

Did you know that these days, advancements in medical machinery has taken us to a place where neuroscientists or neurologists can look at our brains and see what we are desiring?

Did you know that?

They've done studies using this different types of MRI imagery, where they take healthy people and they put things like kale, a lot of us are doing little vomits, green veggies, all sorts of healthy foods, and their brains are firing up like a Christmas tree.

The parts of the brain that are meant to show desire for those things are firing.

They put fatty, unhealthy food in front of those healthy people's brains, nothing happens.

The brain is just quiet.

There's no neurons firing.

They do the same for unhealthy people, and they put the green veggies and nothing, no desire.

But put the fatty, unhealthy food, boom, boom, boom, lights up like a Christmas tree.

Paul's letter to Titus is written to an overseer of many churches, a man named Titus.

Paul compels him to appoint leaders in Crete who would lead the church well and be lovers of the good.

In Greek, philogathos.

Titus 1 verse 8 says, rather he, the elder, must be hospitable, one who loves what is good.

Paul says at the end of the letter to Titus, we just heard it read, chapter 3, 14, our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

So there's this connection between living a productive life and doing good and vice versa.

We can live unproductive lives when we don't learn how to do good.

Are you a lover of the good?

Do you love good, philogathos?

Or are you, as Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, there will be terrible times in the last days, people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.

If we were able to scan our brains to see what spikes our desire, to see what reveals our hidden loves, to show what we have habitually ingrained as that which we love, would it be good?

Would it be good?

Or would it be a philogathos?

Philogathos means lover of the good.

When you put the a in front, the prefix says opposite of.

The opposite of.

Would it be not a lover of the good?

I want to put it to you today and myself also, without loving the good, it's really hard to live a productive life in Christ Jesus.

So the question for today is, do you love the good?

Ben has done an excellent job.

I really think he has.

I've heard such good feedback and I watched the sermons as he taught through the book of Titus.

I asked him to preach the whole series because I thought you'll be on a roll and you might as well finish it off.

And that was the case.

He really would have done a great job to do that.

But he was down to preach it.

And then he was so excited about being part of launching Squitch Sunday.

He said, could you please finish it off?

So I'm doing that.

Titus is set on the island of Crete.

And as we have heard, Cretans on the whole are a sinful bunch.

History remembers them as liars and cheats.

And so the Apostle Paul knows this.

And he's talking to a young man who is leading a bunch of leaders, who are leaders of churches.

And he's basically saying, for the Christian church to stand out, to have a witness in this quite bad environment, like there's a lot of evil going on in Crete, you're going to have to be good at doing good.

You're going to have to devote yourselves to doing good.

Do good.

If we want to live productive lives in Christ, we have to learn how to do good.

First one, remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.

Of course, the reason that Paul is saying to Titus to do good, what would be the main reason?

It is because God is good, amen?

God is good, and He does good works, and He has prepared in advance good works for His church to do.

God is good.

Psalm 100 verse 5, For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever.

His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalm 34 verse 8, Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.

God's goodness is experiential.

It's not just abstract like the Greek idea of good.

We can experience His goodness in relationship.

But not only is He good, He does good.

His works are good.

Genesis 1 verse 31, we're very familiar with.

God saw all that He had made and it was good.

And then He made creation, humanity.

He said, it's very good.

Psalm 119, you are good and what you do is good.

Teach me your decrees, says the Psalmist.

James 1, every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.

God is the source of all true goodness and gives what is good.

As the song says, God is so good.

God is so good.

God is so good.

He is so good to me.

And Titus says, God wants you to do good because He's good and His works are good.

So what is good going to look like for Titus, for the Church of the first century, for us?

Doing good will involve not slandering people.

If we're going to be people that do good, we're going to have a tight rein on our tongues.

We're not going to look to put others down when they're not around.

Slander no one.

Doing good will mean we will not be quick to enter conflict.

It's quite practical doing good, isn't it?

We will be gentle.

The text says, be peaceable and considerate and always be gentle toward everyone.

Do good.

Paul says in verse 3, at one time we were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

To do good will mean that we have to realise what is deceiving us if we are deceived.

We have to be wise and obedient to Jesus' teaching.

And it's going to involve not being enslaved to passions and pleasures that are ungodly.

Paul says what used to be the case for the now Christians before they came to faith, he said, we lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

So doing good will involve avoiding malice.

That's nastiness.

Does anyone, I'm not asking you to raise your hand, but does anyone feel like a confidence that you're someone who if you get crossed, you better watch out?

You know, I'm normally gentle, but you cross me and I know how to do malice.

I know how to be nasty.

Well, that's not good.

That's not good if we put your brain and your heart on the reveler of desire.

It might show a philogathos, not a lover of the good.

What about envy?

It says, don't walk down the path of envy.

Don't feed the heart, the mind, the brain, the soul on envy.

Certainly, we live in a time when you can do that with social media.

That would lead you to being a person who, it's hard to love the good, if you dwell on envy.

What a powerful way of describing unreconciled relationships.

Being hated and hating one another.

Is that you?

Do you go to a place in your week, it might be gardening or whatever, and in that place, you have a habit that you go to a place where you reminisce and rehearse what you might have said to those people that hurt you.

That's called hating and being hated on a loop.

That'll be hard to do good out of, won't it?

Because it's very practical.

Don't be this way if you're going to be a person who loves good, do good.

Verse 10 says, avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law.

These are unprofitable and useless.

Warn a divisive person once and then warn them a second time.

After that, have nothing to do with them.

So, doing good, as we said before, will have this tight rein on the tongue, wisely applying discipline to those who need it.

There are loads of examples in history and in the church about people who did an enormous amount of good.

From the Bible, there's Tabitha, Acts 9.

It says, she was always doing good and helping the poor.

She made clothes for widows and poor people and then she died and they so wanted her to come back that they did.

They raised her from the dead.

Peter did that by God's grace.

In history, you can think of so many people.

Who comes to mind when you think of people who have done good in the name of Jesus?

I think of someone like William Wilberforce, worked for 40 years to pull down the transatlantic slave trade, supported over 60 charities and their establishment in education for the poor and animal welfare and prison reform.

Have you heard of Amy Carmichael?

Anybody?

Missionary to India, rescued hundreds of girls from temple prostitution.

She refused furlough for 55 years.

Now, we're not going to hold that up as a good thing.

She needed to learn life balance, soul care.

George Muller, in the 19th century in England, he cared for over 10,000 orphans.

And do you remember?

He never asked for anything.

He just brought their needs to the Lord in prayer.

What good, doing good.

Jackie Pullinger moved to Hong Kong in her early 20s.

And no support or plan except to love people.

She found herself in the walled city in Hong Kong with drug addicts and gang members.

And she's, I think, still there 50 years on.

Dr.

Catherine Hamlin, an Australian obstetrician, who co-founded a hospital in Ethiopia to treat women with fistula injuries.

She has restored miraculously, wonderfully, physically over 60,000 women.

I remember visiting one of the Hamlin hospitals in Ethiopia.

Amazing to see.

As John Wesley said, all these people do good.

Do all the goods you can by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, and as long as ever you can.

Are you inspired or overwhelmed?

Inspired or overwhelmed?



I was in Uganda years ago, and I got into this debate.

I wasn't looking for it, but I was on a pastor's trip, and this guy in Uganda came up to me, and we were chatting, and he was quite forceful.

He said, why in the West do you disobey God's command?

I said, oh, what do you mean?

We are told to be fruitful and multiply, but you don't have enough children.

And because he was coming at me, I sort of parried back and had a little bit of a debate with him, and I sort of debated a little bit more, and then he said, he stopped and he said, I am defeated.

I was like, I didn't mean to defeat you, mate.

He said, I am defeated.

And I wonder, that came to my mind when I thought of this challenge to do good all the time.

I feel like saying, I am defeated.

I don't do good all the time.

I don't feel like I can do good all the time.

Is anyone with me?

There's this need to do good, but we just don't always do it.

God is good.

His works are good.

God has prepared good works for us to do in advance.

Ephesians 2, 8.

But often we don't do good.

But let me just tell you, the good and bad news is it gets worse.

We're not just meant to do good.

We're meant to be good, aren't we?

It's one thing to do good, but God, through Jesus and the Spirit, remember in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, every good tree will be known that it's good by the fruit that it bears.

It's got to come from in here.

It's not about just doing good out there.

Christianity is all about the inside of a human, amen?

And what comes out of a man reveals, and a woman is, what reveals what's inside.

That's Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus does say in Mark 10, why do you call me good?

No one is good except God alone.

And so what do we do with that?

Can we be good?

Well, clearly we can.

The whole New Testament teaches that the promise of the Father was that he would take away our heart of stone, put inside of us a heart of flesh, which will, the heart of flesh, teach us to walk according to his statutes.

That by the Spirit, we would represent Jesus and do his works because they are a natural expression of who we are, born again.

We've all had the experience, haven't we?

Of biting into a piece of fruit and finding that it's not what it looks like on the outside.

It's bruised or maybe there's something in it.

But this is the challenge that we have as Christians.

We're meant to do good, but we're really, beyond that, we're meant to be good.

How do we get to the place where we can be good?

That beautiful part of the scripture.

That just came alive as Gary read it, verse four.

It's the gospel that makes us be good, amen?

When the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things that we had done, not because we were so good, but because of His mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Lord, so that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

This is the Gospel.

Christ is referred to as our Saviour here because that's what He did.

He died in our place on a Roman cross.

He was clothed in my sin and yours.

He paid the price because we had not done good.

In fact, we have sinned, all have sinned.

And the Bible is clear, through faith in His life, death and resurrection, we can be saved, born again, changed, renewed, transformed from the inside out, made good.

Through the Gospel, we are made good.

So how do we live a productive life?

We do good.

But before we can do good, we really do need to be good from the inside out.

That's what faith in Christ does.

And so we come to this situation which is what we are very familiar with as Christians.

I'm a sinner.

I can't do good.

But I'm clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

And so God sort of looks at Jesus' righteousness, maybe a bit outside of me.

I'm this Roman 7 sinner who just keeps on sinning all the time.

But lucky, God looks over there.

Are you with me?

This is the spiritual formation dilemma.

Is that what it is all about?

I'm a sinner.

I will get to go to heaven because I've got faith in Christ.

And apparently I've been clothed in Christ's righteousness.

And God, when he looks at me, sort of sees this being, this righteousness that's separate from me.

But I still struggle with my sin.

I think that the teaching of the New Testament says that's all true, but there's something far more wonderful.

We're meant to actually appropriate that, the righteousness of Christ.

How do you appropriate the righteousness of Christ?

I would put it that simply you learn how to love good.

Love good.

Remember, that's what the elders are meant to be.

People that love the good feel like Athos.

So, there's one thing to do good.

It comes out of being good, which is through the grace of God in Jesus.

But we need to learn how to love good.

This is what Titus 3 verse 8 and verse 14 tell us.

I want to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

There's action to be done, isn't there?

Out of the place of forgiveness, that we have been made good.

These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Verse 14, our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

Not live unproductive lives.

Last week, I was watching from home just part of the sermon when Ben started talking about being in the car.

Isn't it funny, as a father, you say things and you have no idea what impact they have.

But it's true, this passage, Titus 2.11, became something very significant for Ben.

It had been for me, the grace of God.

It's such a wonderful verse that brings salvation.

It has appeared to all people.

It, the grace of God, it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, but to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem for himself a people that are his very own, what?

Eager to do what is good.

Isn't that amazing?

That passage encapsulates so much of the story of life.

The church is waiting for the second coming of Christ, the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, but He gave Himself.

Why?

To redeem for Himself a people, not just any people, but a people who are His very own, eager to do what is good.

Are you feeling the impact of the importance of good?

We talked about this in our Bible study last week, and it was interesting.

Those with a Catholic background said, it's a little bit hard to deal with because I grew up being told, you've got to do good, you've got to do good.

And there are varied levels of good.

And we're sort of caught sometimes in a sense of earning God's salvation or merit.

That's not what the Bible teaches.

We don't earn His favour from good works, amen?

It's by His grace.

But we're meant to do good, be good, but it comes out of loving good.

So let me ask you this question.

It's a truly probing question.

Are you a lover of the good?

Philogathos.

Or are you, would you describe yourself as, are Philogathos?

Not a lover of the good.

I think it's hard to do good if you don't love the good.

What do you reckon?

It's much easier to love good.

And in loving good, we're loving God because God is good.

It's much easier to do good if we love good.

Could it be true that we are not primarily thinking beings but loving beings?

Have a think about that.

We are primarily not thinking beings, but we are loving beings.

Could it be that our deepest commitments are shaped not by what we know, but by what we desire?

Our deepest commitments are on the brain scan.

Just put them in front of you, and the brain goes, not interested in that, in serving, in humility, in giving my life away, that all those things are good.

I don't really like that.

I'm a bit more into the envy stuff, a bit more into the malice stuff, a bit more into the hating and being hated, a bit more into the lover of themselves.

That sounds awful and judgy, but today, right now, this is a scalpel moment, I think, for us all.

What would the scan reveal in this season of your life?

You are a lover of the good, or not a lover of the good.

Discipleship maybe is more about retraining our loves than simply informing our minds.

It has been said, discipleship is a kind of immigration.

Think of that verse in Colossians.

We've been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

From the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's beloved Son, a transfer of citizenship that should be evident in our habits, practices, and routines.

We are what we love.

Aren't we?

Don't we become more and more like what we love?

Well, that's what Jesus teaches.

He says, where your treasure is, there your heart will go.

What you love most, you will treasure most, and what you love most will shape you into its image.

How does that sit with you?

Do you love the good in this season of your life?

I mentioned over a year ago, I said something.

I was quite proud of the, in a good way.

I said, I'm sporting a lighter tabernacle up here.

I'm 10 kilos lighter.

And what was cool was there was a spontaneous applause.



I've put it all back on.

Thank you.

Oh, that is true love.

But it's also avoiding body shaming, et cetera.

But I say that because I lost weight because of certain habits that I had implemented, that have become routine.

And I have put on weight for various complex reasons, but clearly through certain habits and routines that I have embraced.

That's how we love the good or don't love the good, isn't it?

We learn to do it.

That's what our text says.

Devote yourselves to being a lover of the good.

Ben preached on the grace that affects us in our past.

He said it was Kronos time.

It's in the past.

Kronos is that chronological one day after a day, where there's grace for the past.

He talked about Ionios time, the everlasting, the age to come, the future grace.

But he also talked about Kairos time, the grace that brings salvation into our moment now.

There is grace to change us now.

What does the heart scan reveal for you?

The brain scan, the mind scan, the soul scan.

Am I a lover of the good?

Philogathos, or am I, like Paul said to Timothy, people will be lots of yucky things.

They will be lovers of themselves, not lovers of the good.

Our Philogathos.

There is no productive life and fulfilling life down the path of bitterness.

Are you with me?

Me, do you agree that you can dwell on bitterness such that it becomes habitual?

And we don't know we're doing it, that we're deceived.

We get deceived because we're standing on our rights.

But there's freedom on the other side of putting grace and gospel into that event, that pain, that trauma that you experience that's created the bitterness.

We need to bring that to God because if I'm staying in a life of bitterness, it's hard to do good and I can't live a productive life without doing good.

I need to be good.

I need to love good for it to work.

So you can apply it to envy, pride, hatred, unforgiveness, lust, anger, shame, malice.

It's hard to do good if you're not a lover of the good.

Where would it start if you need to be transformed?

It's not directly from the text, but I would just say a few things.

I think moving towards being a lover of the good is all about loving God, reorientating the loves of our life, which is what idolatry is.

It's false loves.

I'm just loving the wrong thing, the wrong being, the wrong direction.

Starts with the fear of the Lord, doesn't it?

Transformation.

The fear of the Lord, recognising his greatness and holiness and my need for grace.

That's where wisdom comes from, we're told in the Bible.

The fear of the Lord.

And then directly after that is repentance.

Amen.

Repentance.

Asking for God's mercy, receiving it and by his grace, turning away from that direction down a false love as that pathway.

And then to renew the mind with truth.

That then fosters the love of Christ.

The realigning of our heart, our desires.

And then I think starting to do good works even if you don't feel like doing them.

Anyone agree?

Let's just start doing good.

Because so much of life is what we learn as habit.

Infused by the grace of God.

It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and all that.

So the grace of God, God himself, his spirit is in all of this.

And then we are to dwell on the good.

Take every thought captive.

Dwell on the good.

Can you think, oh, I guess there are certain times in history that could rival the access to evil that we have.

But not many.

There are times in history where society has been pretty evil.

I don't have my phone here, but when you've got evil ready to go on that little device that most of us have in our pockets, that's dangerous.

That's dangerous.

How do you love the good?

Embrace the fear of the Lord.

Repent.

Immerse yourself in truth.

The love of Christ.

Let it be shed abroad in your heart.

Romans 5.

Activate the good works.

Get involved in them.

Dwell on the good.

Paul says in Philippians 4, I think, this passage speaks to the whole of Titus.

Brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure,

whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy.

Think about such things.

Has anyone seen a movie on Netflix that in the top left corner it says noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy?

G plus.

You know the G stands for good.

It's time to curate our feed, isn't it?

I'm not talking about just social media or the internet.

It's what we allow our heart and mind to dwell on, will take us to a place of being a lover of the good, God's good, or not a lover of the good.

Let's pray.

Lord God, we just want to stop and acknowledge that you are good, and you are worthy of our praise.

And without Christ, we are not good.

But Lord, we thank you that by faith in Christ, the Spirit of the living God dwells in us, and you call us good.

Perfect, because we are clothed in Christ, and we pray, Lord Holy Spirit, that you might enable us to appropriate all that Christ has achieved for us by his grace.

That the grace that saves us might also teach us, transform us, guide us, mold us into people who love the good.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.