



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### **GOD IS GOOD, ALL THE TIME**

~ Scripture: Psalms 145 & 73 ~

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#### INTRODUCTION

GOD IS GOOD. . .ALL THE TIME. ALL THE TIME. . .GOD IS GOOD!

It's a phrase we say almost every time we gather for worship. It has become our watchword. More than a byline or slogan or catchphrase; it is a *statement of faith*, really. There's a whole lot of theology (of what we believe about God) in that phrase that I would like to unpack today.

In the Bible, there are dozens of times when the word "good" or "goodness" is associated with God. I counted over 40. One of the really great passages that extols God's goodness is **Psalm 145**. I would like for us to read it responsively this morning. . .

#### **PSALM 145** [New Living Translation]

- 1 I will praise you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.
- 2 I will bless you every day, and I will praise you forever.
- 3 Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! His greatness is beyond discovery!
- 4 Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts.
- 5 I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles.
- 6 Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue; I will proclaim your greatness.
- 7 Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness; they will sing with joy of your righteousness.
- 8 The LORD is kind and merciful, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love.
- 9 The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.
- 10 All of your works will thank you, LORD, and your faithful followers will bless you.
- 11 They will talk together about the glory of your kingdom; they will celebrate examples of your power.
- 12 They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign.
- 13 For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule generation after generation.
- 14 The LORD helps the fallen and lifts up those bent beneath their loads.
- 15 All eyes look to you for help; you give them their food as they need it.
- 16 When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.

- 17 The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.
- 18 The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him sincerely.
- 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them.
- 20 The LORD protects all those who love him, but he destroys the wicked.
- 21 I will praise the LORD, and everyone on earth will bless his holy name forever and forever.

This psalm was first a hymn / praise song sung by an early community of faith. This is what these worshippers believed. It is how they saw God, how they felt about Him.

- They saw him as a **king** (v. 1) == boundless in power and ruling strength. . .  
A God who is in control no matter how crazy things get here below!
- They saw him as **kind** and **compassionate**.  
[v. 9: *“The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.”*]
- In other words, here was a God whom they could follow, trust, base their lives on.

So, what do we mean by the term “good”? What are we saying when we call God “good”?

When I hear the word “good”, I think of:

- Something **Satisfying / Useful** – maybe that’s why God said *“It is good”* at the end of each day of creation.
- Something **Pleasant / Joyful / Agreeable** – like *good* food, a *good* movie. *“O taste and see that the Lord is good.”* See for yourself.....
- **Kindness / Love / Bounty** – In the New Testament, God is likened to the father who can’t give enough good gifts to his children (cf. Luke 11:13).

But isn’t there more? Isn’t there something deeper?

- Yes, God DOES good. His actions, His deeds are certainly praiseworthy!
- But our Scripture says God IS good. That has to do with His being, His character.

The word “*good*” reveals the nature, the character of God. When we say “*God is good*”, we are saying something about WHO He is as much or more than WHAT He does. In His nature there is no sin, no evil. His moral character is absolutely above reproach.

But not everybody believes that! Some have what I call. . .

### A PHILOSOPHICAL STRUGGLE

We live in a day & age that denigrates the goodness of God. In fact, our entire culture has been indicting God as immoral for centuries. How often do we hear people complaining that God is wrathful, vengeful, angry?

- He throws one temper tantrum after another in the Old Testament.
- He directs evil toward people (as in the Book of Job).
- He promises eternal abandonment from His presence to those who don’t follow Him.

If God is such a mixture of good and evil himself, how can we love, worship, or want to serve Him? How can we trust or have faith in Him?

[One of the core values of our faith that we can help resuscitate is the Biblical view of God’s character as loving & fatherly. That He is absolutely, infinitely, eternally GOOD is our message!]

BUT, you say, what about JOB? What about JESUS?

Wasn’t God’s wrath poured out on His sinless Son at the Cross? Yes, it was. But that was in order to make a way for us as sinners to be redeemed. Without such a sacrifice, each of us would have been punishable for our own sins. Certainly, He had a *good* purpose in mind.

Well, then, if God is so good, why is there so much evil in the world? Jesus explains it very clearly in a parable found in Matthew 13:24-30. . .

*"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as everyone slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. The farmer's servants came and told him, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds!' 'An enemy has done it!' the farmer exclaimed. 'Shall we pull out the weeds?' they asked. He replied, 'No, you will hurt the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'"*

That parable makes two things clear:

1. God does not create evil, though He does allow it (as in the case of Job);
2. Evil is a temporary phenomenon. There's coming a day when there will be no more dying, disability, pain or tears. . .when the blind will see, the lame will walk, and the dead will live again.

Why does He allow it? Because He has given the gift of free will to us. In so doing, he subordinated His own will to ours. Think about it for a moment. You and I have more power than a nuclear weapon. You may not feel that powerful this morning. But, consider this, you can say "No" to the living God. Now there may be consequences to that—God has even arranged for the "eternal consequences" to be dealt with—but He will never force / coerce you to do His will. Man, that's freedom! That's power! And how badly we abuse it!

God is good and His creation is also good—even with the evil "tares" strewn throughout. God is NOT the source of evil. Nor is He angry or vengeful or filled with wrath. The Bible affirms over & over—in passages like Psalms 145—the loving nature of God and our redemption through faith.

The New Testament supports this. . .

- Romans 2:4 – *"Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Can't you see how kind He has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?"*
- Romans 11:22 – *"Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fall, but kindness to you who continue in Him."*

Sometimes it takes a little sternness to turn us from our sinful ways. Any parent charged with the bending of a child's will toward that which is honest, truthful, and right knows it's going to take a little sternness along the way. So, how can we question the intention, the motivation of God who wants none to perish but for all to come to repentance and faith (cf. II Peter 3:9).

Well, not all of us have a PHILOSOPHICAL STRUGGLE with the goodness of God. But, I'll bet some (if not all) of us have a more PERSONAL STRUGGLE with it. . .

### A PERSONAL STRUGGLE

We mouth the words, *"God is good"*. But down inside, we wonder. Take a look at Psalms 73. . .

*Truly God is good!* [Starts out on a good note!]  
*But concerning me, I was coming close to the edge of the cliff.*  
*My feet were slipping; I was almost gone.*

*I envied the proud! They seemed to prosper despite their wickedness.*  
*They seemed to live painless lives. . .their bodies so healthy and strong.*

*They don't seem troubled like other people, or plagued with problems like others.*

*From their callous hearts comes iniquity. They seem to be able to do evil all day long and get away with it. Indeed, they seem to have everything their hearts could ever desire.*

*Was it for nothing that I have kept my heart pure and kept myself from doing wrong?*

*I wonder sometimes if God knows what is going on? If He even realizes (or cares) what is happening?"*

We get to looking at other people. They seem to be doing “just fine, thank-you” without God in their lives. Suddenly the grass starts looking greener on the other side. We get into self-pity and get bitter—unless we realize, as the psalmist did (vv. 23-26):

*No matter what, I still belong to you; you are still holding my right hand.  
You will keep on guiding me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny.  
Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth.  
My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine  
(and I am His) forever.*

It’s important that you know that! It is important that you know that God is good! In life, many experiences will challenge this truth. . .many things you don’t understand. “*What possible good could come from this illness, this trial, this tragedy?*” You do not know WHY God has allowed something to happen – and you get confused. But you’re not seeing the total picture; you’re only seeing this part.

What we DO know is that God is good AND that “*in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose*” [cf. Romans 8:28]. We can’t see it; it’s a position we have to take by faith. What you DON’T know is why you’re going through whatever you’re going through. Don’t give up what you DO know for what you DON’T know!!! God has a GOOD purpose. If we could see beyond today, you would (and someday will) see it.

Satan loves to challenge: “Where’s your God now?” And we wonder. That’s what Psalm 73 is all about. Consider. . .

### **JOSEPH (of the Old Testament)**

His brothers conspired to put him to death—because they were jealous of the favor he had found with his father. They just laughed at his pleas for mercy. They sold him to traders headed toward Egypt and dividing the money. Joseph ended up on the slave market. Although he did well where he was placed, the master’s wife made false accusations, and he ended up in jail.

Joseph might be wondering about now, “*Is God good?*”

A butler was put in jail and had a dream. Joseph interpreted it. And the butler was restored three days later. Just before he was released, Joseph asked a favor of the butler: “Could you see if Pharaoh would grant clemency?” The butler forgot, and Joseph spent two more years in prison. One day Pharaoh had a dream. Suddenly the butler remembered: “Oh no, my Hebrew friend is probably still down in jail.” He told the Pharaoh about Joseph. . .Joseph was brought to interpret the dream. . .and Pharaoh made him second over all of Egypt. Joseph prepared them to persevere through a severe famine that was coming.

The picture starts to become clearer. Now, he can see God’s purposes unfolding. Truly God is good! But there was a time in Joseph’s life when he looked at circumstances and wondered.

Now, the brothers thought Joseph would want to get even. The tides had turned; this time they came seeking mercy. Of course, Joseph forgave them and the family was restored. When it was all over, Joseph said: “*You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*”

God is good and He works all things together for good.

### **JOB**

He lost everything (e.g.: possessions / family / health / friends). Sitting there in that painful, miserable condition, his wife asked: *“How can you say ‘God is good?’”* *“Where is God now?”* His answer is recorded in Job 23:10 – *“But He knows the way I take. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”*

### **PAUL**

Paul was beaten. . .stoned. . .imprisoned. . .shipwrecked. . . and (finally) beheaded. Yet he declares in Romans 8:18 – *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed.”*

### **CONCLUSION**

All of us are going to face trouble and sorrow. It’s not a matter of “if” but “when”. Question is:

- Where will you turn when trouble comes?
- Where will be your place of strength? Where will your stronghold be?
- Will you put your trust in the Lord?

Life is hard and sometimes unfair. But God is good! God has “good” reasons for what He does and what He allows. And His answer to our suffering is always Himself.