

Goodness Is Godness

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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: adding value, a new perspective – a benefit in some way.

A good deed is one that benefits another. A good friend is a mutually beneficial relationship, rooted in dependability and acceptance.

And more than simple benefit, *goodness* implies an abundance of benefit, a generosity beyond expectation. To read a book

and be entertained is to be expected. A 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 showered with blessings none the less.

A goodhearted person is one who readily performs good toward others; they treat others sincerely and honestly, with decency and respect. A good heart exhibits this naturally and without thinking. There is no hesitancy or consideration of anything less than beneficial behaviors. I like the phrase "Goodness is God-ness"; that sums it up. When we are doing good, we are doing God's work.

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

[Read: Shay and the Baseball Game]

There is little difference between goodness and kindness. But perhaps a slight differentiation can be made: 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; it is the attitude of being thoughtful, helpful, compassionate, and gentle. Goodness is the doing of those things. It is moral excellence, virtue and generosity, and

it is the activity designed to advance kindness...the doing of kindness. So we can think of goodness as kindness in action.

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 and good orchestral music. If you like Nascar, you are drawn to good drivers and good competition...or good crashes. If you like clothes, you are drawn to good designers. Goodness is magnetic.

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, and that affect is far reaching.

The Bible is clear about goodness and in Luke 6:35 addresses it in this manner: *“Love your enemies! Do good to them!”*

Pablo Casals 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 intentions...our goodness... from within. 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.

As a society or as a global family, goodness is observed in terms of a geo-perspective, whether we have a broad global consciousness or a narrow local focus. Our cultural desire 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.

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.”

Every goodness we perform ripples persistently outward, affecting every heart that comes in contact with. Animals remember and respond to goodness; we remember the goodness bestowed upon us.

Marcus Aurelius wrote: Live not as though there were a thousand years ahead of you. Fate is at your elbow; make yourself good while life and power are still yours.

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 much can we get done together? How many lives can we positively impact? Although we may be talented and have a specific purpose in our life, the highest calling is to serve others in some way, to be of some benefit, of some help, and to express goodness abundantly into Creation by letting Christ light our path.

Let us pray...