

But the Lord answered me, “My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness.” So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I’m weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me. So I’m not defeated by my weakness, but delighted! For when I feel my weakness and endure mistreatment—when I’m surrounded with troubles on every side and face persecution - because of my love for Christ I am made yet stronger. For my weakness becomes a portal to God’s power.”

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 TPT

Look at Slide (Response)

Last week we talked about kindness, as having a compassionate and empathetic heart for others, that empathy motivates us to loving action towards others. We look outward, paying attention to the needs and struggles of others – whether or not those people have earned the right to our kindness. True kindness is going beyond just feeling bad for someone, it’s being willing to take action to help them.

This is what God did for us. God saw our brokenness and had compassion for our condition and separation from God. God chose to be kind. God took action by sending Jesus to us – the perfect model of Kindness.

The word “goodness” means to be like God. This doesn’t mean we become “a god”, but it does mean that to be good, we would

take on the attributes of God. I John 1:5 tells us “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” So, to become like God means that as we remain in Christ, our God light will increase for others to see as well. We will change more and more to look like Jesus.

Philippians 2:13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

The Bible also talks about the goodness of God as part of God’s character. It’s who God is. As we continue to become new creations, becoming more like Christ, goodness can become more of a character trait in us, too. Instead of being motivated to do good because we want accolades or rewards, we do good because we’ve allowed God to change our hearts. We choose to bring honor to God. We choose to be kind and to serve others because we understand all that God has given to us.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to grow more of the Spirit’s kindness and goodness in our lives, we will draw others to want to know this kind and gracious God.

Now, I admit the topic of Goodness stumped me a bit, because as Mary said about Love, it seems to me that all fruit involves “goodness”. When I think of a “good” person the traits of love, joy peace, patience, kindness, patience, faithfulness, gentleness and self control all come to mind.

But we use the word good so much in everyday use, and it has a different meaning. When something is good - it fulfills its purpose- a good tool needs to work well, a good dog obeys us

and does its job, even the job of companionship. So, what purpose do humans need to fulfill in order to be “good”? What can we do to fulfill our purpose?

I realized that this type of thinking might be what Jesus is trying to discourage when He instructs us to “abide” in him. When we are living in Jesus' way, the Holy Spirit will direct our actions, and will increase all of those good fruit in us.....together. But as Mary said earlier, using the fruit as a list of behaviors that I can check off list today and oh dear, I missed a few – oh no, I missed the mark, well, that type of behavior can lead to a conclusion that we did not do enough because we are not good enough. We are saved by belief in Jesus' work on the cross—the “grace of Christ”—plus nothing else. No list of characteristics must be added to the gospel – we are saved *through* faith in Jesus. It is the object of our faith that saves us, nothing else. And there is a long growing process for sweet fruit- sometimes, we expect it overnight. But green fruit on the vine isn't bad – its perfectly good, its just as it should be, it's on the vine and in its process of maturing. So today, I want to explore the fruit of Goodness, in the light of *our* worthiness, wholeness and being a good, healthy vessel for the Holy Spirit to develop the fruit of goodness.

I've got a friend who loves to give dinner parties. She has pretty much everything needed to entertain about 20 people, and she loves to do it. Her house is always full, somebody is usually staying over. Her home is a fun place and she makes everyone feel like family. She gets her energy by being around and serving others and she invites people over often. I rarely entertain. So, in an unusual choice, I decided to host a knitting

night with a bunch of friends I knew enjoyed that sort of thing. I sent out invites, heard from a few folks, and cleaned the house. I set up a beautiful charcuterie- even took a picture of it. And then I waited. The extroverted friend texted and said she had a headache, and I felt bad for her, but then small panic, I was on my own to carry the conversation ...I could always count on her to handle the talking part....and then I waited...and waited some more. Well, eventually, one person did come. And honestly, we had a lovely evening, getting to know each other much better. For this introvert, it was kind of a relief. But I would be lying if I didn't say that when I had to put almost the entire charcuterie board back in the fridge, a middle school insecurity hit me like a ton of bricks. My thought - I'm not good enough. I'm just not enough. And then I was embarrassed for myself that a mature woman could be thinking like a lonely middle-schooler. Well, apparently, I was not alone. In the United States, [over 7,000](#) people search not good enough on Google every month. In the same time frame, [1,400](#) search why am I not good enough. Even though I say I know the truth that I am totally loved by God, and I tell others that they are as well, there were still times that I still didn't feel good enough. Christian author Lysa Teurkist writes about a similar situation - only in her case, it was about not being invited to the networking party. She writes "I kept pondering that statement sitting in my heart: I'm not good enough. And finally, I had a slight breakthrough. "Good enough" is a terrible statement. Nobody ever wants their friends to say, "Well, I mean, you're good enough." I would never want my boss or my kids to just say, "You are good enough." No child would ever want their parents to say, "You're good enough."

Absolutely not.

We're better than enough, we are even better than good enough, and as our scripture says, God's good grace is more than enough. God made us to be people who learn and explore and create and give and delight and love. God made us full of potential and purpose. God tucked full wonder inside us so we could help other people find our God to be wonderful.

God made us to reach out, not pull back.

God made us to believe the best before assuming the worst.

God made us to freely give grace, realizing we so desperately need it ourselves.

God made us to add goodness to the world, see the beautiful, and rest in the assurance of God's lavish love for us.

Never ever, not for one second, did God look at us and say, My goal is for this one to be simply good enough. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. You are God's handiwork, and God didn't make junk. We have a choice in how we think, and that is a topic for "Self-Control".

So, what if only one person came to the party. That's not because I wasn't good enough. In my life, I have found God both my my triumphs and my traumas. And when we look in the Bible, we see the same. Nearly every single person mentioned in the Bible had a tragic failure at one time or another. David murdered and cheated. Jonah ran. Elijah couldn't hold himself together. Peter denied Jesus. Paul persecuted Christians. Moses wasn't a good enough speaker. The list goes on and on. But we don't think of these Bible characters in that light because the Bible is a reflection of how God sees us, not a summary of life's failures, but as a reflection of Gods mercy and grace. And only God gets the credit. And that's a good thing because if any of

these people had “been good enough” we would likely be tempted to look to them instead of looking to God. That’s why it’s important that we not fall victim to the push to be good enough. People need the blessing of finding God to be enough. If we attempt to be everything to the people around us, not only are we doomed to fail, but we rob others of the blessing of finding God to be enough.

I have come to appreciate the beauty of both our strengths and weaknesses. We are all of the same value to God, but that doesn’t mean we are all the same. We look, feel, think, act, or are gifted in different ways. This is truly a huge relief. Why? Well, we don’t have to do it all or be everything to everyone. This summer has really driven this home to me. I have seen how the different members of our church are gifted in so many ways, and how they interact and work together.

Romans 12:6-8 makes it clear that in God’s good grace, we all have different gifts in the body of Christ. Some are better teachers, and some are better at coming alongside you with support. I see that God didn’t gift everyone the same and I shouldn’t try to be what God created someone else to be. Just as importantly, I shouldn’t expect other people to be what God did not create them to be. It’s taken me most of my years to come to a place where I can say (when I’m in my right mind anyway) that I am still enough. God gave me things that I have a flair for, and I’ve learned to appreciate those things.

Appreciation for what we have been gifted with – Gratitude - that’s essential for goodness in our lives. It’s not about being like your friend, neighbor, or that person who seems to have

everything right on social media. As Mary said, we aren't made to live on display. We are creations of a Holy God, and we can bring glory to God by using both the strengths and weaknesses, the triumphs and the traumas, to show that God is faithful and then we share the news of that faithfulness with others.

And now, for something difficult to hear, but true nonetheless - it's not our job to be everything to everyone. This may seem harsh – we are always enough, right? Well, we are always enough for God, but sometimes we cannot be enough to every person, and this is actually a blessing. It's a relief. God already has that covered for us. It's God's job to be omnipotent. It's God's job to be God. It's Jesus' job to save. It is our job to be the best parents we can be, but not our job to be perfect parents, it is our job to support our spouses in love, but not to be the answer to our spouse's deepest struggle. We can leave that stuff up to God. We are simply vessels for God's use.

You see, our scripture today tells us that it's when our own abilities and efforts end, when we give up control, that God can truly shine through us in a way that impacts those around us.

I love the freedom that brings us. Instead of beating ourselves up over what we never will be, what we never *can* be, we can focus on what we are naturally good at and ask Jesus to help us in those places we are not as strong. And we can accept that the light of the Holy Spirit shines brightest through our cracks. When we have experienced God's healing, we allow God's light to stream through our cracks, and what we may have thought were ugly and broken cracks can be suddenly changed into a

beautiful pattern that is reflected all around us. Patsy Claremont writes of this in her classic book “All cracked up”. One time, When I cracked a guitar, the luthier explained that the wood glue was actually stronger than the wood itself. The guitar might crack in another place, but not where it was glued. Being cracked and healed isn’t a sign of weakness or failure. It’s the beauty of the body of Christ that we support each other, and each have a role. When we LEAN on the people around us who are gifted in those areas where we are not. We allow their gift of encouragement to bless us, and everyone has a secure and needed part in the family of God. (Heres the church, heres the steeple....)And together we become a strong structure. Together, each using the good gifts God gave us.

I want to conclude with the rest of Lysa Teurkist’s devotion -

Whatever is making you feel “not good enough” today, whether it’s because of a recent rejection, a careless comment or text, or something else, know these words: With Jesus, we’re forever safe. Forever accepted. Forever held. Completely loved and always invited in. Life with Jesus is a great love story. He isn’t a magic genie we occasionally run to for a little dose of divine help. He is the One who stills us, quiets us, wipes away our exhaustion and whispers love to us.

Your soul was made simply to be with Jesus. Be with – abide in....And the more you are with Jesus, the more you will stop fearing what the world might take from you. With Jesus, you are free to be you. The real you. The you whose core is in alignment with God’s Truth. The you who doesn’t fear imperfections or

rejections because grace has covered those in the loveliest of ways.

Receive these words, friend. Believe them with all your heart. Indeed, you are so very loved.

Let us pray

Forgive us Lord for the times we treat ourselves less kindly than we would treat our neighbor. And forgive us when we love ourselves more than we love our neighbors. Help us to believe the Truth, that when we abide in You, that Your more than enough grace flows down and covers us. We are free to be ourselves and to use the gifts that You gave us to bring glory to you God. We are created in Your image God and You are good. We pray that we look to You to produce the fruit of goodness, and that the Spirits light of goodness will shine out of every crack to make a beautiful pattern in our world. Amen.