

My Goodness

06/10/2018

Galatians 5:22-23 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control.

What thoughts come to mind when you hear the word *goodness* – a good book, a good talk at church, a good friend? There are probably many thoughts that surface, and may I suggest three concepts that are probably in common with most thoughts of goodness: there is a benefit, a purpose being generously fulfilled, and an embracing of basic morality.

When I think of a good book or idea, or the goodness of someone or some ‘thing’, I think in terms of those words. I think of its value or worth to me; its benefit to me. A good book is one that benefits me in terms of either knowledge or entertainment. It meets a particular standard of expectation.

A good Sunday talk does what it is supposed to do: it adds value, a new perspective – a benefit in some way. A good deed benefits another. A good friend is a mutually beneficial relationship, rooted in dependability, trust, and acceptance.

And more than simple benefit, *goodness* implies an abundance of benefit, a generosity beyond expectation. A truly good book goes beyond expectation.

To pay the expected amount for effort given is *just*, while paying beyond what is expected, paying generously may be described as *goodness*. God's goodness bestowed upon us is called a blessing. We don't necessarily deserve all the good that we receive, but we are still showered with blessings.

A good heart consists of one that readily does good deeds for others; one that treats others sincerely and honestly, with decency and respect. A good-hearted person does this naturally and without thinking. There is no hesitancy or consideration of alternative or less beneficial choices.

When we are in tune with Spirit, we express goodness; where there is goodness, there is Spirit expressing.

[Read: Shay and the Baseball Game]

Sometimes there is little difference between kindness and goodness, except in this: kindness is having a benevolent nature or disposition; it is the desire to do good to others and to sincerely desire happiness of others. Kindness is the thinking. Goodness is the doing. Yes, it is moral excellence, virtue and generosity, and it is the activity designed to advance kindness...the doing of kindness.

People are drawn to goodness in every form of life: a good cup of coffee, a good dog, a good movie, a good conversation.

If you like opera, you are drawn to good singers. If you like Nascar, you are drawn to good drivers. If you like clothes, you are drawn to good designers. Goodness is magnetic.

Goodness is powerful. Parmahansa Yogananda said this:
Just as one moon gives more light than all the stars, one good man, by his very presence in the world, emanates vibrations that counteract the vibrations of a myriad evil people. The inherently greater influence of good people is then augmented by the power of God's goodness.

When you are able to free yourself from all bad habits, and to do good because you want to do good, and not because doing evil will bring you sorrow, then you are truly free.

Goodness is a powerful fruit of Spirit that spills out onto all that is in its path. Shakespeare said it this way: *How far that little candle throws his beams. So shines a good deed in a weary world.*

When we are shining our goodness into the world, we are allowing Spirit to unfold and express through us.

Ephesians 5:5;7-9 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world. 7 Don't participate in the things these people do. 8 For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your

behavior should show it! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

Ken Wilber, transpersonal philosopher and author says that all things of the Universe can be seen through four vantage points – internally and externally; individually and collectively.

Using his concepts, we can examine goodness in this way as well, and attempt to express goodness in all ways. Viewing goodness externally, in measurable observable terms, we describe an individual with words like decent, moral, respectful, honest, and sincere. It is the typical way that we think of goodness. “He or she does good things.”

Collectively, we can describe goodness socially in terms of how we treat each other, whether laws are set up such that people are treated justly, how we treat other societies, and so on. “We do good things.”

The Bible addresses these two aspects of goodness in one verse. Luke 6:35 - *“Love your enemies! Do good to them!”*

Goodness can also be described from an internal perspective, which includes the emotions and intention. How does it feel to do good things? What does it mean to be good? “Not only do I do good things, but I am good.”

Pablo Casals, famous cellist, said, “Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It

is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own good.”

It is more difficult to honestly assess our intention...our goodness. We are quick to see his goodness, her goodness – but my goodness? Often, we see nothing good within our own hearts; we are tainted by past actions, and often judge our internal selves based upon external criteria.

Paul struggled with this when he said in Romans 7:18 *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”*

Yet when we look at ourselves from within, through our spiritual eyes, we recognize that we are a Child of God, and as such cannot be anything but good – Spirit made us and moves in and through us, and God don’t make no junk!

Being ‘born again’ is the recognition and acknowledgement of God within us; that Spirit is our primary essence and that the Christ light can express through our words, thoughts, and actions. We merely have to acknowledge it and let it grow.

As Eckhart Tolle said: You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you and allowing that goodness to emerge.

Collectively, goodness is observed internally in terms of a geo-perspective, whether we have a broad global consciousness or a narrow local focus. Our collective desire as

a culture to do good to all people, all groups, all nationalities and ethnicities defines the broadness of our goodness.

Of course, Jesus taught us to develop a broad perspective through his teachings such as the Good Samaritan. He constantly taught us to love our neighbors, love our enemies – in other words: love the broad expanse of people outside our narrow life-space.

Mohammed also taught something similar: “Do not say, that if the people do good to us, we will do good to them; and if the people oppress us, we will oppress them; but determine that if people do you good, you will do good to them; and if they oppress you, you will not oppress them.”

Spirit is constantly unfolding to greater expanse and awareness, wanting to include more and more of Creation, desiring to draw all cultures into one body. Helen Keller noted, “The welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all.”

Shari Arison, Israeli-American business woman and philanthropist, said this: Doing Good is a simple and universal vision. A vision to which each and every one of us can connect and contribute to its realization. A vision based on the belief that by doing good deeds, positive thinking and affirmative choice of words, feelings and actions, we can enhance goodness in the world.

Every goodness we perform ripples persistently outward, affecting every heart it meets, enhancing every life and

situation. Animals remember and respond to goodness as well as cruelty; we remember goodness bestowed upon us as well as malice. Goodness is soft, warm, healing, light-filled, and loving; cruelty and meanness are harsh, cold, disturbing, dark, and uncaring. Both make a deep and lasting impression.

So, the game is a foot, and we are only here to play in these bodies for a short period of time. Spirit is like a puppy wagging its tail, eager, willing, and ready to join in the fun, only if we let it.

How many lives can we positively impact? Although we may be talented and have a specific purpose in our life, Spirit calls us to serve from our highest Self, to be of some benefit, to be couriers for the vibrating power of goodness and love into Creation while allowing the Christ to express abundantly through us.

Perhaps John Wesley said it best: *Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can.*” Inaccurately attributed to John Wesley, founder of Methodism; 1703-1791.

Let us pray...