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Luke 6:17-26  
 Jeremiah 17:5-10  
 Psalm 1  
 I Corinthians 15:12-20

February 13, 2022  
 The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

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*God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good.*

How many times have you heard these words? Do they ring true? Do they resonate with your experience of God? Indeed, God is good but do we know God to be good all the time?

I was struck this week at how we wrestle with the goodness of God; and, in relation to God's goodness, how we understand our blessedness. Is God still good when things go bad? Maybe your first response is, "Well, of course God is still good. That's what we are supposed to believe." But, in the depths of human experience, when you find yourself in the grip of pain, anger, or despair...how do you understand God at those moments? Or when you look around at the unrest in the world, hunger, war, and sickness...can any of us look at those things and say God is still good?

Let's look at three of our readings this morning to help us consider this question. In Jeremiah, we are given some hard truths about humanity. Truths that tell us that life is going to pose some challenges, and at times those challenges are going to feel insurmountable. For Jeremiah, the true nature of God emerges not as a stimulus for the good or the bad things that happen; but instead, the true nature of God emerges as we are able to trust in God's goodness. In other words, the prophet acknowledges that God isn't out there to let bad things happen, but God is there to lift us up when things go wrong.

God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. And so when we say these words, we are saying we trust that God's mercy and strength is available to us at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances.

*<sup>7</sup>Blessed are those who trust in the LORD,  
 whose trust is the LORD.  
<sup>8</sup>They shall be like a tree planted by water,  
 sending out its roots by the stream.  
 It shall not fear when heat comes,  
 and its leaves shall stay green;  
 in the year of drought it is not anxious,  
 and it does not cease to bear fruit.*

However, our texts also teach that our trust is not an emotion in and of itself. Trust is a discipline. An active way of being that calls forth within us a desire to follow what the law of God teaches. We not only trust that God is good but we also want to do what God teaches.

Because, we believe that following God's laws, in being a faithful disciple, is to live a life that is worthy of God's goodness. And, so, we examine within ourselves what is right and true, what is whole and worthy. We want to do good because God is good. Psalm 1 teaches:

<sup>1</sup>*Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!*

<sup>2</sup>*Their delight is in the law of the LORD, and they meditate on his law day and night.*

<sup>3</sup>*They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper.*

Surely, it's not always easy to follow but we repeat to ourselves: God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. And we come back time and time again to live as God wants us to live. Because we believe out of righteous living grows the goodness that God promises. It builds the foundation that sustains us when life pushes us to our limits, when we see pain and suffering, when we experience our own loss and doubt. We come back to God's teaching and we put it into practice... not just for ourselves but for our communities, in how we act, in how we speak, in how we *are*...inside and out.

As scholar Paul Myhre, states, *"Drinking from the stream from which the law of God flows can strengthen people so that they might discern that which is wicked and choose against it. The Psalmist is inviting people corporately and individually to live life in all its fullness by allowing the law of God to permeate them completely. It is a goal and we are invited to the journey toward that goal."*

Trust and faithful discipline. Two of the cornerstones to understanding the good nature of God.

Finally, let's look at our Gospel reading from Luke. God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. I have a hard time with this phrase when I read the Beatitudes. Maybe you get stuck here as well. At first glance, the Beatitudes can seem like a dividing line for divine goodness...of those who receive it and those who do not. It might even seem like a glorification of suffering and an admonishment of those who may achieve certain kinds of success. You might say that it seems as though God saves God's goodness for only some people....

*"Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

<sup>21</sup>*"Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.*

*"Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.*

But, maybe God's goodness isn't for everyone:

<sup>24</sup>*“But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.*

<sup>25</sup>*“Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.*

*“Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.*

From Luke’s perspective, is God good all the time? It certainly requires us to put into practice what we have learned thus far.

So, from what we have learned from Jeremiah and from the Psalmist, how is God’s goodness working in this passage? Think of it as God working to alleviate suffering in all its manifestations. That God sees our suffering when we brought low by circumstances and God sees our suffering when we are blind to God’s laws and God sees our suffering when we fail to trust in God’s mercy and grace.

It’s the promise that God always sees us and loves us and wants us to thrive. Jesus calls us to live in a place of awareness and discipline. To trust and to follow God’s law. That means when we are struggling, we trust that God will give us strength to overcome. And it means when we are moving through life with ease and abundance, we are to always live into God’s love by mending the places and the circumstances where others are suffering.

Barbara Brown Taylor describes it beautifully this way,

*“The Beatitudes are not advice...Jesus describes different kinds of people, hoping that his listeners will recognize themselves as one kind or another, and then he makes the same promise to all of them: that the way things are is not the way they will always be. The Ferris wheel will go around, so that those who are swaying at the top, with the wind in their hair and all the world’s lights at their feet, will have their turn at the bottom, while those who are down there right now, where all they can see are candy wrappers in the sawdust, will have their chance to touch the stars. It is not advice at all. It is not even judgment. It is simply the truth about the way things work, pronounced by someone who loves everyone on that wheel. ”*

That wheel is continuous and connected. Connected by trust and by faithfulness. Jesus is addressing the goodness of God in every blessing and in every woe and in every person. Jesus is removing barriers so that we can all see God’s love and reflect God’s love. We do so in order to be active participants of not only receiving God’s goodness but in participating in God’s goodness.

When we enter into faithful discipleship with God, we begin to embody day by day the truth of God’s goodness for our ourselves and for one another.

And let us all say, God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. Amen.