

Good Works: A Window to the World

by Jeff Jackson

Jeff Jackson's sermon emphasizes the role of Christians as salt and light in the world, showcasing good works as a reflection of God's Kingdom.

Duration: 58:41

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-2, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32, Galatians 6:9, Titus 2:11-14

Topics: "Christian Living", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the character and purpose of a Christian in the world. He emphasizes the importance of living as a servant of God and interacting with a world that does not follow His rule. The speaker uses the analogy of salt and light to describe the role of a Christian. Just as salt adds flavor and preserves, Christians are called to bring a positive influence and preserve righteousness in the world. Similarly, just as light illuminates and exposes, Christians are meant to bring knowledge and reveal the truth of God to those in darkness.

Transcript

Father, thank you. Thank you for brothers and sisters that love you and love Helen and I. Thank you for brothers and sisters that rejoice over the opportunity to come together corporately and worship you and brothers and sisters that want to know what you have to say and want to do your will. Father, I pray that you would guide us now and lead us for your glory in Jesus' name.

Amen. You should be in Matthew chapter 5 and as you're kind of camped out there, I want to lay the foundation for this. This is the first sermon that Jesus gave.

It's his first sermon and it's one of my favorites, so that's why I was blessed when Mark asked me to see what the Lord would want to speak to you from this text in Matthew chapter 5. And one of the things that's important to understand as we begin to look at it and the specific portion that I want to focus on is what were the people that he's speaking to dealing with at the time he's speaking to them? Understand that he's speaking to a crowd of Jews. There are disciples already, those that have chosen to begin following him, but then there's a large multitude of people that are there listening already. And as Jesus begins this ministry, his ministry and this first sermon, it's important to understand what was on the minds of these people.

Well, we can't really relate to it because of the way we've been raised in our country, but understand that these are people, the Jews, that had a pretty cool history of being an independent sovereign nation, of being God's people and seeing the truths of God fleshed out in the way they lived their lives and the way they interacted with God and the way they worshiped God and the way God had blessed them with houses they didn't build and vineyards that they didn't plant. He gave them that promised land, the land of Israel, and they were to be his people. They were to be a kingdom of priests.

And the concept of kingdom was on the forefront of every Jew's mind. And at the time Jesus came, they were frustrated because they were not a kingdom like they expected to be. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven wasn't working out the way they had expectations that it should based on what they were hearing taught from the word.

And so what was going on? Well, they were under the Roman Empire's thumb. They were not a sovereign nation. They couldn't do what they wanted.

They couldn't raise their own army. They were under the Roman Empire. They were occupied.

They had a ruler over there, a king that they didn't choose. There was not a Jew that didn't worship their God. Life was not good for them.

And so what most of them did was they kind of looked at the kingdom of God as something that was not yet present. It wasn't present at all in the form that they expected. And so when Jesus comes, they kind of have this attitude of, well, the kingdom of God's not really here like we thought it was going to be, like we've been taught it was going to be.

But we know it's here and it's limited. We know a few people are in it. You know, the Pharisees, they're pretty religious.

They're pretty strict. And the Sadducees. And there's a certain group of people that are very meticulous about following the law.

And they're probably the only ones that are getting a taste of the kingdom. We're all excluded because, A, our country is not free. And, B, we're not as serious about our religion as they are.

And so what Jesus does as he comes and as he begins his ministry, he begins to preach the gospel. And you see time and time again that the gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus is not coming, instituting the kingdom of God when you really study the word was already there because it spoke of God's rule and God's reign in the heart and lives of people.

And so when Jesus came, what he has to do is kind of correct their view of what the kingdom of God is. And they are downpressed from not only the Roman government, but from their own religious leaders as if they can't enter the kingdom of God. They're not good enough.

They're not religious enough. And so Jesus, as he begins his ministry with this first sermon, he goes right to the thing which was on the forefront of their mind, thinking about the kingdom of God. And he begins with those beatitudes, which are descriptions, in a sense, of the character of the subject that actually lives in the kingdom of God, his character, his nature, a description of that.

And so let's read real quickly through these beatitudes. Blessed, verse three, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. See in the mindset of the religious people, if you're poor in spirit, you can't get into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says, oh, no, happy are those that are poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, not the strong. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Oh, they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. When you're pursuing righteousness, and you're walking with God, and you're persecuted for it, not recognized for it, but persecuted for it, blessed are you. You're a possessor of the kingdom of heaven.

And then he says in verse 11, blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you, and excuse me, all evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So he's given us a description right off the bat of the character of the subject of the kingdom of God. And that does not hinge on the political atmosphere. That does not hinge on religiosity.

And he's going to explain that as he goes through this sermon. But it's interesting now, he makes a transition from what the character and the nature or the description of the subject of God's kingdom is like to the purpose of that subject in this world. See, to be a servant of the king, a subject of the king who is an eternal king, who is a spiritual king, and yet to live in this world, you've got to interact with things that are not from his kingdom.

And so what he does next is he then gives us an understanding of the purpose of this person in this world, where his rule and reign are not the ultimate, are not being followed. And so he uses a couple of interesting analogies. He says, verse 13, you are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing, but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. Now, it's interesting because he makes that transition from a character description of a Christian, a person who's in the kingdom, to the purpose of that person in this world. As you work your way through the rest of the sermon, which we're not going to do this morning, you see he goes on and talks about how this person relates to the world, how this person relates to the law that the Jews have been taught, how this person relates to money, how this person relates to God, how this person relates to somebody who's offended them, how this person relates to judging other peoples and comparing other people.

He works this all the way through. It's an incredible sermon. You could spend literally weeks, months studying it, and it's worth the study.

But the first thing he does in regards to the Christian in this world and interacting with the world is he says, you are the salt of the earth. Now, what did that mean to the people? When you say, if you told somebody, you're the salt of the earth, what would that mean to somebody today? Nothing, because salt doesn't play

that significant of a role in the world we live in. In those days, salt was life and death.

Salt was a life and death issue. And the salt was different because in a sense, it was different in the sense that it wasn't refined like we have it today and purified and all those other things, but it was dug out and it was intermingled with other things, but it served the purpose. It served some really crucial purposes.

So it's interesting that he would grab this analogy of, you are the salt of the earth. Okay, what was salt used for in those days? First and foremost, salt was used as a preservative. Salt was a preservative.

In other words, salt, when it was taken and was forced into contact with another substance, it would preserve the decay or the corruption that was inherent in that substance. Every substance is pure at a certain moment, but left alone, it will move towards decay and corruption. And so what salt does is salt slows down or inhibits the rate of decay or corruption.

I remember this real practically from the Philippines. And if you've been to these places that live by the people, that live by the sea and so forth, they eat dried fish. And so a lot of times what they would do is they would take fish, they would of course gut the fish, split it open, then they would take salt and they would rub it into the meat of the fish and then they'd lay it out in the sun.

Flies flying all around and landing on it and stuff, but it would sit out in the sun for a couple of days, non-refrigerated. But the salt rubbed into the fish flesh kept it from decaying and corrupting and preserved it and you could then eat that for up to a week, never refrigerating it. Many people live on that.

It's interesting. And it's fragrant too, if you can imagine. But it was very obvious that salt served the purpose.

And see, the thing about salt is that in order to inhibit decay or corruption, to be that preservative, it has to come in contact with a substance other than itself. Salt in a salt shaker is worthless salt. It does absolutely no good.

Salt taken out of the salt shaker and woven into something else will then produce the effect that you desire, a preservation. So he says you are the salt of the earth, this kind of person with this kind of character that loves this kind of God. Secondly, not only does it preserve and inhibit decay or corruption, but it accents the flavor of what is good that it is interspersed with.

Salt brings out the existing flavor that's there. It accents it. It doesn't change it, but it enhances it.

It makes it, there's actually the word tang, you know, don't think of the orange drink, but the concept in the old days, the word tang meant that accent that made something really palatable and tasty, you see. And so salt not only preserves, but it brings out. How many of us use salt on our meals? Does it change the specific flavor? No, it enhances it.

It makes it better. Too much salt can change it, obviously. And then third, salt had another interesting dynamic, and that was that it creates a desire for something essential.

Salt also, when it comes in contact with something else, it stimulates a desire for something essential. So salt was good to stimulate thirst. Things which, and of course water, it stimulates you to have thirst, wherein you would take water and keep yourself from dehydrating.

So salt is a stimulant, in a sense, for you to be stirred up, to crave that which is ultimately good for you, that which is essential. And so think of that as an analogy for a Christian or for the church. We are here in the midst of a fallen society, culture, and we are to be what, people? Salt.

We are to preserve the corruption and the decay that's going on around us, where Satan rules and reigns and people's lives are in rebellion to God. We are in the midst of those people, and we should be a preserving entity as we come in contact with them. But if we don't come in contact with them, we can't preserve them.

Salt in a salt shaker is useless salt. If we stay together all the time with other believers and we're not interacting with what's going on out there, we're not serving the purpose that salt is to serve. Also, we should be accenting the flavor of what is good.

Not everything is bad and corrupt and decaying. Well, we should inhibit that, but also there are some good things that are taking place in the world. And so we, as salt of the earth, should accent that.

We should bring flavor to it. We should bring an aspect to it that's not being seen, that detached angle that God isn't there. It's just striving for yourself.

And so that's kind of been an interesting thing as I've worked with the ALS associations and so forth, how many people, the goal of their whole lives is to stay alive. As awesome as it is what Lance Armstrong has done, the problem with his whole live strong thing is it's as if this life is all there is. Like the greatest goal in life is to stay alive as long as possible.

That's got it backwards. That is not the reason you exist, to stay alive. You exist for a greater purpose, the glory of God, you see? And we should be living in such a way that we are stirring up a desire in other people to have a drink from the fountain we've drunk from.

They should see us flowing out rivers of life. Not ease and comfort, but flowing out what real life is all about. And in doing so, perhaps they'll want to have a drink from the fountain that we're drinking from.

So it's interesting. He says you are the salt of the earth, and then he immediately gives a challenge. He says you're the salt of the earth, and then he immediately says what? But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? You can't re-flavor salt, especially in those days.

If it's been so intermixed that it's no longer doing what it's supposed to do, it's useless. You might as well just throw it on the ground and walk on it. So he's telling us, you and me individually and the church, that we are to be salt, that we should be a preservative, that we should accent that which is good, that we should create a desire for something that is essential.

And if we don't do that, if we're not fulfilling that role, it's pretty much, you know, you might as well just be walked on. And the world will walk on you. The devil will walk all over you.

So verse 14, and this is the verse I really want to, the few verses I really want to focus on. He says in verse 14, you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Now it's interesting to me that first salt and then light, but the first thing he does after using the concept of salt and the concept of light is he immediately gives a warning. You are salt, but flavorless salt is useless.

You are light, but you don't take the light that's in a city on a hill and cover it.

You don't light a lamp and cover it with a basket. So it's interesting that he immediately uses the analogy, and then he immediately gives a warning of that analogy or that understanding being misunderstood, because he knows how we are. We'll find all kinds of reasons not to be salt, not to be light, and so he's warning us, no, that's what you are.

Understand, you're going to be held responsible to be that which you were created to be. That's heavy. Now, he then says this in verse 16, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

Now, before we look at that verse, which is our key verse for this morning, verse 16, the title of this message is, by the way, good works, a window for the world. Good works, a window for the world. Now, light, what is light? Light is that which illuminates, that which unveils, that which exposes, that which brings something to your senses so that you can perceive it, understand it.

Light at its core is that which illuminates and makes known what was previously unknown or hidden. So he says, you are the light of the world. Now, what's interesting about that is we know from when he first started his ministry that he is the ultimate light, right? John 1, 9 talks about the reality that Jesus was the true light that gives light to all men, and that light came into the world, but people what? Loved the darkness.

The true light, loved the darkness. This is the light that when you read in Genesis, in the creation account, where it says, God said, let there be light, and there was light. That was four days before he created the sun.

There was light shining before the sun was created. Why? Because he is the light. That was the sun shining, the sun, S-O-N, not the sun, S-U-N.

That came at a later point in creation. Jesus said in John 8, 12, I am the light of the world. But now, he says, you are the light of the world.

What does that mean? Does that mean we generate our own illumination? No. We reflect his light. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, and somebody reminded me after the first service, the moon, although it's just a reflection of the sun, the moon has incredible influence, doesn't it? It affects the tides.

So we are to be the salt of the earth. We are to be the light of the world. We are to be the moon affecting the tides of people's lives, drawing them towards the God who created them.

It's so interesting how God uses these kind of expressions. Paul says in Philippians, he says, you live in the midst of a crooked, Philippians 2, 15, you live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world. Are we shining as lights? We are going to talk about that.

How do we shine as lights? Now, what kind of got me on this when Mark called me and asked me to speak about something from Matthew 5 is the Lord has permitted us in Mesquite to be part of a church plant for the third time. By the grace of God, we were able to pioneer a church from the ground up in the Philippines in the beginning of 1988, end of 1987. When we got back in 1994, we pioneered a church among the Filipino community in San Diego originally.

And now for the third time, maybe I'll get it this time, we get to be part of a church plant from the ground up. And when you're a part of the leadership team of a church plant, you wrestle with questions that are healthy to be wrestled with. Lord, what do you want this church to look like? What are we supposed to be? Are we doing church? Do we want to just do church the way everybody else does church? Lord, do you want to do something new, something different, perhaps something that's a throwback to a more biblical example? These are questions that you wrestle with.

And what do we want our church to be known for? We have the ability to chart the course of this body of believers. What do we want it to be known for? And so you're throwing around the term church. And I think what I've learned over the years is when you throw that term around, it's good to actually think about what you mean.

What is the word church? What is a church? Well, Jesus grabbed this word church. The Greek word was ecclesia. And it's interesting that he would grab this word because the word church, and the first time you find it is in Matthew chapter 16.

The word is only used three times in the gospels, all three times by Jesus. And so there's significance in when he used that word and how he used that word to understand what it means. And what's interesting is he chose this word ecclesia, or ecclesia, or depending on I'm not a Greek guy.

So if you're Greek, forgive me that I'm mispronouncing the word. But the the word, interestingly enough, was from the political realm. Did you know that? It was from the political realm.

Now, what do I mean it was from the political realm? Well, you know, if they had a newspaper in those days, and the city council met, the word that was for city council was the word ecclesia. It was a political word. And the common day equivalent of it would be the city council of a community or of a city.

Now, what did that mean? Well, what was the city council? It was an assembly of called out ones. It was a certain portion of the citizens of a community that assembled together, they were called out to come together. And what's so interesting about him grabbing this word and using this word and calling us corporately with this word is that what was the main purpose or what is the main purpose of a city council? Is it to further the purposes and the ends of the members that are on it? No.

A city council does not exist for the welfare primarily of its own members. You don't join the city council because you want to be famous, because you want to be more comfortable. You join a city council, why? Because you want to further good things in your community.

You serve for the good of the community. You serve for something larger than yourself. The city council does not exist for the interests of its own members.

And if they act that way, what do we do the next election? You're out of there. Now, that's the word that Jesus grabs from the existing political realm and he says that's what I'm going to call this group of people that follow me. Ecclesia, the church.

When you talk about the church today, first of all, many people misunderstand the word church. You say church today, what do people think? And we use this terminology all the time. We got a church building.

Where's the meeting at? It's at the church. No. The church is not a building.

It's not a location. The church is an assembly of people. The church is people.

It's the body of Christ. He is the head. We are the body.

It's the building. God's building here on planet earth. It's the bride of Christ.

The church is not the building. This is just a building. This is not the church.

And when we leave here, God's not here in the same sense that he's here when we're here. Are you with me on that? Now, we all use the term interchangeably and so forth, but it's good for us to stop and think about it. So what's interesting to me is when Jesus grabs this term, ecclesia, for the church, in the very concept of the church is the idea that the church doesn't exist for the interests of its own members.

This church does not exist to make you feel good, to meet your needs. Does it make you feel good? Hopefully. Are your needs being met? Yes.

But is that the primary reason Calvary Chapel of Absolutely not. And when we do think that and live as if that's true, we actually undermine the very reason for our existence. And this is what Jesus is talking about here.

He's talking about his kingdom now being available, what the character of the people in his kingdom are, and then how they interact. And they are to be salt and they are to be light. Both of those things imply that they are only doing that which they were created to do when they're interacting with not just one another, but those on the outside.

Salt is useless if it's in the salt shaker. Light is useless if it's under a basket. It must shine.

So the church, what's happened is, and it's interesting that when Jesus talks about the church in Matthew 16, the first time it's mentioned, he says, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The church is on a mission from God. The gates of Hades, how can the gates have you ever been attacked by a gate? No.

Gates are stationary. So if the church is going to have problems with gates, which Jesus said they're going to have problems with gates, the gates of Hades can't prevail against you. The only way we're having conflict with a gate is if we're moving, seeking to save that which is lost behind those gates.

And they cannot prevail. Gates don't chase people. And yet, what has the church become in many ways? It's become a gated fortress.

The walls are up, the gates are up, and the church comes together and worships God behind the walls while the world is dying. All the salts gathered together in the salt shaker, just so enthused to see all those other grains of salt, missing the very reason they exist. The fortress should be a force.

The church is not to be a fortress from the world, it's to be a force in the world. And yet we've twisted that around. So we ask ourselves the question as we pioneer the church up there, and God's really blessing the church plan, what does the world see when they look at our church? When we would ask somebody, if we would ask somebody, what do you think about the church on the corner? Calvary Chapel of Escondido.

What would they say? How would they describe it? Well, you know, they have a lot of people that show up on Sunday mornings. Parking lot's always full. They're really a pain.

It's hard to get around that corner on Sunday mornings. And they all come together, and I hear really good singing kind of wafting through the thing. And I know they study the Bible.

They say it's God's word. They study it in there. And I know that they're doing some really cool ministry to their kids.

Okay. Is there anything known about the church larger than what takes place here? Within the fortress? Is the church a force? Or is it a fortress? It's interesting to chew on this stuff. Now, what should be the minimum of a church? Well, certainly hearing the word, teaching the word, fellowship, you know, breaking of bread, prayer, all of those things are crucial, minimum components of a local church.

But is that enough? What does the world see? What would the world see if they looked at most churches? Well, they would say there is God being talked about in there. God is on display, at least through his word, this God that they believe in. They read this thing called the Bible, and it says they think it's his word, and so they're learning about their God.

Okay. What else would they see? Well, hopefully they would see that lives are changed, right? They would say, oh, yeah, the people that go to that church over there, I know people that went there, and their lives have changed. They've turned away from destructive habits.

You should have seen that person before you started going to that church. It's been really good for them to go. They don't have those destructive habits anymore.

They don't have ungodly behavior. They were violent before and socially dangerous in their actions, and now they're not anymore. Actually, what's really cool about that church over there is that people are changed, and they actually get jobs.

And so they're not on the public payroll anymore through taxes and all those other things. So it's good. So maybe the world would say God is there because he's taught about from the Bible, and there are changed lives there.

Lots of people being changed from lots of things. But that's the problem. You see? Is that what the church is about? Teaching God's word only? Worshipping God only? Getting people to turn from their sins? Now, all of those things are necessary, but is that all there is? Are people not only being changed from things, but are they being changed to things? And you'll see this as we go.

In other words, if somebody was to say this is the ethic of that church, this is the moral or the standard that I've learned and observed from that church over there. Yeah, they're really big on changing lives, helping people turn away from destructive things. They're really good on that.

That's what they do. That is not enough, people, biblically. It's not enough to turn away from.

It's what are you turning to? And what is produced? Well, Jesus says, verse 16, let your light shine. Christian, your light should shine. And what is the vehicle for that shining according to Jesus in his first sermon? Let your light shine before men that they might what? See your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

You hear what Jesus is doing here? He is saying that the world will peer into the nature of God, the reality of God. They will see God through your good works. And if they see those good works, they will glorify your God.

Isn't that why you live? Isn't that why you exist? Good works are the window through which the world sees our God. And when we are doing good works and our God is seen, they will praise him. They will glorify him because they've seen him through our good works.

And yet good works are hardly ever talked about or taught. Matter of fact, I mean, I've listened to hundreds, thousands of sermons. And I've heard hardly any teaching on the subject of good works.

Why? When it's so prevalent, which you're going to see in a minute in the scripture. Why? Well, here's why. Because we don't walk a balancing act very good.

We're all prone to extremes, all of us. We tend to run in extremes. So for a while, it was thought that good works in the theological realm, good works were made you acceptable to God.

That going to heaven, and this is still that way in some religions, that going to heaven, we have a lot of Mormons up there. This is totally Mormonism. Going to heaven is based on the combination of what Jesus did on the cross and what you do good work wise.

So if you have Jesus and you do enough good works, let's say you have 75 bad things, but you've done 80 good things, you're plus five. So that plus five plus Jesus, you're in heaven. And many people believe that.

Well, I'm a good person. So therefore I'm going to heaven. Well, okay, well, how do you measure good? Well, I'm pretty good most of the time.

Okay, well, have you ever told a lie? Well, yeah. Have you ever stolen anything? Well, yeah. Have you ever thought about looking at a woman with lust in your heart or a man? Well, yeah.

So, okay, let me see. You're a thieving, lying adulterer. But you're pretty good, right? No, you're not good.

Not by God's standard. You don't meet the standard. So what's happened is what we people have done and what the church has done in order to emphasize that it's all by grace and you are saved only by grace, unmerited favor.

Your good works mean absolutely nothing in regards to your position with God in eternity. They mean nothing. You are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

But because that's been twisted, people shy away from good works. And they say, well, that's what it's all about, being a Christian is saying the sinner's prayer, going forward in a Billy Graham crusade, raising your hand, bowing your head and closing every eye and repeating a prayer as if that was that which saves you. And once you've said the right things, believe the right concoction of words, you're saved.

Wrong. Biblical saving faith will produce good works. And so James makes this very clear.

If you don't have good works, your faith is dead. Your good works don't save you. Nobody is saved by doing good works.

But if you have no good works, you have no saving faith. Good works are not the cause of salvation. They are the effect of salvation.

And so Jesus in his first sermon says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. And the New Testament has a bunch to say about the place of good works. But so I want to answer two questions as I kind of start to bring this to a point.

Number one, what are good works? When Jesus says let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and magnify or glorify your father in heaven, what does he mean? Well, I think the first thing we need to do is we're going to try to define good works is look at the life of Jesus. And some of you have heard me say this before. It's kind of one of my hobby horses.

But I have a real problem with the church today. And here's why. When I talk to people in the world and I ask them to describe Jesus for me, they give me a list of what they know about Jesus.

And their list is all about the things that Jesus did. He healed the sick. He raised the dead.

He went with the poor. He defended the woman caught in adultery. He did that.

Jesus is known around the world by even people that don't believe in him for what he did. But the church is known and Christians are known for what? What they don't do. Oh, yeah, he's a Christian.

He doesn't go to R-rated movies. You know what? He's really serious. He doesn't even rent R-rated videos.

They don't go to bars. They don't go here. They don't go there.

Why are Christians known for what they don't do? And their Lord is known for what he did do. Turning away from sin is not the end. Our ethic of Christianity is about what you've been saved from is wrong if it doesn't include what you're saved to.

Are you with me? And it's sad to me that unbelievers have come to the conclusion that we're known for what we don't do. We don't smoke. We don't chew.

We don't run with those who do. And we're proud of that. No.

No. Jesus was never known for that. He was salt.

And he was light. And he was engaged in the what was going on out there in the real world. And he represented God properly.

So he helped the sick, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, stopped the storm, fed people selflessly, defended the oppressed, did a lot of stuff. A lot of good works. And that's what he was known for.

A man who went about doing good. Why is the church not known as a group of people who go about doing good? Instead it's known as a group of people who come together and sing really nice songs and listen to Bible studies. What about the early church and Paul? Chapter 2 of Acts after the Holy Spirit comes there on the day of Pentecost.

It says they sold everything they had and distributed it to the poor. That would be a good work. To take that which you possess and to sell it or use it to bless those that are in need.

They opened their homes to one another. In chapter 4, verse 32 of Acts, it was kind of the mentality. Nobody claimed that anything they owned was their own.

But they said whatever we have, if it can be used by you, here, use it. In chapter 6 of the book of Acts, the early church, they had a distribution program, food for widows. Greek speaking widows, Hebrew speaking widows, there was conflict there.

But the point of it was the early church fed their own widows. They weren't on food stamps. They weren't on food stamps.

You see? The church has somehow missed it. And it's because we don't understand the role of good works. And yet this is what our God uses to unveil himself.

Good works. Not good worship. Not good Bible studies.

Although those things are good and God has unveiled in those things. Go to the scripture. How is he unveiled? You see, the thing that drew the nonbeliever to the early church was not their great teaching.

It was not their great worship. What drew them to the early church was, whoo, those people love each other. They serve each other.

They serve the community. Everywhere they go, they're looking for an opportunity to be a blessing. Yeah.

Dorcas. How would you like to have that name? Chapter 9, verse 36. A woman named Dorcas died.

Peter was called. And when he got there, he found people weeping over Dorcas, who was referred to as a woman full of good deeds. And there were women standing around grieving because Dorcas had died.

And they showed Peter the garments that she had made to help the poor. Yeah. You see? Those women in Dorcas, they took what they had and they ministered and they served selflessly other people.

They sent money in chapter 11, verse 29 for relief when there was a famine in Jerusalem. They sent money. They housed missionaries.

Lydia did in Acts 16. Jason did in Acts 17. In Acts 20, verse 34, Paul tells the Ephesian elders, he says, hey, when I came among you, I worked making tents and I shared what I made.

And he says, you must support the weak also because Jesus said it's better to give than to receive. And then kind of to me, the icing on the cake, the pinnacle of Paul and his understanding of what it means to serve God is he's a prisoner. He's an old guy.

He's a geyser. He's on his way to Rome because he's been arrested falsely. And he's appealed to Rome.

And so he's going to Rome. And you know the story, he's put on that ship and that ship wrecks. And it goes down at sea and everybody swims ashore.

You know, they're all dragging up on the beaches because the ship is demolished because of the storm. And when they get to the shore on the island of Malta, it tells us in Acts 28, verse 3, that when they got

there and they were all wet and damp after crawling out of the sea and being in the storm, you know what Paul did, the old geyser? He sat around and waited for people to wait on him. No, Paul went out and was gathering sticks to build a fire.

The old man that had the right to sit there and be waited upon, the one who predicted the storm, the one who in the midst of the storm brought calm, the one who said if you listen to what I say, nobody is going to die but the ship is going to be ruined. Follow me and you'll live. That guy gets on shore and the first thing he does is get up and start gathering sticks to start a fire to help other people warm up.

And he gets bit by a snake in doing it and God rescues him. Doesn't die. Paul was known for what he did.

Not for what he didn't do. You see? So we know what good works are. We know what they look like.

Is it a good work to come to church? Some people say that's about as minimum as you can get. What are your good works? Well, they go to church. Okay.

I'm not sure about that but I think you need to rethink that a little bit. Going to church is not a good work necessarily. Okay? Teaching Sunday school, that's a good work but that's a good work for other people in the salt shaker.

Praise the Lord. People in the salt shaker need to be served. But what about those outside? Those are good works when you go and help the poor.

When Mark and the crew get into the convalescent homes and they're there talking to people that nobody else talks to. What about Josh and the Romos and those that are ministering out at Grape Day Park? Those are good works where you put something at risk to selflessly show the reality of God to other people. We live these little fabricated lives of comfort as if being a Christian is about comfort and convenience.

Why do good works? That's the next question. This is where I'm going to start to end this. Why do good works? Well, according to Jesus, number one, God is glorified by us doing good works.

First Peter 2.11, Peter echoes this and says unbelievers glorify God when they see us doing good works. Ephesians 2. Anybody have Ephesians 2.8 and 9 memorized? Who has that memorized? Anybody? Ephesians 2.8 and 9. Do you have verse 10 memorized? All right, praise the Lord, brother. Ephesians 2.8 and 9. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. So that's, I mean, that's the verse, right? Man, we're saved by grace through faith. It's not of good works, right? Except the next verse says, for you are his workmanship, his poem, poema.

You are God's poem created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand for you to do. You were saved for good works, and God has prepared those works before he saved you. Do you know what those good works are for you? That's why you were saved.

If you don't, you're having a purposeless walk with the Lord. 1 Timothy 6, Paul says to 1 Timothy, pastoring the church at Ephesus, Timothy, command those who are rich in this present age, and by the way, you're rich. I don't want to burst your bubble, but having been around the world and so forth, you're rich.

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works. Rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come.

Storing up a good foundation, how do you store up a good foundation for the time to come according to Paul? Be rich in good works. Have you ever heard the song, that's all the lumber? Song by a guy named Eli. This guy is a Christian, and he dies.

And he meets Peter. And this guy has been banking on Jesus said, I go and prepare a place for you. My father's house, there are many mansions.

So the guy gets up there, and Peter says, well, come on, I'm going to show you your place. And he said, wow, big, huge, 5,000 square foot home. And as he walks down the street, it's a 5,000 square foot home, and then a 4,000, and then a 3,000.

And as they continue to walk, the houses get smaller until he's down to like the 600 square foot studio condo. And he's wondering, hmm, where's my mansion? Must be a mistake. And he gets to the last house on the street, which is an 8 by 10 shack made out of an old garage door and pallets.

And he says, well, I thought Jesus was up here building a mansion for me. And Peter says, hey, man, that's all the lumber you sent. That's all the lumber.

That's all the lumber. That's all the lumber you sent. What's the point? We don't have anything to work with up here.

You haven't sent anything up. Oh, you're here. You're glad you're here.

You're in the presence of God. But you don't have fullness like you could have if you're rich and good works. That's what builds your house in heaven.

You're in heaven, but your good works, you're going to give account for those. They're going to make a difference on your eternity. Let me close with Titus.

Go over to Titus. I can't emphasize this enough. When Paul wrote what are called the pastoral epistles, the first pastoral epistles are, of course, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, and then the other pastoral epistle, letters to pastors, is Titus.

The church at Ephesus, which is where Timothy was pastoring when Paul wrote to him, Paul started this church. Paul began and pastored the church at Ephesus for three years. This church was solid.

It had it together. When you read the letter to the Ephesians, they were able to chew on some pretty heavy theology in Ephesians. But that's also the letter where Paul says, hey, by the way, you guys, you that used to steal, knock it off.

You used to steal from people. Now you take your hands, and you work, and you earn, and now you give things away to those that are in need. Sounds like good works, doesn't it? Sounds like Paul saying, hey, guys, it's not enough to turn away from stealing.

You need to also now be working with those hands and giving. But he wrote then to Titus. Titus was on Crete.

Paul didn't start this church. It was a new church. It didn't have the foundation that Paul had laid.

So it's interesting that writing to Titus on the island of Crete, Paul mentions four times in this short little letter the importance of good works. Titus chapter 2, verse 6, likewise, exhort the young man to be sober minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works. So first thing he does is says to the pastor what? Show yourself to be a pattern of good works.

If anybody paid attention to you, pastor, leader, would they see a pattern of good works? Chapter 2, verse 14, after talking about the grace of God teaching us, he says in verse 14, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, verse 12, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. See, that's from, turn away from those things and live soberly, righteously, godly, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, listen to verse 14, are you here? Are you listening? Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, what? Zealous for good works. His people should be zealous for good works.

Do you have a zeal for good works? According to Paul, his purified people do. Those that are redeemed do. Titus 3.8, this is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly.

You hear what he tells the pastor? These things I want you to affirm constantly. Every week we should be hearing a message or a reminder of what? These things. That those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.

Those who have believed in God should do what? Be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to them. Lumber, lumber, they're sending lumber up, they're good and profitable.

You're sending lumber up doing your good works and you're opening a window for God to be seen. Finally, Titus 3.14, and let our people also learn to maintain good works. Do you think good works matter to Paul in this church? Four different times.

Let our people learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, and then it's interesting, he says that they may not be unfruitful. If you don't have good works, according to Paul, you are unfruitful. Unfruitful.

You should be fruitful, Christian. And not only are these the reasons why we should do good works, but also, Hebrews 10 tells us that we should not forsake the gathering of ourselves together and that we should stir up one another to love and good works. How can you stir up or provoke each other to good works if you don't have any yourself? What model are you demonstrating? So let me close with this question.

I'm going to say this a few times. Are you ready? If you're writing, you can write this down, because I'm going to say it at least a couple of times. Are there any deeds that you have planned into your life which you think it would be reasonable for people to look at and then conclude that because of your deeds, your God deserves their praise? Heavy.

Let me say it again. Are there any deeds that you have planned into your life which you think it would be reasonable for people to look at and then conclude that because of your deeds, your God deserves their

praise? Heavy. Would a reasonable person watching you, would a reasonable person watching you and seeing you conclude that because of your deeds, your God deserves their praise? If not, then we need to repent.

And we need to say, what are we doing here? Why are we in the church? Why do we exist? One more time. Are there any deeds, and I want you to notice this angle that you have planned. In other words, good works are what? Intentional? You should be willing to be spontaneously a good deed doer.

Good deed doer. But good deeds are planned. Do you wake up every morning and say, Lord, what can I do today? What good deed, what selfless act can I do today that will unveil your character in such a way that if somebody sees me, they'll want to praise you.

Because they'll know the only person that would do this is somebody that has been empowered by God. For them to be that selfless, there must be a God thing involved. Are there any deeds that you have planned into your life which you think it would be reasonable for people to look at and then conclude that because of your deeds, your God deserves their praise? And Paul said in Galatians 6.9, let us not grow weary while doing good.

Doing good is wearying. Paul said don't grow weary while doing good. Just remember that in due season, God is going to bless.

You're sending up lumber. You may not see any of it in this world, but lumber is up there. Let's pray.

Father, somehow I think we have missed the boat at times. Church as we know it has become something that I think is a little foreign to your word from what we read in your word. And yet you're graceful and you're merciful, so you use even the little that we do.

But Lord, you want us to grow up and be mature. And I think a part of maturity, Lord, is what we've seen consistently through your word this morning, that those that know you and love you will want to do good works. Lord, we should by your spirit because of what you've done for us, because of the hope that we have in you, because of your faithfulness, we can risk anything to selflessly serve somebody else.

So what if it's taken away? So what if we lose it all, Lord? You're faithful. You've promised to provide what we need in season and out of season. Father, I pray that you'd stir the hearts of every one of your people this morning that know you.

That there would be intentionality every morning that we awake. Lord, show us that we need to have a plan to unveil your character through selfless good works daily in the hope that you might use those works to bring others to praise you. And when we do that, Lord, we know that we will have satisfaction because we're doing that which we were created to do.

So Father, if there's any need for repentance, move upon your people to do that, to turn away from the old perspective, the old way, and to begin living this way. Good works. And Father, if there's anybody here that doesn't know you, if there's anybody here that doesn't understand how awesome you are, how good you are, your redemption, Lord, may they be bold enough to come and ask to seek out Mark or Richard or some of the other leaders that are up here and ask how to know this awesome God.

Thank you for this morning, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. All right.

God bless you.

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