

The Goodness of God

Selected texts

Introduction

100 years ago, 2 fellowshiping assemblies, in the Sully area, by the providence of God, decided to come together to form the Sully Community Church. We stand today as a legacy of the wisdom of that decision.

What other things were taking place in 1923? / what was it like?

You could buy Ford Model T for \$260
A gallon of gas = 14 cents

Babe Ruth hit 41 homeruns that year / batted .393 – and had 131 RBI's / Yanks won the Series

One of the top songs of 1923 was – ‘Yes, we have no bananas’ – Billy Jones

Time magazine's first issue was in March, 1923

Coca Cola invented the 6-pack in 1923

Warren Harding became the first American President to visit Canada during his presidency – in 1923. He made a speech and played golf in Vancouver but contracted pneumonia and died a week later.

Top Baby Names of 1923:

Girls: Mary, Dorothy, Helen, Margaret, Betty, Ruth, Virginia, Mildred, Elizabeth

U.S. life expectancy – for men – 56.1 / for women – 58.5 – [that was 1923]

Michael Reagan: 'A few years ago, I played golf with a young man in his twenties, a restaurant manager. As we played golf together, I mentioned that I had been asked to go to France the next day and raise the flag at the American cemetery at Normandy. This young man looked at me with a puzzled expression and said, 'Why is there an American cemetery at Normandy?'

'Here was a guy who was bright, successful and well-educated - yet he knew nothing about D-Day, the invasion of Normandy, or the liberation of Europe. He didn't know why there is an American cemetery at Normandy. And because He didn't know about the sacrifices Americans had made for the cause of liberty around the world, he didn't have the kind of love of country that I learned from my father.'

[Lessons My Father taught Me, p. 77]

For Michael Reagan – it was clear that – a breakdown in knowing basic facts of history – was leading to deficient views about the present – and of America in general

It's the same thing in the spiritual realm

We might ask: 'Why is there a church in Sully?' - - - in 2023

Why do people get together and sing praises to God in these buildings we often call churches?

The answer points us to our great God and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ

Psalm 100:5 - 'For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.'

God is good and His goodness is recognized in the church

Jesus said that He would build His church - - - He later laid down His life an atonement for sinners / rose again from the dead – offering salvation to all who would repent and trust in Him

The church is a body of people who have come to see [by grace] God's supreme goodness manifest to us thru Jesus Christ

I. The Goodness of Jesus - John 7:37

John 7:37 - 'Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'

John 7:38 - 'He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

Here is Jesus during one of the Jewish feasts – the feast of tabernacles – which took place over 7 days in Jerusalem

Alfred Edersheim: 'The most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel was that of the "Feast of Tabernacles". It fell on a time of year when the hearts of the people would naturally be full of thankfulness, gladness, and expectancy.'

Some would say it compares to our thanksgiving holiday – harvest is over / etc. [this year's feast begins Sept. 29-Oct. 6th]

One of the traditions that had become customary at this feast – was a water drawing ritual

The priests would go down to the pool of Siloam – and fill a golden vessel with water / then they would go up to the temple and pour the water upon the altar – they did this every day - -
- there would be blowing of the shofar's / singing of Psalm 118

Jesus gets up at the end of this feast and declares that one needs to come to Him for the water of life – this is a messianic claim – this feast points ultimately to Christ being the One who provides our great need of salvation

Images / metaphors of salvation are very instructive in the Scriptures:

Man is a dead person needing life
A leper who needs cleansing
A debtor who needs to be forgiven
A slave or prisoner who needs to be set free
A sheep who has gone astray / needs to return home
An enemy who needs to be reconciled
A rebel who needs to surrender
A blind man who needs sight
A thirsty man that needs the water of life

All these images tell us something about our predicament as sinners / our great need – and our provision in Jesus Christ

'If any man is thirsty - let him come to Me and drink'

All spiritual activity begins with this thirst of the soul – God awakens our soul to its great need

This thirst – is the soul's way of saying: 'I need God'

There is no other fountain!

Blaise Pascal: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

We might say – the church is a people who are thirsty for God – and find that need met in Christ

In the physical realm – we have certain needs: air / water / food
We die without such things

In the spiritual realm - - - man needs a relationship with God

If we do not have this relationship – we are like a ship drifting aimlessly in the ocean – rudderless / in confusion / emptiness / vanity

C.S. Lewis: 'all that we call human history . . . is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.'

Man looks everywhere else to meet his thirst

The world and its pleasures / its wealth / its power / status / etc. - - - many look to the world to fill their soul - - - but it's no good – there is a vanity built into human existence apart from the Creator – due to the Fall

But - there is no other fountain to draw this water from

Solomon reminds us in the book of Ecclesiastes of this thirst – 'vanity of vanities'

He chases after all kinds of earthly substitutes – pleasure / wealth / worldly projects / alcohol / earthly power / etc.

He looks at the world – He sees the brokenness of it / the fallen nature of it [vanity]

Daniel Lewin, was the co-founder of Akamai technologies – a high tech company [1998] - that exploded in growth during its start-up

On Sept. 11, 2001, Daniel boarded American Airlines Flight 11. He was going to Los Angeles, but of course, terrorists instead crashed the plane into the World Trade Center. Daniel was 31 years old.

Today - Akamai is a company worth over \$15B - - - with 9800 employees

Thomson Leighton – the other co-founder of the company - - - has a net worth of \$250M

If you ground all of reality and meaning in this material world - - the proper conclusion is - -
- What a vanity / what a folly this thing called life is – What a rip off!

There is something wrong with the present order of things - - -

God says – 'you are right' – this world is under a curse – it's fallen – you will not find the water of life in things of the world

Disease and death mar human existence

Natural disasters – remind us we are not in control of our fate

CBS reporter Steve Hartman was doing a commentary – on the tsunami in Indonesia that killed some 230,000 people – 2004 - - - he asked a question that my pastor brain thought – 'ooh – I need to write that down'

Steve Hartman: 'What can you trust in a world where you can't even trust the ocean to stay in its place?'

One day – a village is here along the coast – huts and homes and livelihoods lived out next to the ocean - - - the next day - - - gone - - - all washed away – the ocean took it away

This world is transitory / fleeting - - - we're a vapor that appears for a while [says James] - - - this is not a good place to put our trust

What is the church? - it's a people seeking something solid – they find it in Christ

Heb. 13:14 - 'Here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.'

The way out of futility – is thru the Savior Jesus Christ – who took our curse for us up on the cross - and restores our broken relationship with God – and gives unto us the resurrection life and a kingdom which is to come – in which righteousness dwells

There is only one who can wash the sinner
There is only one who can remove sins
There is only one who meets the thirst of the soul

John 1:29 - 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'

The Lord is good / Jesus is good - - - He says:

'If any man is thirsty - let him come to Me and drink'

The church is a body of people who have come to see that He is indeed the One who gives the living water

II. The Grand Vision - I John 3:2,3

The goodness of God is on display in the promises made to the church

When the Bible talks about what awaits the Christian in the future - - - it uses words like glory / reigning / absence of sin / life everlasting / the presence of God – all such things remind us of the goodness of God to us that awaits us

He promises these things to come - - to sinners – redeemed sinners!

Christ is going to return

President John Kennedy once asked – Billy Graham if he believed in the Second Coming of Christ

Billy said – ‘yes’

Kennedy said – how come my church doesn’t teach it [The Roman Catholic]

Billy said – well - it’s in the creeds [the Apostle’s Creed] – recognized by every church that calls itself Christian

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge
the living and the dead

It’s in the Bible
It’s in the church creeds
Jesus is coming back – and there will be a kingdom / we shall be changed

Darrel Bock: ‘the return is a creation shattering, creation altering event; a cosmic entry into the affairs of humanity. The lights are going out on the current cosmic order.’

R.C. Sproul: ‘The whole OT called attention not to a kingdom that would simply appear in people’s hearts, but to a kingdom that would break through into this world, a kingdom that would be ruled by God’s anointed Messiah.’ [The Prayer of the Lord, p. 48]

These are things to come that the redeemed will enjoy

- A kingdom of righteousness
- We’ll be without sin / glorified bodies
- No more sickness / death / no more pain / suffering
- Fellowship with God unbroken / unhindered / joy eternal

Psalm 16:11 – ‘In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures evermore.’

- Curse removed!

And something which theologians call this **the beatific vision** – the glorious vision

We will see Jesus – and it will be a transformational event

I John 3:2, 3 – ‘Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him,

because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.'

C.S. Lewis: 'God is not simply mending, not simply restoring a status quo. Redeemed humanity is to be something more glorious than unfallen humanity would have been . . . the greater the sin, the greater the mercy. The deeper the death the brighter the rebirth.' [Miracles, p. 162]

The Apostle John reminds us of the greatest aspect of future glory: beholding Christ

There is an ethical element that He wants to bring in here

When we see Jesus – sin will be done away / we shall be changed

Some of our number will experience the resurrection at this event

Some of us that are alive – when Christ returns – shall simply be changed at the rapture

I Corinthians 15:51, 52 - 'Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.'

We'll be in glorified bodies – we will enjoy praising God – being in His presence – without our sin creating a barrier

In our heart of hearts – all men and women know that something has gone horribly wrong with this world / with humanity

We see murders / violent crime / sex trafficking / abuse

We see prisons overflowing / or prisoners receiving light sentences

We see drug addicts and homeless people wandering the city streets

We see nations building their nuclear arsenals – enough fire power to destroy the earth

We see corrupt and deceitful politicians and news media

We see Children being led astray by the new gender revolution – in which we are told that a man can become a woman

G.K. Chesterton: "We shall soon be in a world in which a man may be howled down for saying that two and two make four, in which furious party cries will be raised against anybody who says that cows have horns, in which people will persecute the heresy of calling a triangle a three-sided figure, and hang a man for maddening a mob with the news that grass is green."

We're there

Something has gone horribly wrong in this world with its sin

We long for a better world – a world where righteousness dwells

That longing is God's way of pointing us to the future

II Peter 3:13 - 'But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.'

God says, 'yes – there is something wrong with humanity'
'Don't make this world your home – seek the one to come'

I Corinthians 2:9 - 'But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' [KJV]

Conclusion

Who would have guessed in 1923 – when two congregations came together that they would form a church – that would continue to declare the truths of God in the 21st century?

*** Romans 11:36 - 'For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.'

Sproul: 'Have you ever asked yourself where you will be a hundred years from now? You will be somewhere and you will be conscious. You will either be among the damned or in the state where joy never ends . . . where your eyes will behold the beautiful vision of the loveliness of Christ forever.'

Do you know the Savior?

This life is brief and transient and soon shall pass

All that will matter is that you have called upon the name of the Lord

Jesus – will you give me that living water? - - - I believe in you / I believe you died and rose again