

How Good is God?

Psalm 100:5

November 17 and 24, 2019

Pastor David Streets

If you are a parent, there was a moment in your life when you taught your child a deeply profound truth about God. (If you are not a parent, it happened in your life when you were a child). To be sure, once they were born you talked to them, called them by name, you sang to them (Jesus Loves Me), you prayed over them, told them that you loved them as well. This moment did not happen then.

It probably happened sometime between their first and second birthday. Anybody want to guess what it was? Do you need another clue?

It happened at dinner. You taught your child to pray. We taught our children to say grace and most of us who did so taught them this prayer which taught them a deeply profound truth about God:

God is Good. God is Great.
Let us thank him for our food. Amen

Later we may have added:

By his hands we all are fed.
Thank you Lord for our daily bread. Amen

Through that prayer I learned that God is good. Actually I have known that for a long, long time. Sometimes I forget. Often I am so consumed by everything that is going on in my life, so overwhelmed by all I read or hear or see or so focused on what I need to do tomorrow, next week, next month, next year that I fail to remember something about my faith that I always need to remember. That is that God is good.

Recently this biblical truth came crashing back into my life to get my attention. Then the reality of it comforted me. Like a warm bath or hot tub. God is good, God is ever so good.

Most of you know that I love music. It is one of the best gifts God has placed in my life. Music goes straight to my soul and excites my spirit. I enjoy great preaching and teaching. I appreciate the works of several authors when I read their books. Music has this way of sneaking up on me. It latches onto my heart and helps me to get in touch with things going on in my life way down deep. Sometimes I will say that today's music "owned me." It took me over.

I love the music of the traditional series as well as the music of our contemporary services. Music helps me acknowledge the presence of God when our worship services begin

During the month of October, I shared all the messages in the traditional service. Each Sunday we began the service singing "Thou Art Worthy" as an act of praise to God.

Thou Art Worthy! Thou art Worthy!
Thou Art Worthy O Lord!
To receive glory, glory and honor,
Glory and honor and power.
For Thou has created hast all things created
Thou hast created all things
And for Thy glory, they are created,
Thou Art Worthy O Lord.

I loved it. The music owned me that day.

About six months ago, maybe eight, I heard another song that struck a chord with my soul. This time it was a contemporary piece, "The Goodness of God." See if it impacts you the way it impacted me as I play a portion for you.

I live the words. I love the tune. Most of all I love the truth that this song helps me to remember, especially when I am feeling sorry for myself, and I may have forgotten that God is good. God is so good! As I sing the song I am not simply reminded that God is good. I am also reminded of how good God is. I am

reminded of the goodness of God, that it is the very nature of God to be good. The song also causes me to remember ways in which I have experienced the goodness of God.

So let us dig deeper into the lyrics of the song and the biblical truths they support.

I love you, Lord.
For your mercy never fails me...

God possesses “never failing mercy” toward us. Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm. In other words, when you do wrong to me and I have the power to punish or harm you but I don’t, instead I show you compassion or forgiveness, I am displaying mercy toward you. That is what God does. That is who God is.

He (the Lord) does not treat us as our sins deserve
Or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has he removed his transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:10-12

I love you, Lord
For your mercy never fails me
All my days, I’ve held in your hands.

Let me say that again. All my days I’ve been held in your hands. God has us, God has you in his hands all the time, all your days. What an incredibly comforting thing that is for us to know. Sometimes we forget, right? When we are calling upon God and when we aren’t, God still has us in his hands. We are as precious to God as our children and grandchildren are to us.

Someone wrote a poem a while ago called “Footsteps.” In the poem the speaker tells of looking back on his or her life and seeing two sets of footprints, one their own and one belonging to Jesus. They were troubled that during the most difficult time in their life there was only one set of footprints, implying that Jesus had abandoned them, so they questioned the Lord. And he replied:

My precious, precious child,
I would never leave you nor forsake you,
As you look back on your life and you
See only one set of footprints during the hardest times,
It was then that I carried you.

The writer of this song understands God's presence completely and so she sings,

From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

This song is a great song to use to start your day, to revive your day, to end your day or all of the above.

Then we come to the chorus refrain,
And all my life you have been faithful,
And all my life you have been so, so good.
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

When I'm singing this part of the song, when I'm reflecting on all my life, whether I'm in worship or on my exercise bike, this is when the tears begin to well-up in my eyes. And that's because this is the place where I begin to reflect on the places in my life, throughout my entire life that God has been good to me.

I think about my parents who were great parents. They took me to church where I met Jesus and my faith was nurtured to the point that I sensed God calling me to become a pastor in his church.

I think about how I met my wife accidentally in church while I was on the rebound and thinking I will probably never get married...And God laughed!

I think about our relationship and how wonderful she is, how perfect she is for me. I think about our babies, one, then another and another and another. I think about the wonderful chaos of having four boys at home. God is good.

I think about my seven, soon to be eight grandchildren and what a great gift they are, every one of them. We will all be together at Thanksgiving.

I think about what a wonderful gift life is. How God has provided for all my needs. Food, clothing, shelter, water, good health. I think about the wonder of creation and everything in it. I think about how I so seldom stop to dwell in God's goodness, to bask in the goodness of God. And how I now try to do it more often.

I think about the church, God's gift to us. I think about our church and how much I love it. And I think about you, the people of this church.

The next verse of the song says,
I love your voice
You have led me through the fire.
In the darkest night
You are close like no other...

And I think of those instances in my life when God has led me through the fire: children with high fevers and yet-to-be-diagnosed conditions; severe illnesses and in some cases the death of friends and family members; changing circumstances at work; other events in my life that loomed large like huge mountains to overcome, and my own sickness in 2013. God has led me through the fire.

Many of you have had those times as well, right? Are you like me in that sometimes, once you overcome the rough spots you quickly get on with your life and you stop thinking about how God led you through that fire and you forget about the goodness of God?

Some of you are facing similar circumstances right now. You are walking through the fire and man it's rough. And you do not know when that walk will end and where it will lead. I want you to know that you are not alone. The Lord is leading you through the fire. You are at the top of his list. He knows exactly who you are and what your circumstances are. God thinks about you all the time. He knows your name.

The rest of the verse says,
I've known you as a father.
I've known you as a friend.
And I have lived in the goodness of God.

We compare God to our earthly fathers because they provide for us, protect us, guide, direct, and instruct us. So does God.

We also compare God to a friend who is always there for us; one who comes to us whenever we call and doesn't ask questions; one who cares for us unconditionally; the one person in our lives in whom we confide, to whom we can say anything. That's true of God also. And we have lived and we are living in the goodness of God.

And all my life you have been faithful
And all my life you have been so, so good.
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

Think back throughout all your life. Think back to all the prayers you prayed, all those times you called on God and he answered. Think about when you or your wife was about to give birth and you prayed fervently for her and the baby...think about those times you watched your child head off into surgery and out of your sight and you asked God to be there... Think about your own illness and maybe your need for surgery and you relied on God and the doctors in that order and when you recovered you thought your doctor was God but he wasn't. He was just an instrument in the hands of God.

Oh and by the way, this thought, this amazing fact about God often gets overlooked. I love doctors. I respect them. I have doctors in my family and I know several others. I hold them in high regard. For most, if not all of them, after they remove and repair, after they cut and put you back together, there is one thing they are counting on to make their efforts successful. That is the ability of your body to heal and grow back together. It's our divine design. It's something that God did. It's how he made us. It's how we were created. It's in our DNA.

After the doctor cuts you open, removes your appendix, sews you together again, then it's up to your body to function the way it was created by God to function, to heal where it is wounded, so that you recover. That, my friends, is a God thing; it's an example of the goodness of God.

So let's now stop and take a deep breath. And let us take a moment to reflect on how good God has been and continues to be to us. We could reflect on those things forever. And then let's stand and sing this song.