed.

Application: Honesty or truthfulness is the companion of the goodness we are finding in the life of our Savior this morning. The synagogue ruler lacked goodness because his heart was not honest with himself. That is a problem we all have. Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"

This man's heart told him he was a good person. It told him that he had obeyed God's law flawlessly. It had told him that Jesus was only a good man like himself, that perhaps Jesus could add a bit of good insight to his own heretofore successful pursuit of eternal life. It had told him that he needs to call Jesus "Teacher" from now on instead of "Good Teacher." But everything his evil heart told him was a lie.

Jesus, the Good Teacher, told Him the truth in a shocking way. The truth did to him what a gathering storm does to the sky. It made him gloomy and sad. The reason he went away sorrowing was that he had many possessions. He lacked one thing, but it was a very big thing, because it is the one thing that summarizes the whole second table of the law of God - "love your neighbor as yourself" (see Matt. 19:19). Like you and I, he was incurably selfish. He did not see his lack until Jesus, whose goodness was truthfulness, spoke that truth to him in great love for him.

The goodness that is the fruit of the Spirit will cause us to speak the truth about selfishness in love to ourselves first and then to others. The effect will often be the same in those who hear us - gloomy sadness, and we must not fear that result. For the truth will be exactly what is needed to better prepare the soil to become an honest and good heart that

hears saving truth, keeps it, and brings forth fruit with patience. Only the power of God's Spirit can prepare this soil.

Conclusion: Who here has sold all that they have and given it to the poor? None of us have, of course. Does not that mean that we lack what this man lacked? We think of philanthropy as the very rich giving away lots of money while making sure they stay very rich, but none of us is going to divest himself of all of his assets after the message this morning and give it to the poor. Would not the poor need then to do the same to get eternal life?

Jesus explains why no one inherits eternal life this way in v. 27. With men, selling all that you have and giving to the poor, truly loving your neighbor as yourself, is impossible. With God, however, all things are possible, including meeting this standard for inheriting eternal life.

Which brings us back to where we started – Jesus's first point to the man – His goodness is the goodness of His deity. Because He is God, He could sell all that He had and could give it to the poor. This is exactly what He did. 2 Cor. 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." His riches are His goodness; He who knew no sin became our sin for us.

In the end, only that can be the answer to the young man's question. Only through Christ's selling all He had can we inherit eternal life. We recognize that Jesus is God, that Jesus is good, that Jesus is righteous, that Jesus is truth, that Jesus sold all that He had, and that I am the poor who needs from Him this salvation.

Do you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ this morning, that “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich”? Have you repented of your own false pretensions of goodness and of your true sinfulness to plead only what He has done for you?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

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