

THERE'S STILL SOME GOOD IN THE WORLD

Today's world is filled with evil, violence, hatred, and sin. Newspapers, radio, and television fill our homes with all that is bad and very little that is good. Many today have lost all hope for living. "What is life?" they ask. People are looking for some meaning in life, but more and more are becoming pessimistic in their outlook. It has been said that the pessimist is one who feels bad when he feels good for fear that he will feel worse when he feels better. But the Christian is to be optimistic in his or her outlook. The apostle Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4.4).¹ This attitude is very different from that of the world. And because of this attitude of joyfulness, we as Christians should realize that even though there is much evil in the world, there's still some good in the world.

God has always seen the good and the potential for good in human beings. When we were in the depths of sin, God sent his Son to die for us (John 3.16). The scripture says:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5.6-8).

Why? Why did God do this? Why does he love us so much. Because we are made in God's image (Genesis 1.26-27). After creating man and woman, the Bible teaches, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

Not only does God see the good in humans, but Jesus Christ found the good in folk. Jesus saw the good in the woman whom the scribes and Pharisees caught in adultery (John 8.3-11). Yes, Jesus recognized the universality of sin ("Let him who is without sin among you be the

¹Unless indicated otherwise, all scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (2001).

first to throw a stone at her”), by which he taught a lesson on forgiveness. Jesus did not condone her way of life, but he forgave her of previous actions instead of condemning her as the scribes and Pharisees did. This loving action of Jesus perhaps led her to forsake her adulterous lifestyle and practice good in her life. Jesus gave her a chance to cultivate goodness in her life.

In the same way, Jesus gives us a chance to cultivate goodness in our lives. If we believe on him and confess him as the Christ, the Messiah, if we repent of our sins (he told the woman and he tells us today to “go, and from now on sin no more”), if we are buried with him in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2.38; Romans 6.1-4), then Jesus will forgive us of our sins, and we will have the opportunity to cultivate goodness in our lives.

In letters to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus, through his servant John, first commended these communities of faith for their good works before reprimanding them for their evil deeds (Revelation, chapters 2 and 3).

Yes, there are still some good people in the world. Jesus gave us an example of a good person in Luke, chapter 10. This is the story of the Good Samaritan. You remember the story well. Those who were supposed to be good men—even religious leaders—did nothing for the man who was beaten by robbers and left on the side of the road to die. The priest and the Levite passed by. They were indifferent to the needs of one who needed help. They did nothing wrong. But they did nothing good. James writes, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4.17; NKJV).² But the Samaritan, who was moved by compassion, provided for the needs of the one who was in need. So Jesus found good in others, and the Good Samaritan is an example of this.

²New King James Version (1982).

Just as God and Christ finds good in us humans, we need to find the good in others. In Acts, chapter 23, Luke records an interesting story about the apostle Paul when he was being interrogated by the Sanhedrin council after being captured in Jerusalem by Jewish leaders for allegedly profaning the temple.

And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?” And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people’” (Acts 23.1-5).

Under the Old Law, only good was to be spoken of the Jewish leaders (Exodus 22.28). Even today, we are to pray for “all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2.1-2). We are “to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people” (Titus 3.2). And especially we are not to speak evil of a brother or sister in Christ. James says, “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters” (James 4.11; NRSV).³

We are not to speak evil of others, and we are not to think evil of others. 1 Corinthians 13.5 teaches us that love “thinks no evil” (NKJV). Rather,

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4.8).

We as Christians are to be light of the world and salt of the earth (Matthew 5.13-16). If we are busy finding fault and criticizing others, where will the good things come from? We are to be

³New Revised Standard Version (1989).

bearers of good news, people who bring glad tidings of good things, not carriers of corrupt and calloused communication. Is there not any good for us to tell about others?

The little girl coaxed her daddy to the front door to see what was there. Looking out the window, never had he seen such a hideous looking creature. There it was, an old skinny, mangy, sick dog. When he expressed his opinion, his daughter replied, “Yes, daddy, but he wags his tail.”

We must remember that lilies do grow in the marsh. And there is an oasis in every desert. Yes, life is like a box of chocolates. No matter what comes on the inside, it is always surrounded by something delicious and sweet.

But whether or not we see those lilies or that oasis depends very much upon our own outlook or perspective. Paul affirms, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled” (Titus 1.15). A person who is a hypocrite (that is, he or she is “playing church”) often thinks everyone else is also a hypocrite. But the person who loves God and is keeping his commandments speaks only good of his friends and neighbors. We must be good ourselves if we are to see the good in other folks.

Several things will help us to be good ourselves. We will be slow to condemn. 1 Corinthians 13.4 tells us that “love is patient and kind.” And we will be slow to judge. Jesus said:

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7.1-5).

Jesus here is condemning jumping to conclusions, forming harsh and hasty opinions, arriving at decisions without weighing the evidence, misjudging people because of prejudice, seeing the

motives of others as bad when they may be good, and refusing to see the good in others while evil characterizes our own life. Jesus also said, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7.24).

To be good ourselves and to find the good in others, we will be slow to find fault and criticize. It has been said that “the greatest fault of all faults is the fault of faultfinding.” The old Indian proverb suggests that we should never criticize a person until we have spent ten days in his or her moccasins. And we will be anxious to forgive. If we are Christians, God forgave us. If goodness fills our hearts, we will be quick to forgive others seventy times seven times if needed. This is what Jesus taught us in his parable about an unmerciful servant (Matthew 18.21-35). When evaluating others and their actions, remember that we seldom know all the facts in any situation.

A tired passenger on a train was kept awake by the crying of a baby being cared for by his father. After a while, the passenger lost his patience and yelled at the man, “Why don’t you take the baby to his mother?” The helpless and inexperienced father replied, “The baby’s mother is a corpse in the baggage car.” Perhaps the impatient passenger would not have been so harsh had he known all the facts.

Too many times we speak before we know the situation.

Yes, there is still good in our world. God always has seen in human beings the potential for good. Jesus Christ recognized the good in men and women. And we too should look for the good and not the evil in others. But if we are to find good in others, we must strive to be good ourselves. Good is to be desired over evil. The apostle John writes, “Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God” (3 John 11).

God indeed is the true source of everything that is good. And many of the Psalms speak of his goodness.

Good the upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way (Psalm 25.8).

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 100.5).

The Lord is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made (Psalm 145.9).

Jesus told a rich young man, “No one is good but One, that is, God” (Matthew 19.17; NKJV).

So we humans in our sinful condition can do no good by ourselves. It is only by coming to God and drawing from the fountainhead of all goodness that we are able to have any virtue or goodness. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, we only can reflect in our lives a part of the total goodness of our Creator.

Is your life filled with good, or is your life filled with evil? Renew your life for good today. Come to Jesus, the Son of God, and walk in his footsteps. He will cleanse you from iniquity unto good works.