

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2020

Psalm 23:1-6 (NIV) ¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV) ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

John 10:1-10 (NIV) ¹"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what

he was telling them. ⁷Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

1 Peter 2:2-10 (NIV) ²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ⁷Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, ⁸and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. ⁹But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Let us pray, Heavenly Father, thank you that we have *tasted* your goodness because of the mercy we have received through our Lord Jesus Christ. Teach us to *grow up* in our salvation by craving the things that are precious to you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Inimitable Goodness Outline

1 Peter 2:2-10

The goodness of the Lord

(verses 2-3; James 1:17; Hebrews 6:4; Matthew 11:30; Psalm 34:8; Jeremiah 31:14; Romans 2:4)

God demonstrates His goodness by:

- ❑ Joining us with Christ to become a holy temple
(verses 4-8; Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 12:1; 15:16; Hebrews 13:15-16)
- ❑ Choosing us to belong to Him
(verses 9-10; Romans 1:6; Ephesians 5:8)
- ❑ Calling us out of darkness into His wonderful light
(verse 9; Colossians 1:12-13)
- ❑ Granting us mercy
(verse 10; Titus 3:4-5; Psalm 103:8; 145:9)

Inimitable Goodness Message

1 Peter 2:2-10

What happens when you taste something that is really, really, good? You want more of it! In our Scripture lesson today, the apostle Peter wants Christians to crave more and more of godly things now that they have tasted that the Lord is good.

I've titled this message, Inimitable Goodness. Inimitable [i-'ni-mə-tə-bəl] means not capable of being imitated.

It describes something so good and uniquely extraordinary as to be impossible to copy or be equaled

❖ The inimitable goodness of the Lord

All experiences of goodness in this world are expressions of God's inimitable goodness.

Martin Luther wrote: "It is God alone . . . from whom we receive all that is good." God "is an eternal fountain which overflows with sheer goodness and pours forth all that is good." (Large Catechism, The First Commandment)

Scripture tells us that in James 1:17 (NIV) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

We often think that God is stern or harsh or judgmental and fearful—but that is only because we cannot fathom the white-hot jealousy of His love—which is actually an expression of God's inimitable goodness.

Yes, we are to have a reverent fear of God who is holy; Peter said that clearly and emphatically in chapter 1.

But now in chapter two Peter emphasizes the sheer goodness of God.

²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

You don't have to command an infant to feed upon the sweet milk at her mother's breast. The newborn will suckle until satisfied. The sheer goodness of its sweet flavor and its satisfying nourishment is enough motivation to drink long and fully.

And so, we are to drink with satisfaction and delight the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God with all of its promises, and all the grace it contains in order to grow in our salvation. And we are to crave

the living Word of God—Jesus—and all that He is for us and all He has done for us.

The book of Hebrews, chapter 6:4 speaks of believers having *tasted the heavenly gift and [having] tasted the goodness of the word of God*

God's given us a taste of His goodness—and now he wants us to have a craving for the rest of the meal. To desire more and more of God and of the things that are precious to Him.

The dictionary definition of good includes: being of moral excellence; upright. It can also mean positive or desirable in nature; pleasant; enjoyable. Or it can mean benevolent and kind.

The Greek word for *good* used here means benevolent and kind and is often translated in the Bible as kindness. It is from the same root word as the *kindness* of the Lord that we heard about last week from Ephesians 2, that God will spend eternity lavishing upon us *the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

It's the same word that is used when Jesus says in Matthew 11:30 (ESV) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." God's yoke is actually a kindness to us—something that is beneficial and good.

Peter no doubt had Psalm 34:8 in mind as He dictated this letter: *O Taste and see that the Lord is good . . .*

This Psalm calls us to experience the goodness of the Lord.

Jeremiah 31:14 (NASB-U) . . . *My people will be satisfied with My goodness," declares the Lord.*

Have you tasted the goodness of God? Do you crave pure spiritual milk? Are you growing in your salvation? Are you satisfied with God's goodness,

or, are you seeking satisfaction in something else, something other than God?

In Romans 2:4 we are told: *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness [goodness] and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?* (ESV)

This morning, I want you to discover, or rediscover, that *God is good*; He is kind; and God wants you to *crave* Him and the things that are precious to Him; to desire God and His goodness above everything else. God isn't going to compel you (force you) to desire Him. God has given you a taste of His goodness, and wants you to long for more.

We see in *this* passage God demonstrating His goodness in three ways. First, by:

- ❑ Joining us with Christ to become a holy temple (verses 4-8; Ephesians 2:19-22)

⁴As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ⁷Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, ⁸and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

God has shown his goodness by joining us to Jesus Christ to be His temple here on earth as the church. Jesus is the corner stone—the one on whom the whole structure is built and with which it is aligned.

Jesus is that *living stone* that is holy and precious to God, and ought to be precious to us

In the church we experience the sweetness of fellowship with believers and we grow together in our salvation.

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV) *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

So, one of the ways we grow in our salvation, is, as we are united with Christ, we are being built into a spiritual house—the church—to offer spiritual sacrifices.

What sacrifices are we to offer?

Romans 12:1 (NIV) *Therefore, I urge you, brothers [and sisters], in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Hebrews 13:15-16 (NIV) ¹⁵*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 15:16 that he was called *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* (NIV)

So, we are to offer ourselves, our praise, our service to others and our sharing the gospel as *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Second, God demonstrates His inimitable goodness by

- ❑ Choosing us to belong to Him (verses 9-10; Romans 1:6 Ephesians 1:4)

⁹*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Just as Jesus was chosen and precious to God, we are also chosen and precious to him. We experience that God is good by being chosen by Him. We are not rejected.

All of us know what it is like to be rejected. Rejection is one of the most hurtful experiences we can endure. And I think the reason that it hurts so much, is that we were created to belong—to be part of something greater than ourselves; and when we are excluded, there is an existential loneliness, a longing to be included, to belong—because we were made to belong to God.

Romans 1:6 (NIV) *And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 1:3-4 (NIV) *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight . . .*

Third, God has demonstrated His inimitable goodness by

- Calling us out of darkness into His wonderful light (verse 9; Colossians 1:12-13; Ephesians 5:8)

⁹ . . . that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

I don't know if you've had the experience of being in complete, absolute, total darkness. A number of years ago, we went caving in Colorado. You descend deep below the ground with your headlamps on, but when you reach in inner part of the cave where no light can penetrate, you turn off your headlamps and let your eyes "adjust" to total darkness. We are not made for the darkness. We were created for the light. *God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.* (1 John 1:5)

Colossians 1:12-13 tells us that as believers we are to be *¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.* (NIV)

God has rescued you and me, out of the darkness of unbelief, and out of the darkness of sin—to bask in the light of His goodness. Here in Washington, when the sun comes out, so do the people—often times just to walk in the light.

Ephesians 5:8 reminds us: *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light* (ESV)

Heaven will be eternal light and well as eternal life.

Finally, God has demonstrated His inimitable goodness by

- Granting us mercy (verse 10)

¹⁰ . . . once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Titus 3:4-5 tells us: *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit* (NIV)

The English Standard Version (ESV) translates verse 4 this way: *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared . . .*

Out of His goodness, his loving kindness, God saved us *because of his mercy*

David cried, (Psalm 51:1 ESV) *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*

Out of God's steadfast love and *abundant mercy* in Jesus Christ were are forgiven and have received mercy.

Psalm 103:8 tells us: (ESV) *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

Psalm 145:9 (ESV) *The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.*

Taste and see that the Lord is good. *²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Let us pray,

Benediction: 2 Peter 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*