

## The Goodness of God - Luke 18:18-30

### Context & Story

If you have a bible with you or have access an app on your device, let's open our bible to Luke 18:18-30 to remind ourself of what was read earlier.

We see in the couple of stories before hand, a tax collector, seen as a sinner coming to God with a humble heart. Then Jesus calls for people to come to God with a child like faithful.

And now we see a rich young ruler. He is wealthy in position, authority and material assets.

But after hearing Jesus talk, he starts to question if he has got what he needs to gain eternal life? Jesus shows him his personal problem, that he idolises wealth above God.

Ultimately showing him and all the witnesses that only God can do the impossible in bringing someone into relationship with himself and grant eternal life.

### Introduction

What does it mean to live a good life?

I was reading an article about positive psychology and living a good life. Its was quite interesting reflecting on a number of psychologist and different school of thought over what is needed to live a good life. It encompassed outwardly acting well and inwardly finding purpose. But quickly you see that personality and external factors will make it difficult to achieve a good life.

One quote that stood out to me was from Socrates and said 'That a good life doesn't refer to a persons reputation but to the state of a persons soul'.

To be good means that the state of our soul must be made good.

## Only God is Good... (v18-19)

At the start of our passage today we see Jesus pick up on the fact the rich ruler calls him 'Good teacher'.

In some senses, this may just seem like a polite way to approach someone. We can think about how in older plays or films someone may be address as 'good sir.'

But Jesus immediately picks up on this greeting because it is drastically out the norm for a rabbi or teacher to be address as 'good'. Only God is called good. Goodness is only ascribed to God.

According to the bible God is the creator of all things and existed before anything material. So as creator, designer and continued sustainer, he gets to set the parameters by which we live by. If I start building a town out of lego, I get to decide what the building looks like, how many parts there are, what size and colour. I define it.

So God gets to define what is good. So what is Gods Goodness?

Well in the bible we see that goodness is found in two ways within God.

Firstly we experience Gods goodness in the outward expression. God always does good. We see this in how God lead his people through the wilderness, trails and temptations in the Old Testament. He guides and blesses his people. As part of genuine goodness, God cares, protects and disciplines his people when appropriate.

What makes a good parent? A good parent will give things to there child in the right amount. Too little and there aren't cared for and too much there may get spoilt. A good parent will also protect a child, even when a child may not fully understand what they are being shielded from.

God is good in all his actions, even when we don't understand them fully.

God is also good in his perfect inward heart. God is totally pure in thought and attitude. Habakkuk 1:13 says 'You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.' God himself is the essence of goodness.

The most tangible expression we can see of God's goodness is seen in his Son living in this world. That of Jesus. Jesus example for us shows us how to live, act and helps guides our decisions.

Jesus here makes a point that only God is good, what he means here is that only God is Holy, perfect, righteous and whereas humans are sinful and unholy, there is a divide.

See this is the mans problem, he wants a quick fix to gain eternal life but doesn't recognise that he isn't perfect and holy, he only sees external goodness as the main factor to gain entry to heaven. Instead of recognising that he is a sinner in his heart.

No-one else is Good... (v19-21)

Romans 3:10-12 highlights the position of all humans. It says...

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,  
not even one.”

There is a clear distinctive between a God full of goodness, perfect and holy and mankind. All humans start with a position of not being good. We may do good things externally and have good thoughts but we are tainted by the affect of sin.

It's a bit like the ripples we see after throwing a pebble into a lake. The ripples from that one small stone flow out into every part of your life. Sin does that same thing, it stains us all. It shows our separation from God.

The rich ruler thinks he is genuinely good. Culturally there was the thought process that if you were a good person that would be seen

externally. Through position and wealth. And the opposite was true as well. If you were poor or unwell, it would be assumed that you had done something bad and therefore deserved your lot in life.

So the the rich ruler must thinks he is okay, he has his wealth and position and most important he thinks his works will inherit him eternal life.

Jesus responds to this man by showing him it isn't just about keeping the commandments.

In the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5 we see Jesus talking about the commandments and how they show they are not just literal actions but they are reflected in the heart of every human. Do not murder, isn't just literal murder but its holding hatred in your heart toward someone else. Adultery isn't just a physical affair but its when you lust over another person in your mind outside of marriage.

Jesus then points out the mans personal problem, his heart issue.

'You still lack one thing' Jesus says.

For every one of us we have heart issues, because we place other things before God. Whether you haven't accepted God yet or you have, we all struggle with idolatry, putting something before God.

Where we take something, that maybe a good thing, and over indulge in it, creating an idol that our hearts focus on.

This mans personal problem, that Jesus needs to highlight for him, was money, wealth and possessions. This passage doesn't point out that if you want to know Jesus in a true relationship you have to be poor. Now there is wisdom in thinking through our use and love of money because wealth has big hold in our society. But Jesus' main point here is that we all have things we have placed as more important than God in our lives. If we are to truly know him we must place him above all else.

Sometimes that will look like small changes in habit and patterns of life and other times we will require us to be ruthless to sin and idolatry. But above all ...

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ - Mark 12:30.

As Jesus highlights this mans personal battle, we quickly come on to his response.

Verse 23, ‘When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy’.

His Idol was too much for him, he was blinded by the material wealth in this world and couldn’t see past it. Jesus even offered him treasures in heaven but his heart was still dark. He couldn’t see past his idol.

It's an interesting parallel that Jesus goes onto use isn't it. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It's a very simple and obvious analogy. It's impossible, a camel, commonly seen and the biggest animal in the area, can't go through the smallest hole seen, the eye of a needle.

Only God can make us Good... (v24-27)

On the back of this analogy we see the crowds ask ‘Who then can be saved?’

If the wealthy and those who are super spiritual do all the right things to gain eternal life, and still find it impossible to get to heaven, then what hope has the ordinary poor person got.

Jesus recognises this impossibility and wants to confirm it. He is getting everyone to realise, no matter who you are, that in our own strength we aren't good and have no way of having a relationship with God.

A miracle is needed for each person to have a chance to be reunited with God.

But to start the process of having a relationship with God, we have to come to a place of realising that God has to be the most important thing in our lives.

One fundamental truth about all humanity is that everyone worships something. We all do, whether it's money or power, family, fame or another ideology. Everyone worships something. If we want to see and grow in the truth of Jesus then we must sacrifice everything that we idolise above Jesus to place him above all else.

That will coincide with God working a miracle in our lives.

Ezekiel 11:19 says 'I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.'

God will take a heart of stone and bring life to it. God will perform the impossible of bringing life to a stone. Taking a Camel through the eye of a needle. And giving true life and eternal hope for people that aren't good.

### Application...

Does anyone remember the tv series, The Good Life, I remember watching it as a child. Well in the first Episode we see Tom, on his 40th birthday, having a sort of mid-life crisis. He doesn't want to be trapped in a work-place and instead comes to a conclusion that he needs to have a change in life. He wants a better way to live, he wants The Good Life.

Like Tom, I hope that all of us here today might want change to see the good life. Not just a generally good life in the eyes of the world but to understand a Good life, based on a Good God, that has so much more depth, love, compassion, care and assurance of the hope that is to come in the new heavens and earth.

To remove any idols, that may hinder us, to place God in the correct position and too, follow him faithfully.

Psalms 34:8 says - 'Come and taste that the Lord is good'.

Jesus doesn't promise that laying down our idols will be easy but he does say it's vital to be able to come to God fully and follow him faithfully.

And as an encouragement Jesus remind his followers that they aren't left in pit of despair and misery at the sacrifices they have had to make to follow him but shows them that they will be blessed abundantly.

He finishes by promising two things, in his conversation with the disciples in verse 28-30.

One that maybe we often recognise and one that we probably forget.

God promises eternal life... that is what the rich young ruler asks for. And Jesus through the impossible miracle of salvation, offers eternal lives to those are are willing to lay down there own life and follow him faithfully.

But he also says through everything, all the sacrifice and hardships. You will still be blessed in this world greatly because of your relationship with God.

How do we see those blessings? - We may see that in the natural world and material blessings. We may also see his blessings in church community. I'm sure most of us would agree that we've seen huge blessings just from being part of a church community that love, care, challenge and support us in life. Gods love and goodness reach far and wide. His rewards will be finalised in heaven but his blessings are active for all who know him now on earth.

So as we go into our weeks coming up, remember the wonderful blessings you've received right now as a recipient of Gods grace and mercy.

Remind yourself of how Good God is, how he has performed or can perform a miracle in our lives to bring us all to a good relationship with him.

God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.