

Title: Thanks-loving and Thanks-living
Date: November 14, 2021
Subject: Thanksgiving Travels – followers of Christ show they belong to the truth by doing good.
Scripture: Titus 1:1, 8, 16; 2:3, 5, 7, 14; 3:1, 3 – 8, 13, 14

In our Thanksgiving Travels with Titus we've seen that the truth of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection is the foundation of our lives. It allows us to come into a right relationship with the Almighty God. We're to know the truth and firm firmly hold on to it, the trustworthy message about Jesus Christ. We're to encourage people with it and refute those who oppose it. Truth is to lead to transformation that's lived out among our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and in the world around us. To use Thanksgiving language: Thanksgiving for what Christ has done should lead to thanks-loving and thanks-living.

Anytime a word is repeated there's something to see. It's like if people keep telling you this coming Thanksgiving that you have a glob of mashed potatoes on your chin, you better pay attention. One of the repeated words in Titus is "good." It's used eight or nine times...depending upon the translation.

However, we're going to begin with a word that isn't the word "good." However, it encapsulates everything that is good. We again begin with the first verse of Titus. READ 1:1.

Godliness. The knowledge of truth leads to godliness. Therefore, we need to know what godliness means. Dictionary.com "the quality or practice of conforming to the laws and wishes of God; devoutness and moral uprightness:...reflecting the nature of the kingdom of God in the course of everyday life."

David Jeremiah, "Put simply, godliness is living a fruitful, obedient Christian life." He delineates characteristics of godliness. The first is "Godliness is the proof of our faith" which leads to this statement: "Godliness is being faithful to our calling by doing the good works for which we are saved" (davidjeremiah.blog/what-is-godliness/)

Godliness is living out the relationship we have with Jesus Christ. It's devotion to God evidenced in the desire to live holy lives of moral purity, to please him. It's the practical aspect of Christianity. It's in contrast with the ungodliness of the world (2:12). We live differently because we've been changed. The speaker at the retreat Jean and I attended remarked: "Justification makes sanctification possible but not inevitable. We are to be practitioners of applied sanctification." Being declared not guilty by God and no longer held accountable to pay the debt for our sins sets the table for being set apart for God's use and becoming more like him. "Sanctification is an ongoing process, dependent on God's continuing action in the believer, and consisting of the believer's continuous struggle against sin" (ligonier.org/posts/what-sanctification)

I. Loving what is it good. Read 1:8

This is another character quality of elders, the spiritual leaders of the church. They're to love what is good. What is good? It's the teaching about Jesus Christ and the good news he brought to people that they can have their sins forgiven, a place in heaven to live with God forever and experience eternal life.

Another aspect of what is good is that which is proper and fitting for a child God: “whatever is true...noble...right...pure...lovely...admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). We aren't just to think about these things, but we're to do them as the next verse tells us to put into practice what has been heard through Paul -- the teachings of Christ and these character qualities. Conduct according to these qualities and contrary to the selfishness inside is included in what is good.

A third aspect of what's good is good deeds - works of mercy and charity. These are valuable and beneficial to other people. It's what's helpful in their spiritual lives and daily lives. It includes meeting practical needs of shelter, food, clothing, reaching out to the lonely, extending comfort to the grieving, serving others.

Please move ahead to chapter 2. READ 2:3.

The call for older women to be reverent is closely aligned with godliness and goodness. It's having a high regard for God and things of God and to live accordingly. The same qualities addressed to older men in verses one and two are included in being reverent. God could have said “ditto,” but put it in a nicer way.

The women of Crete apparently had problems with their mouths. One involved output -- loose tongues used to gossip and slander. Another problem involved intake -- opening their mouths to consume alcohol and became addicted. For now, we'll focus on the output. Instead of engaging in slander they were to teach what is good. This bounces back to the different ways good was described - the truth about Jesus Christ, what's proper for a child of God and doing good works. All are the opposite of slandering. Their students of older women are to be younger women whom they could train. In this way they impact several generations as the younger women would influence their homes. They were to love what is good and pass it on.

II. Doing good

Back up a few verses to 1:16. Read 1:16.

This summation comes at the tail end of a paragraph describing the false teachers who misled the church. They're rebellious, mere talkers, deceivers with corrupted consciences and minds, detestable, disobedient and deniers of God by their actions. Is it any wonder they're unfit for doing anything good? They may have tried to do things which are good, but it really isn't good. People who don't know Christ as Savior can do good things but they still have the natural inclination for doing evil.

What happens after devastation caused by natural disasters? People are drawn to the area. Some come to help, to clean up and start to rebuild. Sadly, there's a sizable segment who come to steal, to loot.

Followers of Christ are to follow his lead and not that of the world system. As we heard from David Jeremiah: “Godliness is being faithful to our calling by doing the good works for which we are saved.”

Pattern of behavior. READ 2:7.

This command was directed at the young preacher. He was to be an example. This comes in the middle of directives given to and about young men. Paul gets specific in 3:13 about how he could be an example.

Titus was to help two men who were part of Paul's traveling team of preachers and teachers. Apollos is one of the more well known helpers. He was a gifted speaker who boldly and passionately proclaimed Jesus as

the way to God and defended this truth. Go from A to Z. Zenas? This is the only time we come across him. As a lawyer he may have been a Roman jurist meaning he was an expert in their laws and offered opinions on what was expected. He didn't go to court to defend or prosecute people. If he were Jewish, he was an expert in the Mosaic Law. He knew the books of Moses inside and out, the minutia of the laws added by the Pharisees to refine and define what was in the first five books of the Old Testament.

These men were vital to Paul and the advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Titus was to see that they had everything they needed. Titus was to do them good and a lot of it.

Titus being an example wasn't limited to young men. They're more in mind because of similar age. Another young pastor, Timothy, was told to not let anyone look down on him because he was young but to be an example to the believers...all of them.

READ 3:8. This instruction covers everybody - every age, young and older and every position in life - the so called "professional" ministers and those who aren't -- every person. Everyone is to do what is good.

The attitude behind doing good. READ 2:14.

Some versions use the word "zealous." The word "zealot" carried a lot of baggage in the biblical era. They were people with radical beliefs and were willing to steal, inflict harm and even kill to advance them.

Zealous doesn't carry as much baggage today. It means, according to Merriam Webster: "filled with or showing a strong and energetic desire to get something done or see something succeed." Synonyms include ardent, fervent, impassioned. We're to be "zealots" of goodness. We're to be eager to do good, not be reluctant.

Let's add a little more to the equation. The King James Version, instead of saying "a people that are his very own," uses "peculiar people." The New King James changes it to "special." Other versions use people who are God's possession or who belong to him. I think the word peculiar is a good one. It means we're different...not weird, strange or odd...though the world may try to portray us as weird, strange and odd because we don't fit into their scheme of reference. We're different, distinctive, unusual, special, peculiar.

Our peculiarity is we're to be devoted to doing what is good. We're to live and breathe it even as a zealot lives and breathes his cause. It's the attitude of being devoted, an avid fan, a devotee, people who have a strong belief in, are very interested, are enthusiastic.

Some people try to drum up enthusiasm. Southwestern Advantage recruits college students to work 70 plus hours a week in the summer to sell educational books, Bibles, software and website subscriptions. I had a friend who sold for the company. Part of the training were mantras salespeople were to repeat to pep themselves up and be enthusiastic: "It's a great day to be a bookman. Two for five. Ain't it great to be alive? If I can, I will, I'm gonna have the best day I've ever had. I feel healthy, I feel happy, I feel terrific." After my friend returned for fall semester, he'd repeat those slogans when the alarm rang... and go back to bed.

Enthusiasm is more than catchphrases. Devotion is more than words. It's an act of the will to do what needs to be done. Being devoted means we're to excel in what we do. We should be leading the way in doing

good, not trying to keep up with the world. We're trying to blow them out of the water by the amount of good that we do.

Samaritan's Purse is a tremendous organization. They're the group behind Operation Christmas Child. But they're so much more. They're at the forefront of providing relief after natural disasters whether it's tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires. They often get there faster than other groups. They provide medical services ranging from heart issues to repairing cleft lips in places where medical care is lacking. They operate an orphanage in Haiti. "Operation Heal Our Patriots gives wounded veterans and their spouses the opportunity for spiritual refreshment, physical renewal, and marriage enrichment." They do good in the name of Jesus.

READ 3:14

As with anything important, there's a learning curve to grasp the importance and get good at it. The child who wants to be good at art practices. She draws and colors and draws and colors and...

Devotion to doing good is a learned habit. Learning comes through reviewing what Jesus Christ has done for us and all the good he's provided for us. It comes through rehearsing his example while he walked on earth. It could be thinking about the good God has in store for us in heaven with him for all eternity. It can be seeing what good can do in the lives of others. Part of learning comes from watching other people doing good.

Back to 3:8. The phrase "these things" is used twice. It's fitting since it has a double application. It looks back at what Jesus Christ has done. Alexander MacLaren writes about the stress that is to be placed on "these things." "In effect Paul says to Timothy: 'Now keep on insisting upon that.' The word translated 'affirm constantly' is a very strong one. It means a forcible and continually repeated enunciation, and the plain English of Paul's injunction to Timothy is: Keep on preaching the gospel as the surest way to produce disciples full of good works... And the men who forget to 'affirm' these things 'constantly,' and preach morals without gospel, are like builders who begin to build on the second story, whose baseless castles in the air are sure to come down in ruins. The true way to produce moral conduct is to bring into clear prominence evangelical truth."

"These things" also looks to the devoting of ourselves to doing what is good. Doing good is to be stressed and emphasized as it's a natural outgrowth of a person's relationship with Christ and an indicator of that relationship.

Prepared. READ 3:1.

We're to be ready to do good. Don't have to be urged or coaxed or have someone say while "Oh pretty please." We're to be ready, willing and able.

The call to be prepared is for anytime, at all moments, but it's given in the realm of citizenship. We're to do good as citizens. We're to advanced what's best for the public interest. We aren't to do evil which is the opposite of doing good. We're to resist evil.

III. Motivations for loving and doing good

Why should we love that which is good and do what is good? It has nothing to do with earning our way into God's good graces, getting on his good side, avoiding being punished by him, helping earn our way to

heaven. It isn't so we can feel good (no matter what James Brown sang). It's not even so people will do good back to us, which is a misunderstanding of the Golden Rule.

We're to be a bunch of do-gooders because we want to live lives of thanksgiving to God. Francis Chan, in his book *Crazy Love*, writes how we do many of the same good things we did before we came to Christ as Savior. The difference is we do them with a different motivation, from a different perspective. We're motivated by the change that has occurred in our lives because of Jesus Christ.

3:3 reveals the horrible and deplorable conditions of our lives before meeting Jesus as Savior. 3:4 - 7 details the change that took place. Loving good and doing good are natural results of salvation.

A second motivation is closely connected to having the new relationship with Jesus Christ. We don't want to distract from him or have his message spoken of in disparaging ways. 2:5 said we don't want to malign the word of God. 2:10 speaks of making the teaching about God our Savior attractive. This happens when we live lives that are doing good. People won't have a reason to point their finger at us and tell us we're bad people who do bad things.

When the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals acquired Jean Pronovost, his new teammates were warned, "Keep an eye on the new guy." Two of them did - and were surprised. As they observed Pronovost's life, they saw something they liked—his Christian testimony through his words and actions. Soon they attended Bible studies with Pronovost and after a while, both players turned their lives over to Jesus. The new guy made the Word of God and the teaching of Christ attractive.

A third motivation is doing good is the right thing to do. 3:8 spoke of doing what is good as being excellent and profitable. Some translations use the word "good" in place of excellent. Doing good is a good thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

Another reason is to provide for the daily necessities. 3:14 is where we find this. Followers of Jesus Christ aren't to live unproductive lives or expect to be given everything. They aren't to be lazy like the Cretans. They're to work so they can provide for their personal needs. There were Christians of this time who figured they'd throw off the shackles of needing to work and just wait for Jesus to come. Others could provide for their needs (2 Thessalonians 3:6 - 15). They became idle and busybodies. The instructions given to them were to settle down, work, do what is right with the added rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Jerome Bettis nicknamed "The Bus", had a stellar career with the Pittsburgh Steelers which led to him being inducted into the professional football Hall of Fame. During his acceptance speech he reflected on the words his dad shared with him when he left home for college: "Son, I don't have much to give you. But I do have a good name, so don't mess it up."

The Lord God has a good name and has welcomes those who place their trust in Jesus Christ under the banner of that name. Because of this we are to live lives that reflect positively on him. We can do that by doing what is good, endeavoring to point people to the one who has been so good to us.