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St Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th St. SW
Austin, MN, 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
sermon preached on-
July 7, 2013
7th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 66:10-14; Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

Hymns: 246; (243:2-4) 473, 464, 412

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Galatians 6:1-10, 14-16

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are
spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering
yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to
be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let
each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing
in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear
his own load.

6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with
him who teaches.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man
sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will
of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will
of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary
while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not
lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good
to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. ...

14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me,

and I to the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed

INTRO: Patriotism and Good Citizenship -

These qualities are encouraged so strongly in our 4th of July observance in America. We remember the price of liberty that has been paid by those who fought to secure our country's liberty and establish our nation. We express our appreciation for those who continue to serve and protect America and we should recognize that being good citizens we honor their sacrifice. But there is something greater that we need to remember. The liberty that we enjoy in America is ours because of the grace of God. One of the liberties that is most precious to us, one that we guard and cherish, is the right to worship as we desire without interference from government or others. We value this liberty so highly because it is also our blessing to know the liberty which God has given us from sin and death. The Lord encourages us to be good citizens: to be obedient to the governing powers, to pray for our leaders, to help our fellow countrymen. To this end as Americans and as children of God we will be busy -

Theme: Doing the Most Good!

I understand why a certain charity has adopted this expression to encourage donations. This particular charity not only wants people to feel that by supporting this cause they are doing good for their community and society as a whole, but they want people to believe that they make the best use of an individual's charitable donations. But when one stops to think about that expression it really is rather presumptuous for an organization to assume and then publicly declare that they are doing the most good, more than anybody else in all of society they do the **most** good! I will take exception to that claim because there is good

that needs to be done that they do not do, which a civic organization should not endeavor to do, which in fact they are not equipped to do. In fact I will contend that this *good* which they should not claim to be doing is the **highest** good, and it is the good which we, as children of God, are singularly equipped to do. I will assert that in going this highest good the children, of God in all the nations around the world, are also doing **the most good**.

We must realize that this is not to be left up to others, but even as we are children of God, we are also to be actively involved in doing good! Indeed it should be such a large part of our lives that it should be seen as a characteristic of our way of life. The good that we do, ALL of the good that we do must be rich in promoting the Highest Good, the love of God in Christ Jesus.

I. Why? – Because Christ Has Done Good to Us.

The world has its own answers concerning why we should do good. The world promotes charitable giving and other generous kindness for a variety of reasons, and some are legitimate reasons. We all should do what we can to make life in our community better for everyone. We all should desire security and the common good for all. So when we see others hurting we should reach out to them with a helping hand. After all the world recognizes that what goes around comes around. That is true of times of trouble and also the kindness of neighbors. The world thinks this as altruistic, and it really isn't because it still has a selfish quality to it. They encourage us to do good to others because it simply makes one feel good about oneself, and the good we have within us. That reasoning of the world truly falls short. It is loaded with self righteousness.

As children of God the Lord has given us a far better reason to be gracious and kind to others in their need. He was gracious and kind to us in our need. He was gracious and kind to us when we were His enemies because of our sin and unbelief. He was gracious and kind to deliver us out of the desperate trouble we got ourselves into because of our sin. He was loving and kind to this sinful world, and sent His only begotten Son to take our sins upon Himself, and free us from sin's curse. He loves us, and so

we ought to love one another. Doing good is not about us. It is about Christ and His presence in our hearts. That is what directs and empowers us in our lives. So Paul wrote in our text.

Galatians 6:14-15 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

That brings us to the realization that we are not to regard others according to nationality or skin color. We are all sinners in need of salvation. We, as children of God, have been blessed with new life through the gospel. Now we, because of the wondrous grace that has come into our hearts and lives, show kindness and grace to others. With that understanding -- that God does not look upon us as being black or white, but rather as souls that are precious in His sight -- **we do good**. The Spirit reveals the answer to the question:

II. To Whom? To All Men –Especially Fellow Believers

We read in verse ten of our text:

Galatians 6:10 “let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

This is important. Love and kindness is not limited to the people of our own community, or culture, or nation. The love of Christ would direct us to do good to all. Of course we can't actually help every individual in the entire world, but we are led by the Spirit to reject false distinctions. We will do good for others whoever they might be. Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount expand upon this important concept.

Matthew 5:43-48 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love

those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

So our kindness shouldn't be limited to those we like, and especially not limited only to those who we know can return the kindness in the future. We will do good even to those who have hurt us, praying also for our enemies.

However, the Apostle does bring out one important distinction. We are to be especially sensitive to the needs of the brethren. Often our fellow Christians are not only neglected by the world, but persecuted for Jesus' sake. Often our fellow believers have sacrificed much for the Savior's sake, and need a helping hand. On his third missionary journey Paul gathered an offering from all the congregations of Greece and Asia Minor to bring back assistance to the believers in Judea who were suffering great want. The Macedonian Christians were especially noteworthy for their generosity, not because they gave so much, but because they gave even though they were impoverished. They did this because they had first given themselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5). It was their desire to help those from whom the blessed gospel had come to them. That brings us to doing the greatest good.

Paul makes a special point of helping brothers who are caught up in sin.

Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

Among the brethren with whom we are in fellowship we have an obligation to care for one another's souls. It is a lot easier thing to be there for people with a hot dish or a few dollars than to talk to someone about their sin. It takes a little more strength to approach someone about their sin. We fear rebuff. Indeed one might get an angry glare even from a brother or sister in Christ, but when one needs to be restored from the snare of sin, it is the

greatest kindness we can bring to our brother. Sin so easily ensnares, and sin is Satan's tool to kill faith, and destroy souls. When we see someone wandering into physical danger we feel compelled to warn them. How much more shouldn't we be there to warn others against spiritual dangers.

To reach out with the hand of love to take hold of another in danger of drowning in sin and perdition is a great good, indeed the greatest good that one person can do for another. What lasting benefit is there for others if we help them with material goods, and they are still lost in eternal death? Now, this isn't to discourage anyone from helping others with temporal, physical needs, not in the least. It is however an encouragement to recognize the greatest good we can do for all people is to bring them the gospel of God's love and forgiveness in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

To bring this gospel of life and salvation to others, a brother in need or a stranger caught in the darkness of sin is the greatest and highest good we are privileged to do in this life.

So the next question is -

III. When? When we have opportunity

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all,

The Lord presents us with abundant opportunities to do good to others. All we have to do is recognize the opportunities presented to us, and walk in them. That is what Paul wrote to the Ephesians concerning the balance between grace and works. He said that we are created, also spiritually as Christians "**for good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them**" (Ephesians 2:10).

Again that may be harder to do with the Highest Good of sharing the gospel, telling others of God's love, than to do other things. But we need to do that good, and not talk ourselves out of it. Often our excuses are no more than poor rationalizations. We talk freely to others about so many other aspects of our lives, but say we can't share the gospel. Or are we afraid of offending others who have "their own religion?" Sharing the gospel is the Highest Good and it is the good the Lord desires of us more than any other.

Paul warned that we should not grow weary of doing Good. It is easy to become cynical in doing good. We might feel that with all the "cons" out there that we have been taken advantage of once too often. Remember that when we do good for others from our love for Christ, it is so received by the Lord, even when others are taking advantage of our generosity and kindness.

It is also true that some people struggle more coping with life and its problems, and also spiritually with its temptations. So the Lord reminds us through Paul to bear one another's burdens. We need to be patient with one another's weakness, because we all also have our own things that other's must "put up with." And the Lord in His patience has borne so much from all of us that what we bear among ourselves pales by comparison.

Keep on doing good! It is not about getting ahead now. Now isn't important. What does it matter if we lose out on a little joy or comfort now. God in Christ has secured an eternal comfort and joy for us in heaven that cannot be taken away from us. Don't grow weary of doing good. In due time, we shall reap the rewards of God's grace which Christ already has secured for us.

In this connection we need to remember the final question in connection with doing the greatest good, -

IV. How? With Humility.

Paul emphasized that especially in connection with others spiritual needs. We need to approach our brother or sister in the faith with gentleness and humility. Remember, we are sinners

too! We also may be tempted. We may even be tempted to think of ourselves as being better than others when that is certainly not true.

We may also be tempted to think that we are something special, because of the good things we do, or because we don't do the bad things others do! When we start to consider ourselves better, more important than others, remember: apart from Christ, we are nothing. Christ is everything! When we examine ourselves and our *best* works in light of the law and the gospel we first see our sin, and how our sin corrupts even the best that we do. But then marvelously we also see the gospel, and how Christ's righteousness has been credited to us. We are told how the Spirit in His grace has sanctified us and all our efforts at doing good so that our meager efforts are acceptable thank offerings to God. Our deeds in this life are not to our credit or our glory, but remain to the praise and glory of our Savior God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Here is the grace of God as it comes into our lives. He gives meaning to our lives by enabling us to show forth His loving kindness in our deeds. Let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith! And the Lord shall bless us.

Galatians 6:16 "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God."

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.