

GOODNESS UNWRAPPED

Welcome to this service in which we will continue to unwrap the fruit of the Spirit; the qualities that grow in us when we decide to follow Jesus. Where are we up to? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness....

“Goodness” can mean lots of things. Let’s have some ideas about what “good” or “goodness” means.....

The trouble is that we don’t always know what is good. For example, what is good for me might be bad for you and vice versa. Can you think of any examples of something like that?.....Say we both enter a competition and I win but you don’t. Good for me, bad for you. In the general scheme of things is that good or bad? Or something might seem good but really be bad. Can you think of examples of something like that?.....What about giving money to a beggar who then uses it to buy drugs?.

What is the opposite of goodness?.....Where does evil come from?..... The devil, who is the source of evil, often pretends to be good. He is very good at deceiving us. That is what is so confusing sometimes. Let’s read about Adam and Eve and the serpent.

God had told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We do not exactly know why he said this, but he was clear about it and we should not disobey a direct order from God. The serpent is actually the devil.

Read Genesis 3 1-8.

Do you remember what happened at the end of this?.....Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they thought they knew better than God, lost their innocence and were thrown out of Eden

Was eating the apple a good thing?.....It seemed good but was not. So the serpent, or the devil, pretended to be good but was really bad. We need to be aware that he is always trying to trick us. Things that seem good can be bad. From a Christian point of view, goodness means behaving in a way of which God approves.

Although a lot of the things we do are a mixture of good and bad, the Bible very clearly teaches that there is total goodness and there is total badness. God is totally good. Goodness is one of God’s attributes, one of the qualities of God. The psalms are constantly telling us that God is good. “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.” “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” And according to Jesus, God is the highest standard of goodness. Jesus said, “No one is good but God alone.” .

God is the source of all goodness. Every good thing comes from God. Every wonderful thing in nature comes from God. Every kindness we do for each other comes from God. Everything that God does is good. When God created the world, “he saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good.”

And if we follow Jesus, God will always bring good out of any situation. “In everything God works for good with those who love him.” God will even bring good out of really bad things. Though it might be very hard to see it at the time. Can you think of an example of this?..... Our expectations of life have been increasing and we tend to think that science and technology can solve all our problems. Perhaps Covid 19 is a wake-up call, bringing us back to reality. That might be a good thing.

One thing is definite. It can be difficult to behave in a way of which God approves. However much we try, we tend to do bad stuff again and again. Have you ever tried to be

good and realised how difficult it is? This is what the Christian writer, C S Lewis said. “No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good.”

And the apostle Paul said “What I do is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.”

The thing is, life is full of choices and to choose wisely, we have to learn to discern which behaviours God thinks are good and which he thinks are bad.

How do we do this? 1: Ask our consciences. 2: Is there anything about this particular behaviour in the Bible? If so, is what it says meant just for its time, or forever? For example, what Paul said about women wearing hats in church is cultural. We don't worry about that now. Not committing murder or adultery is eternal. 3: Pray about it and see what God says to us.

Now let us pray.

Dear Lord

We know that you are very good. No one except you is truly good. We are sorry that we find it hard to be good. Let's thank you for something good now.....Please help us to see clearly what is good and what is bad and how we should think and how we should behave. May we base our behaviour on the life of Jesus. Amen

So what have we learnt about goodness?

It can be difficult to know what is good, other than God. God is totally good. Even when we know what is good, it can be difficult to achieve it. But the Holy Spirit helps.