

Week 3

The Goodness of God's Permanence

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The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. **Psalm 33:11**

There is an old tendency for we humans to think that history revolves around us. *Nothing like this has ever happened before. We are living at a critical moment in time. We can fix it if only “our” people would get into power. Then we could make things right.* Has there ever been a generation anywhere that has not had these thoughts?

Where can we get a more grounded perspective? Of course we know that we should put our hope in God. He is the ultimate “safe space”, a dependable rock to stand when life seems to be falling apart. The Bible also describes God as an escape from the inevitable defeat of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). And what greater temptation is there than of self-reliance? Is that not the oldest rebellion? There are few things more reliable than the human penchant for rejecting God and acting on our own authority. Often the Bible reads less like history and more like a biography. The people of the Old Testament built towers, created idols, and made compromising political alliances; all because they wanted to go their own way. It only led to corruption, chaos, and captivity. It should come as no surprise that this sounds familiar. What of our own modern feats of science, our elaborate bureaucratic solutions, our exaltation of intellectualism over spirituality? The results are the same, and still we don't learn. Even as God is steadfast, we are steadfastly obstinate. Malachi 3:6-7 reads,

“I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty.

When we do return to God, when we run to the strong tower of his Word, we have access to a supernatural assurance and perspective. Because when we know God, we know what's most important. And it won't be found in the cyclical futility of the human experience. God not only created time, but he came into our world to provide us with the key to transcending it. God's unchanging, steadfast nature is a direct reminder of glory that came before, and that lies beyond, our present circumstances.

Yes, there is a crucial juncture in history – in our personal history. It's the moment that we accept Christ's work on the cross for us and allow our souls to be grown and guided by God through this brief time and on to eternity with him. The goodness of God is seen in his complete dependability. Empires rise and fall, ideologies come in and go out of fashion, and prodigal generations selfishly wander and then limp back home. But God remains the same. His plan has never changed. His love never wanes.

God is always waiting for us to return to him.

Choosing to be Thankful

Reflection from Sandy Wagenpfeil

This year we will be celebrating Thanksgiving differently as we practice social distancing, meeting in driveways or garages or not at all, to avoid spreading or contracting CoVid19. This goes against everything we desire to do. We want to gather together from all the corners of the country. We long to embrace each other and share a meal. Our heart's desire is to be Thankful together on Thanksgiving Day.

I would like to encourage you to “be joyful always, pray continually and give thanks in All circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5.16

To be thankful is a daily choice. God wants us to be thankful always, in spite of what comes our way. This can be very difficult when life seems to be just one challenge or heartache after the other.

Thankfulness based on external circumstances is very different from Thankfulness based upon who God is and what our relationship to God is.

God is my creator, my Savior, my heavenly Father, My Lord, my trusted friend, who sees me through all of the external circumstances of life. When I am weak, He is strong. When I am scared, He is my fortress. When I am sad, He dries my tears. When I am lonely, He is there.

I choose gratitude and thankfulness everyday over dissatisfaction and apathy. I choose to see the world with eyes that are filled with awe and wonder at the work of God’s hands. I choose to give thanks each morning when I open my eyes to a new day. Every single day is a gift from God. Choosing to see God’s hand in all the precious gifts surrounding me, keeps me grounded in Him. This inner peace and joy that I’ve found in my relationship with God becomes an outward expression of love for those I encounter throughout my day.

In this month known for Thanksgiving, I encourage you to “draw close to God and He **will** draw close to you”. Peter 4.8. As you spend time with God, through pray or meditating on His word, your trust in Him will grow. Life’s circumstances are in His worthy hands and you can face each day knowing you are never alone. God knows you and He loves you and He is walking this journey with you every step of the way. For this we can all be thankful.

May you all be filled with the peace and thanksgiving always.

Blessing,
Sandy

The Goodness of God



Philippians 4:4-8

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

God’s goodness in His creation

These past weeks, Steve and I have taken drives just to look at the changing colors. Autumn is such a beautiful time of year in the Midwest. My favorite times are the sunrises and sunsets. A farmer friend of ours calls them “harvest sunsets”. The sky is so red and orange that it doesn’t matter if you’re looking east or west, those marvelous colors mix with the blue sky and turn the evening light to a purple that seems to wrap around you. Our creator is a magnificent artist. What a gift to be a part of that moment!

Soon, we will be blessed by large, white snowflakes that will cover up the end of autumn in a blanket of winter. Bringing with it a beauty of God's own that we will get to be a part of too.

In a world where sin exists, God's creation is still good. He calls us to Himself and reminds us He makes the sun rise and set, and commands the changing of the seasons. When the worries of this world leave us lonely, sad, angry, scared... we have a choice...we can let anxiety control us or we can bring it to God in prayer and let Jesus guard our hearts and minds.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he told them to *not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* "Guarded by Christ Jesus"! Amen! Paul continues, telling them what they should be thinking about: "true" things, "pure" things ... "admirable" things. Paul wrote these words from a prison cell to people he loved who encouraged him and for whom he was thankful. Paul continued to see God's goodness. Even from prison, Paul had the joy of the Lord.

I find great hope in these words of Paul, that in the midst of all the ugly that we see in this world that makes us weary, God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. What a gift and how grateful I am for that peace! A peace that I can't explain or even understand. A peace that allows me to see through anxiety that paralyzes me, and to focus on what is true and gives life. Through faith I see the goodness of God in Christ Jesus working in our lives. I see the goodness of God's creation in the changing seasons, the sky, the animals, the farmers harvesting their crops, but especially and more importantly in our love for one another: my husband and children, the laughter & love of my grandchildren, the family of Willerup, the prayers of our pastor & Nalini, being with my friend in her home seeking the Lord together, the timely visit of a dear friend bearing fresh bread, honey & eggs. We are gentle with one another, we laugh with each other, we cry with each other, we struggle together, we grow together, we pray together, we rejoice in the Lord together! God is good, O, He is so very good. And in the words of Paul: "If anything is excellent or praiseworthy think of these things."

The Goodness of God

I love You Lord
Oh Your mercy never fails me
All my days
I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
I will sing of the goodness of God

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
In darkest night
You are close like no other
I've known You as a father
I've known You as a friend
I have lived in the goodness of God

Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
With my life laid down
I'm surrendered now
I give You everything
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me

“The Goodness of God”

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