

FOTS - Wk 7

Goodness > Brokenness

9/26/21

John 5

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. **John 5:1-17**. Pray.

Got a few weeks left in our series on the Fruit of the Spirit. I hope that it has been beneficial in your discipleship to Jesus to spend the fall considering who Christ is and how you might become more like Him.

Early followers of Jesus used to have a saying they would say to each other for encouragement in the midst of hardship, persecution, doubt, and daily life. They would remind one another - **"We do not speak great things but we live them"** - and that's been so much of our goal in this series, that we wouldn't simply speak great things, acknowledge the right things, assent to the fruit of the Spirit, but that we would have distinct and marked lives of God's grace.

Tonight I want to continue our series and talk about **Goodness in a Time of Brokenness**.

Brokenness

Let's talk about **brokenness**. We live in a time of brokenness. Things, people, systems, structures → are broken, they are not right, they are not as they should be.

Dr. George Morelli - **"Brokenness is the term that describes the fundamental disorder that exists in creation."**

We see this on an individual level in our **lives**:

- Broken **relationships** with those around us
- Broken **homes** marked by hurt, abuse, divorce, abandonment
- Broken **bodies** that experience pain and sickness and death
- Broken **hopes** and **dreams** and **desires** for what we wanted from life not coming to fruition

We see this on a macro level in the **systems of our society**:

- Broken **economic** system - 40 million people in the US live below the poverty line, and 43% of global wealth is held by 1% of the world population.
- Broken **political** system - polarization of the left and the right, this disappearing middle ground, us vs. them. Everything politicized and turned into attacks now.
- Broken **educational system** - drastic disparities in resources for different communities even right here in our own backyard in CMS.

We live in a time of brokenness. And here's the deal - you don't have to be a follower of Jesus to acknowledge - **this is off**. Our world is broken. This isn't ok. The world is not as it should be. This is a heavy and burdensome weight → things are not as they should be.

But what often compounds our pain in the midst of this brokenness is that there's a lot of confusion in our world apart from God around what the root of the brokenness is, what is actually good, and how we get there...

In 1981, Scottish-American philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre wrote a book called *After Virtue*, where he argued that the modern West had become, what he called, a **"post-virtue" society**. Modern life in the West had become characterized

by the absence of any coherent moral code—that, even 40 years ago, our society had lost a shared understanding of what was good and what was bad.

We know when something begins to feel broken or off, but we don't know both what is good and we don't know the path forward towards that unknown goodness.

Professor John Koenig a few years ago wrote this brilliant book called *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, where he basically makes up and then defines a bunch of really sad words. It's something else. But one of the words that I got introduced to this week that really struck me was the word **Paro**.

Paro is the feeling that no matter what you do it's always somehow wrong—as if there's some obvious way forward that everybody else can see but you.

After hearing that, I want to stop calling it “parenting” and start calling it “Paro-nting”. You feel me? I mean just think about the absolute lack of clarity on what is good and how to get there when it comes to parenting. Lindsay and I have laughed about the fact that if you search the internet long enough you can find an article backing up whatever your position is:

- Why you should sleep train...why you should never sleep train
- Why you should let your kid cry it out...why you should never let your kid cry it out
- Why one parent should stay at home....why neither parent should stay at home...why both parents should stay at home (I like that option the best)

It's just ridiculous. And this is just one slice of life - but we feel this **“goodness confusion”** in everything.

- Marriage is broken - the answer is stronger marriages, no the answer is no marriage.
- The economy is broken - that's because we need more capitalism and free enterprise, no we need less free enterprise and more government regulations.
- The educational system is broken - we need more resources in public education, no we need more charter schools and private school scholarships.
- We need to step in and serve the poor and provide resources for communities in need. No, that's on them and they need to figure it out on their own.

Whatever the case may be.

So we live in a time of brokenness. It hurts, it's difficult, it's painful. Things in our lives and in our world are not as they should be. And on top of that there is this added layer of confusion over what is good and how we get there.

Goodness

And into the midst of that we see the way of Jesus, the fruit of → **Goodness**. Let's talk about goodness.

In Galatians 5 Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit as - **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

That word **Goodness** in the text is the Greek word - **“Agathosune (ἀγαθωσύνη)”**. And it carries with it a sense of beauty or truthfulness or usefulness.

Here's how one scholar talked about it, he said, **“Goodness is defined by the purpose for which it was created.”**

The question of “is it good” can really be asked as - **“Did this thing do what it was intended or supposed to do.”**

Lawn Mower. Think about it this way - imagine you borrowed my lawn mower. You came to my house, picked it up, took it over to your place. But then when you got back to your place you took it inside and attempted to vacuum your living room rug with it. It's not going to go well right? That would be a very weird thing for you to do, and as your pastor I would have some concerns. But then let's say you brought it back to me and when I asked you how it worked you said, “You know Tim, it's not a very good lawn mower.” That would be an indictment on you, not on the lawn mower, right?

When we ask - “Is this good?” We are asking - **did it satisfy its intended role?**

Well then you have to ask the question - who gets to decide the intended role? Well that's obvious - the one who created it. You and I don't get to decide the purpose of the lawn mower. Who gets to? A British guy named **Edwin Bear Budding** in 1830. That's who. The one who creates and designs it gets to declare it's intended purpose.

Here's what that means for us as Christians:

- We believe God is good. **Psalm 119:68**, the psalmist says - **“You are good and you do good.”**
- We also believe He is the creator and designer of all things. That He created all things and directs their purposes and steps. He has an end goal, a telos, that He is aiming towards with all things.
- We believe that originally creation was in perfect sync with God's design and purposes. In Genesis 1:31 when God declares over His creation that it is “very good” it carries this idea of it being “very right”. Exactly as it should be. In perfect harmony and flourishing.

That is goodness.

Christian goodness is people, places, institutions, and the like living in the flourishing of God's design.

- When a **medical system** is functioning in such a way where people can get access to the healthcare they need, their doctors, medicine, care - that is goodness.
- When a **family** is functioning in line with God's design - husband and wife who sacrifice and love one another - leading their children through the highs and lows of life with eyes focused on Jesus - that is goodness.
- When an **individual** turns from their sin and places their trust in Jesus, when we say “no” to sin in our day to day lives and “yes” to Jesus - that is goodness.

Christian goodness is people, places, institutions, and the like living in the flourishing of God's design.

BROKEN/SIN. So we have, in the Bible, a picture and definition of goodness. **And we also have a story behind the brokenness.** That story is what the Bible would call **sin**. God creates everything “very good” - or “just right”. But in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they sinned, which brought a curse and brokenness upon everything. Upon them as individuals and all humans who would come after them and upon the things of this earth → **everything, us and the world, everything is now broken apart from God.** We and the world around us are no longer functioning in God's flourishing design.

God defines what is good. Brokenness through sin is the absence of that good. But, here's the good news → **God doesn't leave it there.** He steps in to restore humanity and creation back to its original design.

That is the fruit of goodness we are called to step into.

God defines good. Brokenness through sin is the absence of that good. And goodness is restoring it back to the way that God wants them to be.

Joe Beers - "The call to goodness is a total reversal of the fragmented, broken, incompetent state of the world as it currently stands."

Goodness steps into the fragmented, broken, fundamentally disordered state of our world and *joins with God* to bring renewal, redemption, and flourishing.

Jesus and Goodness - John 5 - Pool of Bethesda

John 5. Let's see the fruit of goodness in the life of Jesus together. I want to walk through this passage together and show us a few distinct markers of the fruit of goodness.

John 5:1-17

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

Jesus is in Jerusalem and He goes to a pool, a sort of hot spring-esque type deal which is called Bethesda - which means "house of mercy". And surrounding the pool there's all of these various people who have different ailments. Some are blind, some can't walk.

And they're hanging out at this pool because it's believed that occasionally an angel would stir up the water and whoever was first into the pool when it was stirred would be healed of whatever was ailing them.

5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" 7 The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Here's the first marker of goodness I want us to see:

1) Goodness is intentional

Situation → This is a situation full of brokenness.

It is incredibly difficult to live with a physical handicap in any society at any point in history. But in Jesus' time and place it was a life sentence of poverty and begging. You couldn't work, you couldn't provide for yourself or a family, it was impossible to get around. Many folks wouldn't want to associate with you because the assumption was you had that physical ailment as a curse from the gods for evil you had done.

We don't know the exact number of people that are around this pool wanting to be healed - the Bible says "a multitude." Could be a couple hundred, could be a couple thousand. A crowd of folks left to their sorrows, waiting, hoping, wishing to be healed.

Individual → This man's life is full of brokenness. 38 years of laying by this pool - waiting, begging, hoping. You can hear the disdain and disbelief in his voice right? Jesus asks him - "Do you want to be healed?" And what does he say - "There's no way I'm getting to this pool first. It's not going to happen."

That's the response of hopelessness.

And Jesus willingly and intentionally steps into the brokenness of this scene, the brokenness of this man's life, and he brings redemption. He doesn't sit back - "if they want to be healed, they'll come to me." Jesus went to the brokenness. He moved towards it to bring redemption and flourishing.

And that's the call on our lives as well. In the fruit of goodness, as we become more like Jesus - we move towards brokenness. It's easy to sit back and say things from afar, right? To hope for goodness, to wish for goodness, to even pray for goodness, to even be convinced in our hearts - I will help if a need arises → all while keeping brokenness at arms length.

But the fruit of goodness moves towards:

- I move towards the hurting person in my Community Group.
- I move towards the suffering of my coworker.
- I move towards the needs of my neighbor.
- I move towards generosity, towards compassion, towards presence.

Goodness is intentional. We move towards the brokenness. We don't shy away because we don't feel adequate or equipped or because it'd take some sacrifice. We move towards, like Jesus.

Let's keep going in the story:

9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

The Jewish religious leaders had taken God's command about remembering the Sabbath day and keeping it holy and they had added a bunch of rules and regulations around it. And they put so much emphasis on following these rules, mainly out of a way of puffing themselves up with pride. And so this man, who was lame for almost 40 years, is healed and the main thing they are concerned with is the fact that he is carrying around his mat.

So they confront him - why are you doing this?

11 But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

This is not the only run-in Jesus will have with the Jewish leaders. It is a continual point of confrontation and tension - Jesus trying to do the work of ministry and the Jews trying to find reasons to stop him.

- Jesus heals someone → You can't work on the Sabbath
- Jesus welcomes in tax collectors and sinners and others society rejects - Why do you associate with those people?
- Jesus feeds over 12,000 people miraculously - well He's from Nazareth and his parents weren't even married.

It's just constant. Here's what I want us to see in light of that about goodness:

2) Goodness is confrontational

Sometimes stepping into broken places and joining God in bringing restoration and redemption means you're going to get some backlash. Why?

Because as followers of Jesus our view of goodness is based on the goodness of God, which does not shift with the cultural current, which does not change with who's in elected office, and which does not flip flop based on what's trending on social media.

Sometimes we can wrongly think that goodness is this sort of boring, beige, vanilla passivity that's all kumbaya and hand holding. But for Jesus, goodness meant staring down death threats from the Pharisees. Goodness meant rejection from His hometown. Goodness hurt a little bit.

Because goodness says "not on my watch." We are peace makers not peace keepers. Goodness is willing to step in the middle - to come between the victim and the oppressor and overcomes them by restorative justice in the world. That means we stand for God's design for flourishing even when it's uncomfortable, even when everyone else on our social media feed is saying something different, even when it may cost us something.

I think about some great people of history who sought goodness even in the midst of confrontation:

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer - who left the German church in the 1930s after it was taken over by the Hitler Regime and started an underground seminary to train pastors in the truth of the gospel
- Harriet Tubman - who risked her life to lead the underground railroad movement and free slaves in the 1860s
- Christians in ancient Rome even though the culture wanted them dead, didn't flee the city during plagues, but stepped in to care for the very people who wanted to kill them

Romans 12:21 invites us → **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."**

What is the redemptive goodness you're not stepping into because you're afraid it's going to cost you something?

- Maybe it's standing up for the unborn and speaking out against the injustices of our abortion system in America. Being pro-life womb to tomb, not just in what you say, but in action and deed. Even if you know it's an unpopular opinion.
- Maybe it's that friend or family member or CG member who claims to know Jesus, but you know is living against God's design. But you haven't said anything because you don't want to ruin the relationship. And you've called it love but really it's fear.

That's the picture of confrontational goodness. I'm going to stand in the gap with courage for God's design.

Let me give you two more....

16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

3) Goodness is directional

Jesus did a lot of good during His time on earth. He stepped into the midst of a lot of brokenness. He healed, he restored, he forgave, he welcomed in. He did so much. **But Jesus didn't do every possible thing he could've done.**

One of the most baffling things about this story is that it just talks about the one man. There is a multitude around this pool and yet Jesus focuses on the one man.

And in case you're like - that's a faulty argument from the text. I know Jesus! He would've healed everyone there. Ok, that's fine - you're not Jesus. You're a finite, limited, with a capacity on your energy, time, and resources, human being.

In order for us to step into the brokenness and join God in His work of redemption, we must direct our focus. We are finite creatures with limited capacity. There are areas we must stop caring about, areas we must care about and pray about, and areas we must step in and work to affect change. To put it plainly - because we are limited creatures, we simply cannot do everything there is to do to care for those in need.

Many theologians talk about the idea of **moral proximity**. (this is actually on our practice guide this week). It's how we can understand the consistent commands and invitations in Scripture to care for those in need around us. The closer the moral proximity of those in need, the greater the moral obligation to help. Moral proximity does not simply refer to geography (though that can be part of the equation) but also refers to how connected we are to someone by virtue of familiarity, kinship, space or time.

The closer the moral proximity, the more obligation from the Scriptures there are to help.

So if someone across the country, who you have never met, have no connection to - their house burns down. You can give. You can pray. Those are good and generous actions to take. But you don't have to. You are not morally obligated to help. If someone at Citizens Church, their house burns down. You have to help. They are a part of your church family. There is moral proximity that necessitates action and goodness.

And part of why we don't step into redemptive goodness at all, is because we believe the lie and temptation that we have to do something about everything.

You have limited care molecules that are being sucked out of you towards things that aren't in your **moral proximity** and you don't have energy, time, or relational capacity left to do good in the spaces God has actually placed you.

- So we have no shortage of opinions on how the government should spend trillions of dollars (which is a good thing to care about) and yet we've never kept a budget in such a way that we actually steward our resources to where we can be generous towards those around us in need.
- We have a ton of opinions on how politicians should lead 300 million Americans (again good thing to care about - political involvement is good), but we struggle to lead ourselves in a disciplined way that gets with God, gets a life revolving around others.
- We care a ton about what some blogger or celebrity tweeted and who said what about who and who hurt who (not a good thing to care about), but we don't have time to get to know our neighbors and their hurt and their struggle.

For me - Fired up the last 2 weeks about the border crisis. Instagrams been going crazy. Anger on both sides. Cole Weiner (deacon of our Serve CLT initiative) posts about 2 tangible ways to serve refugee families in basically our backyard and my first thought is - "I hope someone else signs up for that."

Goodness is directional.

What are the areas of moral proximity God has given you?

What is the direction in which your limited time, energy, and resources needs to go?

One more. Look back at v 14 - **14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."**

Jesus heals the man, and then later finds him in the temple - healed from his physical ailment, walking, running, leaping - no longer dealing with the physical pain and torment of the last 38 years and he says - "go and sin no more."

4) Goodness is physical and spiritual

This is what Jesus does throughout His life - He takes care of the physical suffering and brokenness - healing, feeding, raising from the dead - whatever it may be - and then he continues preaching about the kingdom of heaven, "go and sin no more", "believe in me" - constant refrains from His life.

And so as we think about stepping into the brokenness around us - we must have a frame towards both. We don't just take care of the physical needs. We don't just bring tangible, "earthly" healing - we also want to call people to salvation, to believe the gospel, to trust in Jesus. And vice versa. It must be a both/and in how we bring goodness to our city and those around us.

We don't just take the meal to the hurting neighbor. Good thing. Yes and amen. But we also have conversations and start talking about Jesus in the course of that relationship as well.

Our city needs some real tangible help. Our city is broken in some pretty distinct ways that necessitates we step in and take care of some physical and material needs. But our city also needs Jesus. And we must bring both to bear on the lives of those around us.

Become Like Jesus

This is how we become like Jesus - we step into brokenness, joining God in the work He is doing to restore people, places, and institutions back to flourishing with Him.

This is what Christians for centuries have been doing. This is our Christian tradition - stepping into the brokenness of our world and bringing goodness. Listen, the Church gets a really bad rap for the role it plays in society currently and the role it has played in history. Some of it is justified and warranted, but I don't want us to miss the beauty of goodness in our Christian tradition:

- Our modern day **hospital system** was developed by Christians in the middle ages to respond to medical needs around them. Here in CLT? Atrium and Novant were both started by followers of Jesus.
- Other **community organizations** were founded by Christians - groups like the Salvation Army, the YMCA, and others - particularly to serve under-resourced communities.
- Many of the leading **universities** in the world - Harvard, Yale, Oxford - were founded by Christians who wanted to train up new generations of thinkers and philosophers and leaders.
- **Sunday schools** were originally designed to stand in the gap and bring education to poor and segregated communities.
- **Abolition of slavery** in antiquity and modern times was led by Christian activists.
- **Frances Willard** who helped lead early movements towards **women's rights** here in America was a devout follower of Jesus
- High regard for **human life**
- Developments of **art and music**

This is our story as followers of Jesus.

Time and time and time again Christians have stepped into the brokenness of our world with the fruit of goodness to join God in His redemptive work.

The Gospel

Why have Christians done this for thousands of years? Why do we do this today? Why do we step into brokenness and bring restoration, healing, and redemption?

Because that's what Jesus did for us. That's the good news of the gospel. Jesus stepped into our truest brokenness. Jesus stepped into our broken world. Jesus on the cross took upon Himself our brokenness and sin. Jesus takes all of our evil, all of our sin, all of our rebellion, all of our attempts at goodness, all of our falling flat trying to save ourselves → **And He dies putting to death our sin and brokenness, and 3 days later He rises again.**

The offer for all who turn from their sins (repent) and trust in Jesus is true redemption, forgiveness, healing, and salvation.

That is Jesus' invitation to all of us. Come to me and be healed. Be cleaned. Be set free.

And then, Jesus sends us back out to join Him in the work He is doing to continue to bring goodness into the midst of brokenness all around us. We can't do this without Jesus. Jesus is goodness. He doesn't just give us a model or example of goodness. He is goodness on our behalf so that we could be redeemed and join Him in bringing the goodness of redemption to others.

Titus 2:14 - 14 [Jesus] gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Cultivate Goodness

Practice Guide.

Pray.

Communion.