

Good, and the God Who Is Good

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Mark 10:17-22, NIV)

Let's think together for a few minutes about something simple and deep at the same time — the difference between good and evil, and where we stand in it.

What is **good**? We use the word every day — a good cup of tea, a good person. But if I asked each of you what “good” really means, I'd probably get a different answer from every chair in this room. Each of us carries our own measuring stick. We decide what's good by our own lights — how we were raised, what we've come to believe over a

long life. And a standard that changes from person to person isn't really a fixed standard at all.

But the Bible tells us there **is** a fixed standard, and it doesn't come from us. We just heard it. A man calls Jesus “Good teacher,” and Jesus answers, “Why do you call me good? No one is good — except God alone.” Goodness isn't an idea we invented. Goodness is a Person. God is good — not by our measurement, but in himself. He is the measuring stick that never bends.

Now here is a thought that has helped Christians for centuries. If God is the source of all good, then what is evil? Evil is not something God made. Evil is what happens when good is missing. *[pause]* Think of this room. There is light. But if I drew the curtains and switched off every lamp, darkness would come — not because I brought darkness in, but because the light was gone. Darkness is simply the absence of light. And evil, in the same way, is the absence of good — the absence of God, who is good.

John said it beautifully: “God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.” (*1 John 1:5*) When we turn toward God, we turn toward the light. And that is good news — because light is always stronger. You cannot light one candle in the darkest room and have the darkness win. The smallest flame pushes it back.

So God is good, God is the standard, and evil is only the shadow where his light hasn't been let in. Which brings us to the question that matters most, especially as the years go by. **Am I good enough in God's eyes?**

Let me be gentle, because so many faithful people carry this quiet worry. Like the man who knelt before Jesus, we say: all these I have kept — have I done enough? Have my good deeds outweighed my bad, like two sides of a scale?

[pause] If that were the test, none of us could be sure.

Against perfect goodness itself, not one of us would stand.

But here is the heart of it. Whether you are counted good in God's eyes was never meant to rest on what **you** have done. It rests on what **God** has done. While we were still turned away, he did not wait for us to climb up to him — he came down to us. On the cross, Jesus took our turning-away upon himself and offered us his own goodness in its place. “For by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.” (*Ephesians 2:8–9*) A gift cannot be earned. If you could earn it, it wouldn't be a gift.

So what is left for us to do? Only to be **willing**. The rich man went away sad, because he was not willing to let go and follow. But the door is still open. To turn back toward the light, and say yes to what God has already done. Not to earn our place, but to receive it — like opening the curtains and letting the morning in. We don't make the sun rise. We only open the window.

And that is such a comfort, especially now. You do not have to lie awake wondering if you've done enough. You never could, and you were never asked to. God's question is

simpler and kinder: not “Have you been good enough?” but “Will you trust what I have done for you?”

So God is good — good beyond our measuring. Evil is only the shadow. And you are held good, not by anything you have managed across your long years, but because God is good, because Christ has done it all, and because you have turned your face, however weakly, toward the light — the light in which there is no darkness at all.

Let us pray. *[pause]* Father, you are good, and every good thing comes from you. Thank you that our hope rests not on our goodness, but on yours; not on what we have done, but on what you have done for us. Give each of us a quiet trust, and your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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