

The Fruit of a God-Filled Life: Gracious Goodness
May 4, 2008
Luke 4:1-13

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

[title slide] Of all the Fruit of the Spirit, I suspect that “goodness” may be the hardest to sell. It’s not that people are against goodness. It’s just, I think, that people don’t want to have too much of it. Who, after all, wants to be known as a “**Goody goody two-shoes!**”

And have you ever heard of someone who’s so heavenly minded that he’s **no earthly good**?

I mean, just how good do you want to be?

One of our problems with goodness is the same problem we have with love. The word "good" is **used in so many ways**, just as we use the word "love." We love our children, we love apple pie, and we love a beautiful sunset, but each of these "loves" are entirely different.

It’s the same with the word "good." We say, "I had **a good meal**," or "I met a **good person**," or "We had **a good cry**." They’re different, aren’t they?

Let’s look at how the word "good" is used in the Bible. For instance, we read in the opening chapters of Genesis that **God created the heavens and the earth**, and then He created life in the sea and in the air and on the ground. After each creation, God looked at it and said, "**It is good.**" What does that mean?

Well, I guess it means that when God looked at what He had done, it **fulfilled his desire**. He was **pleased with it**. So maybe we could say, "Goodness means fulfilling God’s desire in our lives. Or, goodness is something that pleases God." Or maybe we could go a step further and say, "A good person is a person who is pleasing to God."

The Bible also tells us that "**God is good.**" Now what makes God good? Well, God is **pure**, God is holy, God is **forgiving**, God is **generous**. So therefore, if we’re good people, then all those characteristics would be true of us, too.

Actually, I like this simple definition of goodness that I heard somewhere along the way:
Goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason.

JESUS - A DEMONSTRATION OF GOODNESS

Our model, our example, is Jesus. When you want perfect love, look at Jesus. When you want joy and peace, look at Jesus. And the same is true of goodness.

A lot of people make the **mistake** of thinking that **being good came easily** for Jesus. True, his nature was purely good. But, he lived in the flesh just as we live in the flesh. And **Satan tempted Him** over and over again.

Our scripture lesson this morning tells one of the times that Satan tempted Jesus. There are 3 temptations here. And Satan is still using **those same temptations on us**, even today.

Listen to Luke 4:3-4, "The devil said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.''"

The first temptation is selfishness.

In Luke 19:10, Jesus gives us his mission statement, and it's pretty short and simple. "*I have come to seek and save those who are lost.*" That's why he came. **That was and is his purpose** in life – as it should be the purpose of everyone who claims to follow him.

Now, here is **Satan, trying to get Jesus to focus on Himself**. He tempts Jesus to turn the stones into bread.

Now you must understand that Satan always **tempts us in our area of weakness**. If your area of weakness is lust, Satan is going to attack you using your sexual desires. If your weak point is pride, Satan's going to bring someone along to knock you down a peg. If it's materialism, you're going to suddenly find lots of fancy catalogs hitting your mailbox. It all boils down to this – the devil is going to find a way to tempt you to **put yourself**, your own needs, your own desires, **above God's purposes**.

Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. He was extremely hungry, and Satan knew it. It would have been so easy for Him to have used His power to do what Satan suggested.

If Satan could just get Jesus to be concerned about satisfying His own needs, of making things easy for Himself, of taking the easy way out, then **Jesus would never be willing to pray, "Not my will, but thine be done."**

And He certainly would not have been willing to **pay the price** for your sins and for mine. He would never have gone to the cross for us. If Jesus were concerned first about His own needs, then He would never have gotten around to being concerned about us.

But Jesus, because He had come to do the will of His Father, knew that **the most important thing was not Himself, but us**. So He says, "*It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone.'*" He did the right thing for the right reason.

2. Now continuing on, Luke 4:5-7 says, "*The devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to Him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.'*" Boy, what a temptation!

The second temptation was a temptation to compromise.

"Here it is, Jesus," Satan says, "I have control over the people of this world. They're serving me. So let's make a deal. **Don't set your standards so high.** Just compromise with me, and all this can be yours."

Is Satan using that same temptation on you? Are you **shading the truth** to make yourself look a little bit better or to persuade people to do things your way? Are you **cutting corners**, taking a few **shortcuts** in your work? Nothing big – just doing something a little bit wrong to achieve a bigger good?

Jesus looks at the devil and says, "Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" (verse 8). In other words, "No way, Satan. There are no short-cuts in doing the right thing. It's God's way the whole way." So He did the right thing for the right reason.

3. Vs's 9-11 say, "*The devil led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'*"

The third temptation is the temptation of popularity.

Here is Satan **taking scripture out of context**, and he does it very well. He is tempting Jesus to do something spectacular to **amaze the crowds** and show them His power. If Jesus would do something marvelous like throwing Himself down from the top of the temple in Jerusalem, and then have God's angels swoop down and catch Him like in "**Angels in the Outfield**," everyone would eagerly follow Him. I mean, **how cool is that!**

Let's face it, it's nice to be liked. **We all like to be liked.** I'll tell you an inside secret. Just about everyone who is a **leader** has a deep seated need to be loved, liked, and appreciated. It's one of the things that drives people to lead. And Satan will always be there, especially with leaders, urging them to **do what's popular instead of what's right.** To make the easy choice instead of the tough but godly choice.

What a big temptation that must have been because Jesus could have done it. He could have saved Himself. But **He could not have saved Himself and us, too.**

Jesus said to Satan in vs. 12, "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*" And vs. 13 says, "When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time."

But Satan didn't stay away long. He kept on tempting Him. Don't ever think that it was easy for Jesus to be good. He had to deliberately do the right things for the right reasons.

III. TANGIBLE WAYS TO DISPLAY GOODNESS

Goodness is part of the fruit of a God-filled life. So the question is, "What kind of fruit are we producing?" And as you look at the fruit, do you see goodness? Is it there? Well, **here are 3 ways** to display goodness.

1. #1, **we can display God's goodness by being forgiving**. Listen to Matthew 6:14-15, "*If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*"

Now those are frightening verses, because they say that if I'm not forgiving, then I cannot be forgiven. If I go around holding grudges, then I won't receive the **forgiveness of God** because it is **blocked by my unforgiving spirit**.

The flip side of this is that to display God's goodness, **all of us need to do something that Jesus never did!** And that is that we need to **confess** when we do wrong, ask forgiveness, and **repent** (which means change the way we're behaving).

So the first step is to do the right thing for the right reason and to become forgiving as God is forgiving.

2. The second step is to embrace purity. We can display goodness by being morally pure. Now that is **counter-cultural** because our culture embraces impurity, and is constantly telling us that everybody is doing it.

Have you noticed how our **society has shifted**? Not that many years ago, a person who was "loose" was typically portrayed in movies and on TV in a negative way – an object of pity or derision. But today it's more likely that the moral character will be the butt of jokes for being so un-hip, so out of it. That is, of course, until they fall, in which case they will be derided for their hypocrisy. Basically, **a sexually pure person is either naïve, a loser, a jerk, or a hypocrite**.

But that's not what the Bible says. If you're going to be a good person, you are to be a pure person, keeping your life pure before the Lord.

How do we do that?

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Phil 4:8 (NLT)

The Biblical principle is this: **What you put in determines what you'll pour out**. If you spend ten hours a week watching videos and TV shows that treat sex outside of marriage as normal, and listening to music that equates sex with love and treats women as objects, then try to balance that with one hour in church on Sunday morning, which side do you think is going to win?

I've learned from painful experience that **a pure life grows from pure thoughts**. And there are certain **movies and TV shows** that I can't watch, because when I feed my eyes and my ears that kind of food, my thoughts become impure, and when your thought life starts to go south, your actions won't be far behind.

We are called to nurture purity in our thoughts and actions.

3. Finally, we express goodness by displaying generosity.

1 John 3:1 says, "*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us.*" It is so much love that we cannot even receive it all. **God is a giving God.** "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." And He gives and He gives and He gives some more.

So in turn, then, if we are to participate in the goodness of **God we need to become generous,** too. But that's a touchy subject, isn't it? Shouldn't we give cheerfully? Shouldn't we give because God has given us so much? Shouldn't we give just because we love to give to God?

Someone has said, "You never look more like God than when you are giving." Don't give out of guilt. Don't give out of obligation. Give because it's the right thing to do.

CONCL. Well, after having said all that about goodness, let me say this, "**Goodness will never get us into heaven.**" We will never be good enough to get into heaven. It's only through the mercy and grace of God that we can be saved.

But the growth of goodness in your life is **one important sign of a God-filled life.** A sign that your relationship with Jesus is more than just words.

Will you mess up? Yes, you will. Again and again. But Jesus is patient and loving, and day by day as we surrender our lives to him, as we work out our faith, he forgives us, and transforms us, and makes us more and more like himself. And God is good – all the time.

John Wesley told Christians 250 years ago: "Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can."

It's your choice. **God is good.** You're not. But **you can be** if you follow Christ and submit to His leadership in your life. You can do that right now as we conclude with prayer.