

sermon study guide

Sermon Summary (see next page for discussion questions)

Fruitful: More Like Jesus - Goodness

October 2/3, 2021

Ashwin Ramani

The fruit of the Spirit embodied by Jesus as demonstrated in the gospels is made manifest in the life of the believer by the Holy Spirit. But the following question is poignant: “How are we as Christians perceived by the world during this pandemic?” We are encouraged by Philippians 2:15 to stand out from others as we “shine among them like stars in the sky.”

The character quality that differentiates the believer is that of goodness, a quality that Jesus possessed (Acts 10:38). Jesus is the model of goodness for us so we can also go about doing good in the power of the Holy Spirit and bring healing to those who are oppressed by the enemy.

An atheistic billboard campaign “Good without God” is true in that people who do not know God can do good because we are all created in His image. The difference with the Christian is that goodness is a necessary overflow of our heart put there by the Holy Spirit. Luke 6:43-45 says that each tree is recognized by its fruit and that good fruit cannot come from a bad tree.

Next, we are likened to salt and light. In this context the salt brings out the best flavor. In the same way Christians can unite to bring out the best in their communities. If we fail to effect change this may be an indicator that we are not living out God’s purposes. The light (Matt 5:14-16) is shone so that the nations will come to know God and give him honour. People will see the light of God through the good deeds of Christ-followers. Through a personal anecdote of witnessing a scene of a street preacher battling a protest of LGBTQ activists, Pastor Ashwin amplifies the need to begin our mission by meeting the needs of the surrounding homeless bystanders who were so obviously broken. By tending to the brokenness, we can gain trust and then be able to share the good news. Jesus is saying the world will be brought to its knees by our good works, not by our preaching.

However, if we only do good deeds and don’t share the hope we have – people will praise us for being so kind-hearted. By proclaiming the good news people will give God the praise and come to know Jesus as Savior. Good deeds go hand in hand with the good news.

History has shown us that the church advanced by being salt and light and transforming society. The Roman Emperor Julian tried to replicate this but failed because he couldn’t transform the hearts of the people to love the unlovely. In contrast, Christians acted out of their heart and coupled their good works with the undiluted message of the gospel and turned their world upside down. Pastor Ashwin illustrates this with a touching story of German missionaries caring for and loving abandoned children with HIV/AIDS. The community was transformed by this act of unconditional love coupled with the good news.

We face a world in great disarray. We must allow the goodness of God poured into our hearts to spill over and meet the needs of those around us. By this we place the spotlight on the good news and glorify our Father in heaven.

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Discussion Questions

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. When has something or someone good attracted your attention strongly enough to compel you to find out more? What was the good that you saw?
2. What examples of good deeds have you witnessed during the COVID pandemic?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 5:13-16

3. What are the purposes of salt and light in everyday life? What are the consequences when we lose our 'saltiness' or become 'covered lamps'? How can we prevent that from happening?

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

4. When it comes to our doing good works, what is God's role? What is ours? How does this help us keep a healthy perspective about good works?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Good deeds are the consequence of the heart change that has taken place in us through the Gospel. How would you explain to an observer who sees you helping those in need why you are different? What is the difference that others notice when the Holy Spirit resides in us?
6. What are some opportunities that you sense in your heart right now to do good works in your workplace? In your neighborhood? In your family?

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 5:13-16

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Ashwin said "We engage in good deeds not with ulterior motives – but because it is who we are." Reflect on how God's goodness has changed you and how your good deeds bring glory to the Father.

