

# Goodness and Faithfulness

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[ 0 : 00 ] All right, thank you, Alex. Appreciate it. Good morning, everybody. How are you doing today? Good, good, good. Excited for the collection party afterwards, after the second service, and Dave, cooking those hot dogs?

Yeah? All right, that'll be good. If you're new with us, glad you're here, and we're continuing on our Fruit of the Spirit series. If you're listening online, glad you're listening as well.

And when we speak about Fruits of the Spirit, what we're talking about is character transformation, the kind of thing that takes place as we live the God with life. And so, as we are pressing into Him, and spending time with Him, and surrendering to Him, and looking at Him, and beholding Him, and all that He is, these things start to form and take shape in us.

And they're beautiful things. They're things that we should want to become more like, which is love, and joy, and peace, and patience, right? And today, we're going to look at two of them, which is goodness and faithfulness.

And I would say this, without God, you will never fully comprehend what those two things can possibly mean. So, that's where we're going to begin at. We're going to begin by looking at God Himself.

[ 1 : 09 ] And there's this great little story in Exodus. And so, if you have a Bible, you can turn to Exodus chapter 33. You can flip over there or get there on your phone. If you don't, no worries. We're going to have the verses up on the screen as well.

You can follow along. We're going to start in verse 12, and it says this. Moses said to the Lord, see, you say to me, bring up this people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight. Now, therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.

Consider, too, consider, too, that this nation is your people. And He said, my presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. And He said to him, if your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.

For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?

[ 2 : 20 ] And the Lord said to Moses, this very thing that you have spoken I will do. For you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name. And Moses said, please show me your glory.

And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

In chapter 34, the Lord said to Moses, cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on top of the mountain.

No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain. So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first, and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone.

The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

[ 3 : 44 ] Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation?

And Moses quickly bowed down his head toward the earth in worship. And he said, if now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us.

For it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance. This is God's word. In this one story, it's all that we need to understand the goodness and faithfulness of God.

When you look at all the things God says of himself in this passage, I am merciful, I am gracious, I am slow to anger, I abound in steadfast love, and I keep steadfast love.

I forgive iniquity and transgression and sin, and yet at the same time, I am able to uphold justice in a good and righteous way. These are why we say God is good.

[ 4 : 53 ] This is why he tells Moses, my goodness is going to pass before you, right? Only God could say that. Trust me, I've tried with my wife. It doesn't work.

God's—if we're trying to figure out, okay, when God's goodness, like what are we talking about here, it's all those things, but God's goodness is all those things, but it's also how he is toward us. It's his delightful resolve to promote the welfare and the happiness of his creatures. It is his care for every little sparrow to make sure that they have something to eat every day, and even should one of them fall to the ground, he really cares about that, and he notices that.

And Jesus says, you know what, if it's true for them, how much more for each one of you? But God isn't just kind of this way. He isn't like good most of the time.

He is unceasingly this way. He is faithful. That's why he's not just goodness. He is faithfulness as well. He is unchangeable in his goodness. And these same qualities are what God desires of us.

[ 6 : 00 ] When Jesus told his parable of the talents, where a master goes away and he gives to them certain things to his servants, and he's expecting them to increase them. And when he comes back and he says, okay, what I gave you, can I have them back?

And he says to the ones that multiplied those talents, what does he say to them? Well done, good and faithful servant. I think we should probably care a lot about this, right?

I think God cares a lot about that for us as well. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master. Good and faithfulness isn't just kind of important, right?

Now, here's the question for us. How does one go about being good and faithful? And I would argue from experience, but also the passage we just read, that you can't go about being good and faithful without knowing God in a deep and intimate way.

God's goodness and faithfulness is proved in God's presence. So a bit of context for why Moses is pleading with God in this passage in the first place.

[ 7 : 08 ] God had just brought Israel out of Egypt. They had wandered through the desert for a few days to Mount Sinai. Things are kind of going well at this point. And then God calls up Moses to the mountain.

He's going to give him his law. He's making covenant with them. And then Moses comes down the mountain with tablets in hand. And what happens? He beholds the whole nation of Israel going buck wild, worshiping a golden calf that they had made, right?

So that's that whole fiasco, casting a long and glorious shadow over events. God's angry. Israel's guilty. Moses is interceding.

And God begins by telling Moses, you know what? Depart. Go to the land that I promised to give you. I'm faithful. I'm going to keep my end of the bargain.

Like I promised that to your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob 400 years ago. I'll even send my angel to go before you and to drive out all the peoples in the land so you can go in and possess it.

[ 8 : 07 ] But he says, I, me, God, personally, my presence isn't going to go with you. And Moses says, no, not good enough.

I mean, Exodus 33, 15. He says, all that stuff, all that promise, that land inheritance, that's all worthless if you don't go with us, God.

God's blessings don't prove his character. God's presence does. We need him more than we need his stuff. So Moses begs God to reconsider.

Now, you can read this story in one of two ways. Moses had to talk God off the edge. Like we could see, man, God was a rage monster. And Moses is like, hey, let's bring it down a few levels. Thank you, Moses. Or, or we could see it as God was testing Moses and Israel to see if their priorities were right. And I think the latter is true.

[9:13] Moses, he wants God's presence. And there's something to that. If you really want to know someone, you have to spend time in their presence. That is why God came in the flesh ultimately.

In the fullness of time, Jesus came as the fullness of the image of God, the fullness of God himself, and made God the Father, God who he is in all his ways manifest to us. In human form, Jesus manifested God's faithful, good presence.

Right? In the incarnation of Jesus, that's what we have. And it was proved in faithful presence, but it was a faithful presence that manifested God's ways for our sake.

And God's goodness and faithfulness is found in God's ways. You know, before Moses said, show me your glory, he said to God, would you please now show me your ways?

I want to understand who you are. Would you please now show me your ways? He says that in Exodus 33, verse 13. And for Moses, God's glory and God's ways are indivisible.

[10:16] And you know what? God didn't rebuke Moses and say like, hey, Moses, you got it wrong there. Actually, he answers him accordingly. In Exodus 34, 6 to 8, when he goes about, this is who I am, I'm the Lord, the Lord, abounding in steadfast love and mercy and I'm gracious.

If you want to know God's goodness and faithfulness, learn his ways. Right? That is what God said. He expounds on this.

He is merciful. He is gracious. He is slow to anger. He abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness. He keeps steadfast love for many. He forgives sins. He is also a God of justice and will punish sin. And these are God's ways. This is who he is. And he is faithful to these ways. As James, the brother of Jesus, said of God, there is no variation in him. He doesn't change.

He's not like a shadow that shifts and adjusts. We kind of have to chase around to try to stand in it. God is constant in all that he is.

[11:17] He can't be more merciful. He can't be less merciful. And the same goes for his favor, his grace, his steadfast love. He never runs out. He never gets tired. He never takes a break. He never shifts.

He never changes his mind about those things. He never gives mercy. He never gives us grace. He never pours out steadfast love and then takes it back. He never gives it in half measure either.

He doesn't say like, you know what? Like, man, Jeremy over there, he's a really good guy. I'm going to give him a lot of mercy. But like, Elliot, nah, you know, not so much. I'm just going to give him a half measure.

He doesn't do that. We always get the fullness of those things from him all the time, every single one of us. Why? Because he is faithful in all his ways. And he is good.

And that goodness means that he delights to be this way toward us. Wayne Grudem puts it this way. God's mercy is his goodness towards those in distress. His grace is his goodness towards those who deserve only punishment.

[12:17] And his patience is his goodness towards those who continue to sin over a period of time. That is who God always is.

And he loves to be this way. He delights to be this way to every single one of his creatures. And here's the thing. That doesn't mean we always take notice of that.

It's easy to become entitled to God's faithfulness and goodness so that it's kind of expected rather than appreciated. It can be assumed rather than sought.

So what should we do? Well, we should be looking for God's goodness and faithfulness because it cultivates gratitude. I grew up kind of on the poorer side of middle class, which meant a lot of hand-me-downs.

And I got one meaningful birthday present every birthday, you know? So when I turned six, I remember going into the toy store and looking over the toy section and the thing that I loved.

[13:17] I was like a big Lone Ranger fan. And like some of you young kids, just sorry you missed out, you know? And there was this little Lone Ranger package that had a mask and a pistol and a holster and a handkerchief and a vest.

It was like, I was like, dude, this is going to be amazing. It's like, that's what I wanted. And I never thought I was going to get it because I thought it was too expensive. And then I unwrapped that

present.

And it was the Lone Ranger set from Toy City in La Habra, California. And I was like, oh my gosh, I flipped out with joy and gratitude. I was so excited because I opened it up late at night.

I woke up the next day, the break of dawn, before anybody else was up. I put on all the Lone Ranger stuff and ran around my neighborhood, not realizing that I was only in my chonies at the time.

I was like, I was just having fun. Six-year-old kid just going the buck wild with my new toys. There was genuine gratitude. There was genuine excitement because that was a big thing.

[14:19] I took notice. I said lots of thank yous and gave lots of hugs in response to that. But you know what? I didn't have that same passionate gratitude and recognition every night when I sat down for dinner that I didn't make, that I didn't buy.

That's the point. It's easy to get caught up in looking for the big God moments in our lives and fail to see the many ways he is faithful and good to us. The things that are constant, the things that are unchanging are the things that we can so easily take for granted.

You know, I get irritated when my internet starts bogging down and my show buffers for five seconds. It's like, oh, the humanity, right? And yet, I am old enough to remember the days of AOL dial-up, right?

I used to remember when you'd have to go to Blockbuster to rent a movie or wait a whole week to watch your next episode of the show you really love on Thursday night.

Whatever gets normalized in our lives kind of becomes the new standard that we feel entitled to, doesn't it? And here's the thing. What entitlement does, entitlement shrinks the capacity of our souls to enjoy God's goodness and faithfulness.

[15:36] And it also shrinks the capacity of us to display God's goodness and faithfulness. But you know what gratitude does? Gratitude enlarges us for both.

It makes room for more joy, more love, more mercy, more grace, more goodness, more faithfulness. Gratitude enlarges our capacity to enjoy God's goodness and faithfulness.

So what are some constants? What are some constants that we have in God that we should be seeking to look for and give thanks for? Well, one of them, as we can see, is when Jesus spoke to his disciples, he sent them out on a short-term mission.

He sent them out on a short-term mission to preach the gospel, cast out demons, heal diseases, and they came back very successful. And they're rejoicing in that. And he says, don't rejoice in those things, guys. Because that can just, that'll be a roller coaster up and down.

Man, you know what's better than that? Rejoice that your name is written in the book of life. Rejoice in that. Jesus is saying to us through that moment, don't make results your main focus.

[16:45] That is a surefire recipe for anxiety, for anger, for animosity, even for slipping into apathy. He's saying focus more on what doesn't change.

Focus less on what does. Gratitude for a secured, eternal inheritance is an important perspective to have as disciples of Jesus. And it's an easy one to take for granted, isn't it?

I mean, think about this. You and I, if we believe in Jesus as our Lord and our Savior, we have everlasting life ahead of us. We have unceasing, we have a promise of guaranteed unceasing joy and glory and goodness that is never, ever, ever going to end.

And we're going to step into one moment of that. And the next one's going to be even better. And the next one's going to be even better. Heaven's going to be like this never-ending crescendo of love and joy and goodness and beauty.

We can't even comprehend. When is the last time you and I sought to like, you know what? Let me stop and just comprehend that for a little bit. When's the last time we've pondered that? That would be good for us to do, wouldn't it?

[17:55] And here's another point of goodness and faithfulness. You know what? You and I, we got a foretaste of that everlasting future that's ahead of us. We get a foretaste of it now because of God's abiding presence.

He is the God who is with us. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord for salvation is given this amazing gift. Jesus promised to send his disciples, the Holy Spirit, to fill his disciples, to guide his disciples, to teach his disciples, to empower his disciples with the fullness of the presence of God.

And the Holy Spirit isn't just this ethereal presence or power or energy. He is a person. He is fully God. God just as Jesus is fully God. Just as the Father is fully God.

And they are the same heart and the same mind and the same person. They are one God yet three persons. And all that Jesus came to make known to us through his incarnation, he ascended into heaven, promised us his spirit, sent it to us.

We get it today, and the spirit makes known to us today God's abiding presence, all that Jesus wants to do and say to us. And to continue his work. This is the gift that we get and he's never going to revoke.

[ 19 : 04 ] To be filled with the spirit is to be filled with the goodness and the faithfulness of God, and he makes it known to us. And that makes our witness more powerful. Displaying God's goodness and faithfulness requires God's abiding presence.

I mean, think about this. Jesus didn't let his disciples start the mission right away when he ascended into heaven. He said, you got to wait. I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit, but I'm going to make you wait.

And they waited 10 days between his ascension and Pentecost. Why? Because I think Jesus and God wanted to make it very clear of the necessity of God's abiding presence for us to be able to display God to others.

We can't do this without his help. If we do it without him, we're hopeless. You know what we are? We're a shell without any kind of real life inside of us.

Moses instinctively knew this all the way back in Exodus. That's why he said, God, if your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.

[ 20 : 15 ] Why? How shall it be known? How will people see? How will they perceive that we are any different to them? How will they know that we found favor in your sight, I and your people?

Is it not actually in your going with us that we're going to be distinct? That we'll be separated. We'll be able to discern like who's your people and who's not your people throughout the face of this earth.

Moses knows how much they needed God's presence with them to set them apart from every nation. If you really want to be changed, this is a truth.

This is a law that God has put into his creation and put into us as people and just how things work in his universe. If you really want to be changed by someone, you have to spend time in their presence.

You have to. How often have we as parents said this or heard other parents lament about this? How their kids changed because they, quote, fell into the wrong crowd.

[ 21 : 33 ] And that's the thing about presence. Particularly faithful presence. It proves who they are by having a significant effect on who you are.

God, it's this way with our relationship with God. Man, it proves who he is in part because of his effect on who we become.

And God's favor is approved to us in his abiding presence because it makes you different in ways that others can see. And it's not because our face starts glowing or our wardrobe changes to dockers and polos and jumpers.

That's not what I'm talking about. The distinction is in how we live. We have a new way of being as his disciples. Displaying God's goodness and faithfulness requires that we follow his ways.

Moses said in verse 13, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways. Moses wants to know God's ways.

[ 22 : 43 ] He's asking God to lead him because he wants to follow. And if we believe grace is saving us and leaving us to our own devices, then I don't think we're reading the same Bible.

Here's a truth. The apostle Paul said, it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is a gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast.

We can say yes and amen to that truth, right? Here's another truth that the apostle Paul said. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Okay. Both things are true at the same time. Now here's where it gets tricky. What are the God ways that we should be walking in then?

And this is tough. And I would say this, and this is really important. Because we have to get this right. God's goodness and faithfulness is displayed through a connection-driven life, not a rule-keeping life.

[ 23 : 45 ] I'm just going to sit in that for a little bit. You might say like, yeah, but Jesse, God has rules. Like the Ten Commandments, like the law, like those are things he gave to us.

Those are good things. And I would say yes, but what did Jesus say about the law and the prophets? How did he sum them up? Love God with all your mind and heart and soul and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Is that a rule-keeping life or is that a connection-driven life? Jesus said, a new command I give you that you love one another.

Think about this. What makes me want to read the Bible and pray?

It's connection with my Father in heaven. To know him. To be with him. To sit with my Savior, King Jesus.

[ 24 : 48 ] To fellowship with the Holy Spirit. That's why I read my Bible and pray. Not because I have to because it's a rule that God said I had to do as a disciple. What makes me want to fast and pray?

To contend for those who are oppressed by sin or in need of help or being oppressed by injustice. And I fast and I pray for myself too.

To put to death the sin that makes me want to wonder from the God I love. The sin that grieves him. The sin that impairs my relationship with God and others.

That's why I do those things. That is not rule-driven. That is connection-driven. What compels me to practice the disciplines of silence and solitude so that I can learn that I am more and be reminded that I am more than what I do.

So that I don't try to use myself to gain profile and privilege. And I don't use other people for personal gain. So that I can learn to be a non-anxious presence.

[ 25 : 53 ] So that I can bring that as a blessing to others. So that I can learn to patiently wait on God who often speaks to my soul in the still small voice.

That's why I do that. That's not rule-driven. That is connection-driven. What calls at me to want to be more like Jesus and imitate him in every way?

It's greater intimacy and integrity with God and others. That's what I do it for. Why? Why? To be a greater blessing to my family, to my friends, to strangers. By growing in mercy and grace and goodness and faithfulness.

All the things that he is. See, all of those ways of Jesus. They can be approached as rules to keep. But you know what that does?

It keeps score. It uses people often. And really that is about you promoting yourself to God.

Relationships can just become a to-do list. And when you understand that these are for the sake of the connection-driven life, man, it is the better way to live.

[ 27 : 00 ] It is a better way to follow Jesus. It is much more beautiful and actually much more powerful. And what fuels the formation of God-like goodness and faithfulness in us is that connection-driven life.

That we are pursuing him because he is worthy to be sought. God came in the flesh and died to restore us. His ways are always connection-driven.

And when we follow him, goodness and faithfulness will flow out of our lives to others. We see it in ways like taking a meal to new parents. Calling a grieving friend to check in on how they're doing. Driving someone to church who needs a ride. Man, some of you, you foster and you adopt. It's showing up faithfully to community group. Why? Because it's a place where we get to share burdens.

And do life together. And celebrate the good things. And encourage one another. And build one another up in the faith. Those are beautiful things. That is connection-driven discipleship.

[ 28 : 01 ] Following Jesus. And as we do that, goodness and faithfulness flows out of us. So, the question for you and me is, are we connection-driven?

Or are we rules-driven? The with God life. The one offered to us where we get to abide in his presence. We get to be led by his spirit.

It is a connection-driven life that imitates the life of Jesus. And yes, it is full of his goodness and faithfulness. As the band comes up and we respond. I'm going to say to those in the room, if you're here, you're not yet a follower of Jesus.

Man, one, I'm so glad that you're here. And I'm so glad you got to hear what God is like in his goodness and his faithfulness. And also what he calls us to be. And ways that we're meant to follow him in.

And he is offering to you right now a genuine relationship with him. And he did that so much that he came in the flesh.

[ 29 : 01 ] And he died for you to pay for your sins. That sin that separates you from him. And he did that to pay the price so that you could be forgiven. And what it takes from you is believing in that.

Trusting that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he said he did for you. It means coming to him and surrendering to him as Lord of your life. Receiving his presence.

That promise that he's given. Following him in this beautiful connection-driven life. Of knowing his goodness and faithfulness. In a moment, there's going to be an opportunity for you to respond to that.

There will be a prayer up on the screen for you to pray. And I want to encourage you, today is the opportunity. Don't leave without praying that prayer. To those of us in the room that are following Jesus, already followers of Jesus, as we come to take communion.

Which is one of the ways that we get to enjoy the connection-driven life with Jesus. He calls us to himself and these signs and symbols of his goodness and his faithfulness to us.

[ 30 : 01 ] His body broken, his blood shed. We get to be reminded of those things, those constants. Before we come to the table, I want to give us a chance to respond.

How is God working in your heart right now? How is he calling you and I to respond? So take a moment. We're going to have a moment of quiet.

Just pray where you're at. When you're ready, you can come to the table. Get the communion elements. Bring it back and take it when you're ready. Father, I pray over this moment as we come to you, draw near to us.

Make yourself very real. Work in our hearts, every single one of us. You know what we need.

Amen. Amen. Amen.