

**Do Good - 2**

July 16, 2018

Galatians 5: 18-25, Galatians 6:7-10, and 1 Peter 3: 8-17

Three weeks ago we began our look at Wesley's second rule for Christian living, 'do good'. Last week we looked at the reasons we, as followers of Christ, seek to do good. For John Wesley and for us, the reason or the 'why' we do good comes from something outside of us. In Ephesians 2 we read, *"He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do"*. We closed last week's study of the "do good" rule by recalling the words Jesus left with His followers. His new command was to *"love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another"*. As a way to carry this command into your life this week, I left you with two questions. One reflected on the way that Jesus loved other. The second asked you to consider whether or not others know you are Jesus' disciples by the ways you love. I hope that it was fruitful for you to reflect on these two questions.

For me, it was hard to consider whether or not I could love others as Jesus loved them. Last Monday night I met a new friend that gave me the opportunity to try and love as Jesus loved. A young man came into the church wanting to know if he could use the bathroom. After he came out of the bathroom, he and I shared in a conversation. It was clear from the first words spoken that he was intoxicated and as the conversation evolved, I became fairly convinced that he was high as well.

In the past, this would have been my first excuse to end the conversation. I'd say something about it being inappropriate to be in a church when one was drunk or high and then I'd send the person on their way. I would often offer a shallow invitation to return when they were clean and sober, hoping inwardly that this comment would be enough to insure no future visits. Instead I chose to stay present and to talk with this young man. He shared that his grandmother who lived in Pierre had passed away and he needed some gas money to get to Pierre. I was able to give him \$5 to help him a little. After a little more conversation, he started heading toward the door. He thanked me for the money so that he could go visit his grandmother. I smiled and wished him a safe trip to Pierre and encouraged him to stop back sometime. When he thanked me again for the money, my first thought was to check again on his story. Did she pass on or did you just want to go visit her or...? I decided it wasn't for me to know or for me to judge the story, as I had usually done in the past. I knew I could give him \$5 and I had done so. That was enough. Not having to know why he wanted \$5 – I was alright with that. In focusing on simply being present and offering what I could in the moment, I found I could fully engage this young man and to begin to form a relationship with him.

As we shift to application and practice of doing good tonight, let us begin with a word of prayer...

The Bible has much to say on doing good. As is often the case, Paul contrasts the choice between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. In our opening passage from Galatians 5, Paul encourages us to make a good choice.

Please join me as we read verses 16 through 18:

*<sup>16</sup> Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.*



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Let's take a minute to discuss this passage. With those sitting near you at your table, please discuss these two questions:

- 1) What are the desires of the flesh? What does the Spirit desire?
- 2) How does the desires of the flesh prevent us from doing what the Spirit desires?

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Next, let's see how your list of the desires of the flesh compares to Paul's list. I am reading from verses 19 through 21 in Ephesians 5. Paul writes,

*<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.*

fornication strife enmities  
quarrels factions jealousy  
idolatry licentiousness envy  
dissensions carousing  
sorcery anger  
drunkenness  
impurity



How does your list compare to Paul's? It is quite a list. Anyone tell me what "licentiousness" means? Enmities? The first means being promiscuous and enmities are feelings of oppression or hostility. Yes, these would be works of the flesh. As thorough as this list is, we could all think back over our lives and add words to this list. We all have plenty of experience with the works of the flesh.

After a warning that those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God, Paul then contrasts these things with the fruit of the Spirit. Join me as we read Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. Together, we read verses 22 and 23:

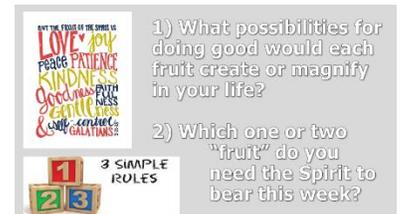


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This is a list that I could live with. How about you? When we offer the stranger love and patience and kindness and gentleness, then we are able to hear their story and to begin to form a relationship with them. Now, please take another minute or two to discuss these two questions with those seated with you:

- 1) What possibilities for doing good would each fruit create or magnify in your life?
- 2) Which one or two "fruit" do you need the Spirit to bear this week?



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### Three Simple Rules

"Do Good – Part 2"



If we had to name a thing or two that prevents us from doing good, from bearing these good fruits in our lives, what would you name?... For me it would be selfishness and pride and jealousy – those nasty fruits of the flesh.

Paul concludes chapter five of Galatians with this great reminder. It is as if he was writing just to me. In verses 25 and 26, Paul writes:

*25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.*



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There is much truth in Paul's words. When we focus on climbing the ladder and having what the Jones' have, then we can easily lose track of our faith and can readily quiet the voice of the Holy Spirit. It is an easy line to cross.

When we turn to Peter's letter to the churches in and around Galatia, we find words of encouragement and words of promise. Join me as we read from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3, verses 8 through 12:

*8 Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing.*



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*It is for this that you were called — that you might inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit.*



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*<sup>11</sup> let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.*



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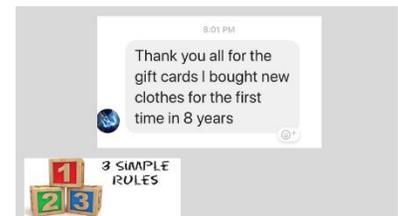


As we draw to a close I would like to share a story of how God can work in and through us when we have sympathy and a tender heart and a love for one

another. I would like to share a brief story from the mission trip we went on in mid-June. At one of the places my team was serving, I met a man named Jim. We went to the Grace Welcome Center on Tuesday and I went with four youth to paint a room that was used as their food pantry. In addition to giving out food to those in need, Grace gives diapers to moms in need, and serves a soup supper on Wednesdays and breakfast on Thursdays and Fridays. Their clients are folks who are homeless or struggling with other issues of poverty. Once upon a time, Jim was one of those clients. He walked into the room we were painting and introduced himself as a volunteer at Grace. I began a conversation by asking him if he was a Kenosha native. His response was, "Worst move I ever made". That was the beginning of his story. His story was full of heartbreak and loss and pain and hardship.

But as his story unfolded, it also told another story. It was a story of faith and God’s love remaining with him through many trials and difficult circumstances. My co-leader Steve had met Jim on Monday. Tuesday evening, we talked about doing something for Jim. He walked about twelve blocks to “work” every day so we asked the director, Leif, about buying Jim a bicycle. Leif checked, but, no, the brain surgery Jim had left him with balance issues – he couldn’t ride a bike. Leif suggested we talk with Pastor Jonathan. After some conversation with Pastor Jonathan, it was decided that we would give him a gift card to the local Wal-Mart. Jonathan agreed to drive Jim and his wife there so they could buy what they needed. The next day we got a card and two Wal-Mart gift cards. Steve gave me the card to give to Jim Thursday, our last day at Grace. We gathered around Jim, gave him the card, and prayed over him. He was worn out from our teams being there all week and was headed home to rest. He stuffed the card in his pocket and headed off. Later that day Steve got a thank you for the card and our prayers. It felt kind of incomplete. Then on Friday night Steve sidled up to me and asked what I thought we should do with the two Wal-Mart cards he found in his suitcase. That explained the initial text from Jim.

We called Jonathan and explained what happened and mailed the cards to Grace. Last week we received a text from Jim. It simply read this: *"Thank you for the gift cards. I bought new clothes for the first time in eight years"*. Wow. Talk about a powerful text. It says so much.



Doing good in the world. This is just one story of how we can do good in the world. But it is an amazing story of how God can and will use us to do good in the world when we have *"unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind"*. When we see each other simply as another child of God, as a fellow brother or sister in this life, then we can begin to see ways to do good for one another. And when we are willing to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, then we will experience God doing amazing, good things in and through us.

This week, I leave you with these two questions to ponder in the week ahead. They are printed on your bulletins so that you can take them with you and can think and pray through them this week. The two questions are:



1) Who in your life needs to know that they too are embraced by the unlimited, saving, and transforming love of God? How can you help them to know this truth?

2) What act of 'doing good' can you sense God calling you to? How can you follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in the week ahead?

Let us pray...