

THE GOODNESS OF JESUS

John 8:2-11

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Theologians often organize God's attributes into two categories – greatness and goodness. God's greatness refers to God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and sovereignty. God's goodness refers to His love, mercy, holiness, and grace. Today we are going to focus on not only the goodness of God, but on the goodness of Jesus Christ.
2. Some of the first songs we teach children are about the love of Jesus.
 - i. Jesus Loves Me This I Know
 - ii. Jesus Loves The Little Children
3. Our text today is going to illustrate the love of Christ.

II. TEXT: John 8:2-11

2 At dawn he went to the temple again, and all the people were coming to him. He sat down and began to teach them.

3 Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. 4 "Teacher," they said to him, "this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. 5 In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" 6 They asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him.

Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. 7 When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, "The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. 9 When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center. 10 When Jesus stood up, he said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

11 "No one, Lord," she answered.

"Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."]

1. This story has four characters:
 - i. Jesus is in the temple teaching.
 - ii. A huge crowd of people were gathered to listen to Him.
 - iii. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who was caught in the act of adultery.
 - iv. The woman caught in adultery.
2. Who were the scribes and the Pharisees?
 - i. The scribes were the experts in Jewish law. They were the lawyers of the day, and they were usually Pharisees.
 - ii. The Pharisees were one of the four major Jewish sects, or denominations of that time. There the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Essenes.

- iii. The Pharisees were known for their strict adherence to the Mosaic Law and to their oral traditions about applying the Mosaic Law.
 - iv. The Pharisees were the religious authorities of the day. They, along with the Sadducees, were the leaders of Jewish society.
 - v. They were always hostile to Jesus, except for the case of Nicodemus.
- 3. Whenever there was a dispute over the law, it was common to go to a Rabbi. So that's what they were doing in this case.
- 4. They brought a woman caught in the act of adultery to Jesus, and asked Him if they should stone her, as the Mosaic Law commanded, or not.
- 5. Verse 6 says "they asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him." This was their trap:
 - i. They were right about the law of Moses. The punishment for adultery was the death penalty (Lev 20:10; Dt 22:13-14).
 - ii. However, the Romans did not allow the Jews to carry out capital punishment.
 - iii. If Jesus said "No, she shouldn't be executed," then He would be contradicting Moses and would disqualify Himself as the Messiah.
 - iv. If He said, "Yes, she should be executed," He would have set Himself an enemy of the Romans.
- 6. So, Jesus stopped down and wrote on the ground with His finger. What did He write? It doesn't say, but there is a good theory. The usual Greek word for "to write" is *graphein*, but here the Greek word is *katagraphhein*, which can mean "to write down a record against someone." Therefore some speculate that Jesus was writing down the sins of the scribes and the Pharisees.
- 7. Then Jesus stood and said those famous words, "The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her."
 - i. Was Jesus disagreeing with the law of Moses? No. Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees were not really interested in His wisdom. They weren't really interested in doing the right thing. They just wanted to trap Him.
 - ii. The Greek word "without sin" means not only without sin, but even without a sinful desire. Jesus may have been saying, "You can stone her, but only if you never wanted to do the same thing yourselves."
 - iii. So, Jesus gave an answer that would...
 - 1. Display His goodness.
 - 2. Uphold the law of Moses.
 - 3. Avoid breaking the law of the Romans.
 - 4. Expose the sin of the scribes and the Pharisees.
- 8. At that, one by one, they left one by one, the older men first.
 - i. Why the older men first? It may be that they had more sin, or that they were more aware of their sin.

9. Then Jesus tells the woman, "I don't condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

10. This story reveals Christ's goodness in four ways.

III. CHRIST'S GOODNESS REVEALED IN FOUR WAYS

1. Jesus loves us despite our faults.

- i. Jesus showed love to this woman even though she was an adulteress. Even though she was a sinner. Even though she was a known sinner.
- ii. Jesus was not kind to the woman in this story because she was a good person; He was kind to her because He loved her.
- iii. It's the same for you. Christ loves you even though you are a sinner.
- iv. Christ knows everything about you. He knows every sin you've ever committed. And He still loves you.
- v. There's nothing you can ever do to make Christ love you less.
- vi. **Romans 8:38-39** "38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- vii. The Jewish leaders often called Jesus "a friend of sinners." They meant this as a criticism, but I'm so glad Jesus is a friend of sinners, because I am one.
- viii. Jesus loves adulterers. He loves murderers. He loves racists. He loves pedophiles. He loves drug addicts. He loves atheists. He loves Muslims. He loves people with tattoos and piercings. He loves liars. He loves divorcees. He loves us despite our faults.
- ix. There are many things in life that you have to earn. You have to earn a paycheck. You have to earn trust. You have to earn respect. You have to earn a college degree. You have to earn a promotion. But the wonderful thing about Jesus is that you don't have to earn His love. He loved you before you were born, and He will never stop loving you.
- x. It's similar to the love of a parent. I know my kids better than all of you put together. I know their flaws and sins more than you. And yet I love them more than you. Why? Because I'm their father. They are my children.
- xi. Jesus knows all your faults, but He loves you more than anybody else will ever love you. Why? Because He made you. You are His child.
- xii. The best example of Christ's love is not the woman caught in adultery, but the cross. **Galatians 2:20** "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
- xiii. Jesus gave up His life rather than give up on you.
- xiv. **Alexander MacLaren** "However I may drag myself away from God, I cannot drive Him away from me, and however little I may care for Him, or love Him, or think about Him, it does not make one hair's-breath of difference as to the fact that He loves me."

2. Jesus does not treat us as we deserve.

- i. This story reveals the mercy of Jesus.
- ii. There is a slight difference between grace and mercy. Grace is God giving you what you don't deserve; mercy is God not giving you what you do deserve.
- iii. The adulteress in this story deserved condemnation. She deserved capital punishment. Yet Jesus didn't give her what she deserved. He was merciful. Instead of endorsing her death, He stood up for her life.
- iv. Jesus never treats us the way we deserve. If He did, we would all be burning in hell right now.
- v. **Psalm 103:9-10** "He will not always accuse us or be angry forever. He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities."
- vi. It's easy to throw a pity party and feel sorry for ourselves sometimes because everything in our life is not perfect. Everything's not just right. We don't have everything we want. But if you would instead compare what you have with what you deserve, then you would have a much different attitude.
- vii. **James 1:17** "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."
 1. Every good thing in your life is literally an undeserved gift.
 2. You don't deserve good health.
 3. You don't deserve good food.
 4. You don't deserve nice clothes.
 5. You don't deserve a good job.
 6. We don't deserve this nice auditorium.
 7. Every time you experience something good in life, it should be a reminder of Christ's mercy, because you don't deserve it.
- viii. Sometimes when bad things happen people shake their fist at God and shout, "How dare you, God? That's not fair!" You're right. God isn't fair. If God was fair, then you'd be in hell. The last thing we should want is for Christ to be fair. Instead, we should praise Him for His mercy.
- ix. This story brings up an important issue. How can God be merciful and just at the same time? The Bible says that God is holy, and His law is holy. The punishment for breaking God's law is death – eternal separation from God. So, how can God show us mercy and forgive us without violating His law? Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God punished His Son for our sins, so that He could forgive us.
- x. **1 Peter 2:24** "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree."
- xi. **J. I. Packer** "Our sins have been punished; the wheel of retribution has turned; judgment has been inflicted for our ungodliness – but on Jesus, the lamb of God, standing in our place."

- xii. Through Jesus Christ we see both the holiness and the mercy of God displayed and harmonized. God doesn't treat us the way we deserve because He punished Christ in our place.

3. Jesus' goal is to save, not to condemn.

- i. Jesus had the opportunity to condemn this woman; to endorse her execution. Instead, He chose to save her.
- ii. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He did not come to condemn and punish; He came to save. He did not come to take up a sword; He came to take up the cross.
- iii. **John 3:17** "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."
- iv. This does not mean that there will never be condemnation. There will come a day of judgement when Christ returns. And on that day, many will be sent to hell. But Christ came to earth to die for our sins so that the number of those who go to hell would be as few as possible.
- v. Jesus Christ reflects the heart of God. God does not want you to hell. He does not want to condemn you. That's why He sent His only Son to suffer and die such a horrible death.
- vi. **Lamentations 3:33** "For he does not enjoy bringing affliction or suffering on mankind."
- vii. As a parent, I have to punish my children at times. I have to discipline them. If I didn't, I wouldn't be a good father. But that doesn't mean that I enjoy it. I hate it. I hate seeing my children in pain. I hate inflicting pain on them. I want what's best for them. I want them to succeed. I want them to do what is right.
- viii. Jesus loves you. He wants what is best for you. There will come a day of judgment, but Christ's goal is to save, not to condemn. He doesn't want you to go to hell. He's rooting for you. He wants you to be saved. He wants you to repent. He wants you to go to heaven. Will you receive Him?

4. Jesus demands that we repent of sin.

- i. Finally, we must not miss the last sentence in this story. Jesus saved the woman from execution. He saved her from condemnation. He didn't condemn her. But this doesn't mean that Jesus condoned of her sin; it doesn't mean that He approved of her sin; it doesn't mean that He didn't care about her sin; it doesn't mean that He thought adultery was no big deal. His last words in this story were, "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."
- ii. Christ loves you despite your faults. He will never love you less. But this doesn't mean that He loves your sin. This doesn't mean that He endorses all your choices. He loves you despite your sin, but He demands that you repent of sin.

- iii. You must understand the nature of sin. Sin is rebellion against God. Sin is war against God. God created this world for His glory and pleasure, and sin robs God of His glory. God has a good and perfect plan for you, and for every person in this world; a plan for good and not disaster. But sin interferes with God's plan. Sin hurts people. It destroys societies and cultures. It breaks up marriages and families. It ruins relationships. It destroys lives. It breaks hearts. For this reason, sin is highly offensive to God; God literally hates sin. So, if you want to have a friendship with God, then you must forsake sin. Anyone who willfully continues in sin is God's enemy.
- iv. As a father, it would not be loving for me to let my kids just do whatever they want. It would not be loving for me to not teach my kids right from wrong. It would not be loving for me to endorse and approve and affirm any choice they make. Some choices are harmful to them. Some choices will lead to their sorrow and not their joy. The loving thing for me to do is to teach them right from wrong, and then encourage them to do what right. Because that's what's best for them. Doing what is right will lead to the best life.
- v. Christ's demand that we forsake sin is an act of love. He is not trying to stop you from enjoying your life. He loves you and wants the best for you. And He knows better than we do that sin leads to suffering. When He says, "Don't sin anymore," He is saying, "Don't hurt yourself anymore."
- vi. **Max Lucado** "God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to let you remain as you are."
- vii. Christ's goal is not merely to save you from the eternal consequences of sin, but to save from a life of sin. To give you an abundant life (Jn 10:10).
- viii. Don't confuse Christ's love and mercy for approval. Even though He loves you, He hates sin. He had to be crucified because of sin. And one day He will return to judge and punish unrepentant sinners.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Learning about Christ's goodness never gets old.
2. When the renowned theologian Karl Barth visited the University of Chicago, students and scholars crowded around him. At a press conference, one asked, "Dr. Barth, what is the most profound truth you have learned in your studies?" Without hesitation he replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."
3. My question is will you receive Christ's goodness? Will you accept it?
4. How?
 - i. Admit your need for a Savior. You are a sinner and you can't do anything to save yourself, or contribute to your salvation. You are helpless and hopeless without Christ.
 - ii. Believe in Jesus Christ as the only Savior. He died for your sins and rose again. You must trust in Him, not in good works or other gods for salvation.
 - iii. Confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Repent of your sins and obey Christ.