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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 28, 2019
7th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 66:1-14, Luke 10:1-12-16-20
Hymns: 20; 439; 394; 50:2

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.

¹⁶And 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, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Doing good. --

We are here to do good. Almost every culture in the world would agree with that statement. Of course there are individuals within every society that don't care about other people at all, and think nothing of hurting other people if that gets them what they want, money or power or pleasure. However the vast majority of people in this world hold to a philosophy that we should do good. In eastern mysticism they may talk about doing good to build up good karma for one's life, either in this life or in a future reincarnation. In Islam they speak of doing good and being kind to strangers that one might build favor with Allah and be received into eternal life. Many religions hold to similar ideas that doing good makes one good and therefore also worthy of heavenly bliss and glory.

That is what makes the gospel of Christ stand out, for Scripture teaches us that only the merits of Christ avail before God, and it is only through faith in Christ that this grace may be appropriated for eternal life.

In other worldly organization there is much talk about making this world a better place for everyone. We may label this as civic righteousness, and agree that this is something that should be encouraged in our communities. However we may not agree with the almost automatic assumption that such good deeds gain favor for salvation before God.

In the past several sermons we have been making our way through Paul's epistle to the Galatians in which Paul addressed this matter of salvation by grace without the deeds of the law very carefully. The Holy Spirit led Paul to make it abundantly clear that any mixture of good works with the gospel actually makes the gospel a different thing that is no longer the gospel, and can no longer save one from eternal death.

So today as we conclude our review of Paul's letter to the Galatians it may seem strange at first reading to find Paul encouraging the Galatians to do good, and to that good to all people, and that they should be careful that they don't grow tired of doing good. Paul encourages us all in --

THEME: Doing Good that Matters.

Please understand that I am not saying that being nice doesn't matter. Not only should we be nice to our neighbors, but we should appreciate neighbors who are nice people. That should be recognized as a blessing from the Lord. Also there is a civic responsibility as well as our spiritual responsibility to look out for our neighbor. It is however important to retain the context of the whole epistle when discussing what Paul is encouraging in our text. The focus of the epistle as a whole is on the gospel of Christ, and the salvation that is found in His name. So much of the good that churches do in the world is focused primarily on the physical, temporal needs of people, and all too often the spiritual and eternal is lost sight of. How much difference does it make if people are made comfortable for a few years if they are going to suffer eternally in hell? So let us look briefly at Paul's words in the closing verses of 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.

In a minute we are going to look at these words again, but for the moment let's appreciate the emphasis that Paul places on the gospel and the power of the gospel in one's life. The cross of Christ is supreme for Paul. Why? Because it is in the cross of Christ that the righteousness of God is revealed. It is in the cross of Christ that sinners find redemption in the holy precious blood that Jesus shed for us and our salvation. That is the treasure that we have and hold dear in our hearts. That is the treasure that God has entrusted to us to share with the world. That is the message that brings life and salvation to lost sinners weighed down by guilt. That truth of the gospel changed Paul's heart and completely changed his relationship with the world and how he viewed the things of this world.

When we understand this for ourselves then we are ready to start --

I. Doing Good that is Actually Good.

Let us read these words again:

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.

So often doing good includes boasting; at least in this that people will make a list of the wonderful things they have done and accomplished with their charitable foundations or giving. It becomes about self as much as it is about helping others. Before his conversion that was what Paul was like. Paul's boasting was focused on his life as a Pharisee and his strict observance of the law the righteousness Paul attained by his own works. After his conversion Paul's boasting was focused on Christ because Jesus is the One who has done it **all**. He has done all the

good. Any deeds or religious observances that may have occurred in our lives aren't part of the picture of our salvation; that good is in Christ alone. He is our GOOD before God. He is our salvation. He is the salvation we desire to bring to others.

So Paul's encouragement in our relationship with others begins with the need for **spiritual** awareness, caring about the spiritual condition of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul writes in our text:

Galatians 6:1- 6 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. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵For each one shall bear his own load. ⁶Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

This is why the Lord has placed us in congregations. We are a spiritual family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are expected to care enough about one another that we will look out for each other, and when we do reach out, it needs to be in love and humility. Remember that we can be tempted as easily as our neighbor. We can also too easily think of ourselves with pride, that we haven't fallen into this or that sin. You know as well as I do that we are all susceptible to sin, and when we have a struggle with an issue in life one can easily lapse into the way of sin again. We are weak. **Christ is strong**. We need to remember that and bear one another's burdens. That means be patient with others in their spiritual struggles whether that be in maintaining a proper understanding of Scripture or lapsing into old sinful ways.

When people get themselves into deep water we need to throw them a life preserver. We don't just watch them drown! That is doing good that requires patience and love, and it is good that really matters!

Bear one another's burdens. When your brother or sister in Christ has an extra burden to bear, be it sickness or loss of property or loss of a loved one, help bear that burden. Be there for them. This requires that "Agape" kind of love. Agape love isn't looking for anything in return, it lifts the downtrodden.

Paul has another word for us that is as important for me as anyone. That line about "each one bearing his own load" isn't about suffering the tribulations or the trials of life. It is about taking on the work that Lord has set before us with the right attitude. It is too easy for us to get disgruntled. I know that, and struggle with that myself. That is when we need to remember that we are doing what we are doing in grateful devotion to Christ our Savior. As children of God we are to serve Christ and our neighbor, or you might say, we serve Christ by serving our neighbor. I entered the pastoral ministry and with that came certain responsibilities and challenges. So I should bear that load cheerfully. Burden is a poor choice of words here. It is more like in that song where one brother carries his brother, and says, "He ain't heavy; he's my brother." We take on a load with love and we bear that load willingly and cheerfully in service to our Savior who bore a far greater load for us than any we might bear.

II. Persisting in Doing Good for the Lord.

What Paul is encouraging is persistence in doing good.

Galatians 6:7-10 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For 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. ⁹And let us not grow weary while

doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith

Those first words I just read are often applied to living a worldly life, and rightly so. If you sow your wild oats and fail to repent you will be included with the tares, or weeds, that will be gathered up on the Last Day and thrown into the fire. If you live a life of wickedness and impenitence, you will harvest the fruits of that life. However, we shouldn't think that there is nothing in these words for us. Paul is looking at the heart. He is warning against pride, and impatience and neglect of our brother as well. Let us always remember where we started out in consideration of the wonders of the grace of Christ crucified, and how He endured so much for me, and how longsuffering Jesus is with me in my life. We don't always do so well. We throw up our hands and give up on people. We tend to think that we have done our share of good, and now someone else should pick it up for a while. We might think we deserve a pat on the back and some recognition for all the good we have done, so we are going to step back until we are properly appreciated. Ah, such vanity!

Let us not grow weary in doing good. **The Lord** is the One who gives us opportunities to do good, and plops them down right in front of our faces. The Lord also gives us the resources to do good. As we have the resources, and we do have resources, more than we would like to admit to ourselves, let us do good. Remember spiritual good is the highest good. That is why Paul mentions supporting the work of the ministry, financially supporting the work of the gospel ministry in this context, including both our local congregation and synodical ministry, and missions.

And yes, the Lord wants us to give special and first attention to those who are of the household of faith, to our brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever they may be in world. Take the time, make the effort to learn of the needs

of others. They often will not receive help from the world. In many parts of the world where Christians are persecuted they aren't going to receive relief during natural disasters from government or society. If they don't receive help and assistance from their fellow Christians they will be suffering all the more, and needlessly because of our neglect. And how disappointed is the Lord in such lost opportunities to exercise Christian fellowship and love.

Let us do good. Let us **persist** in doing good. Let us do good because we have received good from the Lord, even our salvation. Persist in doing that good that directs our fellow man, and assists our Christian brother on their way to heaven. Remember always, we also have that place reserved for us in heaven, and that is our greatest hope and our greatest treasure.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)