

When in Rome: Considering God's Goodness

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[0 : 00] So for many people, Mother's Day is a time to celebrate their mom, to reflect on their mom. And if you are a mom, maybe you've already been celebrated today.

! I hope the flower this morning helped. But remember, you get the whole day, right? You don't leave the service and think, well, that's it. I got my little Mother's Day recognition. Hopefully, whether it was yesterday or today or into the week, you are celebrated by people in your life. If moms are often presented with flowers or gifts on Mother's Day, or maybe even breakfast in bed.

Maybe you got that this morning. For some of us, though, you know, Mother's Day can be a celebration. It really is. It's a time to recognize people who are significant in our lives, to reflect on people who have been significant in our lives if they've passed.

But for other people, Mother's Day can be hard. It can be a complicated time. And I want to just take a moment to acknowledge that. Mother's Day, for some people, can be a reminder of a broken relationship that maybe is still broken.

[1 : 08] Maybe it seems to have no hope of being repaired or restored. Others, it can be a reminder of a loss. A loss of a loss of a spouse, or a parent, or even a sibling.

But this morning, having acknowledged some of those harder things, I want to put that aside as well, as much as possible anyway, as we can. Because this morning we reflect on mothers who supported us, encouraged us, shaped us, made sacrifices for each of us in so many ways.

And for the mothers who are here this morning, or in person, or listening in the days ahead, thank you sincerely for all that you have done.

You are loved, and you are valued. May God bless each of you. Happy Mother's Day. This morning we're continuing in our sermon series, When in Rome.

And for anyone who is visiting this morning, I see some guests this morning. Welcome here. And don't panic. So you're joining us in the middle of a sermon series, but each sermon is designed to kind of stand alone.

[2 : 24] So don't think, oh, I've missed all the homework, I haven't studied. You'll be fine. I promise. And all of the sermons in this series so far are available on our church website.

So if you don't know where that is or how to find it, we have little invitation cards on the back table right by that vase of flowers. And it gives you our website and other information, service times and things like that.

So that will point you to where you can find the sermons. It's conveniently located under the tab titled, Sermons. All right. So our passage for this morning, continuing on in Romans, is Romans 2 verses 1 to 11.

So if you have your Bible and want to look it up, you want to open your Bible app, whatever you want to do, and I will be your audio book version for this morning. Romans 2 verses 1 to 11 says, You therefore have no excuse.

You who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

[3 : 33] Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

God will repay each person according to what they have done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.

But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

[4 : 45] But glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

Last week, we spent some time considering God's wrath. And I think you probably remember if you were here, I said, whoo, bullet dodged. That sermon could have landed on Mother's Day.

Let's talk about the wrath of God. Oh, and happy Mother's Day. Fortunately, it did not land that way. So, last week, we recognized that God reveals his wrath because, anyone remember?

That's okay. I hear some inhalations. I'm trying. I'm thinking. Which is awesome. God reveals his wrath, as Carol said, because humanity suppresses God's revealed truth.

That's what we learned. So, despite how God reveals himself and his truth to his people, they reject or even mock it openly.

[5 : 57] And that's despite evidence clearly stating that God exists. We talked about that as well. Even though that happens and it's all around us, human beings still reject it.

Because we're not always the sharpest knives in the drawer. God also reveals his wrath because humanity is ungrateful. Oh, I'm not ungrateful.

You ever ungrateful? Take things for granted? And foolish. Who wants to be thought of as foolish? Raise your hand. No one. So, for people, even those who believe, they may not always be grateful or thankful to God.

And I think we can all recognize that in our lives. So, sometimes, people glorify and prioritize things, creations, rather than the creator.

And that makes God angry. I think it's fair. God's wrath will ultimately be revealed at final judgment. And I think all of us can recognize that.

[7 : 03] But it's also visible, as we explored last week, today, right now, in the ways that God leaves humanity to their own desires, to indulging their own lusts or their depraved minds.

We see it, right? God's judgment also shows up in the way that he lets humanity go its own way. Right? If you choose that path, go ahead.

God allows us to make bad choices sometimes. So, hopefully, that's a helpful recap of last week's message. You can always just check out sermons on the website.

So, happy Mother's Day. Let's consider God's goodness. goodness. We're going to be exploring this as the counterbalance to God's wrath. And I believe many people, certainly those who haven't come to know God personally or perceived him at work in their own lives, may live with little regard or awareness of the concept of a good God, right?

Why would they? As I was saying to somebody yesterday at the Workbee, big theological discussions happen in parking lots sometimes. But I said, you know, we expect people in the world who don't know God, who don't have much of a concept of Christianity, aside from maybe a negative one, who don't go to church, who don't own a Bible, let alone read a Bible, we expect those folks to play by the same rules that we do as followers of Jesus.

[8 : 37] Is that logical? It feels illogical to me. So we're asking folks to play the same game and know the same rules that we know when they're not even on the field.

They're not even there, right? One pastor friend of mine said once, he said, tell the people from your church to go to a mosque next Sunday. And so I was a pretty new, I'm still a new pastor, new-ish, but I was a really new pastor at the time.

And this is an old friend of mine, pastor mentor, and I said to him, are you nuts? Did you hit your head in the shower? Because that seems crazy. And he said, but we're asking people outside the doors of a church who don't know God, have negative opinions of Christianity, all those things, you should come to church on Sunday.

Why would I do that? Right? So that's kind of the paradigm shift that the church nowadays has to have is that we do live in a post-Christian world.

We live in a world that doesn't say, I love Christianity, I'm excited about it, I go to church all the time, I don't go to church right now, but I would love to go to church again. That's not the normal conversation we hear.

[9 : 53] And we'll get to that some other time. After Romans, maybe. Oh, I totally sidetracked myself. So, just got passionate there for a second.

So, even those of us who worship God have given our lives to him, we may tend to forget how gracious God is, how good he has been to us, how good he continues to be in so many ways in our lives.

And sadly, as we've talked about here a bit, people who don't recognize or follow God have little awareness or even any interest in how their neglect of God, right, they don't even know they're playing the game, may one day come back to them to have real consequences in their lives.

I have a question for each of you this morning. Have you, or I, I'll include myself, given much thought to God's goodness on display in our lives?

What about the many blessings that he brings to us? The way he provides for our needs? Do we recognize those things?

[11 : 05] Are you aware of how it offends God when you take him for granted? And yet, we likely do that all too often.

We probably wouldn't want to admit it. So, our passage for this morning should give us a sober reminder about the importance of being grateful for God's goodness to us.

So, let's dig into this a little bit deeper. First, let's consider what does the goodness of God look like? How do we recognize it?

How does it show up in our lives? Well, first, God shows up, God's goodness shows up in his riches. And if you're thinking of your retirement plan or your bank account, that's not exactly what we're talking about.

So, what does it mean when we talk about the riches of God? Well, true riches, especially those found in God, aren't measured by your bank account, but by the abundance of God's grace towards you.

[12 : 11] So, as believers, we have received Christ's righteousness. We've received the forgiveness of sin, adoption into God's family as his child.

The power of the Holy Spirit literally living within us and ultimately an internal inheritance. That's a lot, is it not?

As a joint heir with Christ, you have access to God's riches, which include unspeakable joy, unconditional love, and peace beyond understanding.

Do you feel peace or joy or love in your life on an average day? Paul speaks about God's riches in other ways, too.

Ephesians 1, verse 7 says, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

[13 : 16] God is rich in grace. Paul declares in Ephesians 2, verse 4, that God is rich in mercy. Philippians 4, 19, we read there that, and my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 6, verse 17, tells us, Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Just to clarify, God will meet not your wants, but your needs. So if you're looking for wants to be met, you may be disappointed, but does he meet your needs?

I think we can all say, usually beyond expectations, often out of the blue, seemingly out of the blue, but God will meet our needs.

Paul says in Ephesians 3, verse 16, I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being.

[14 : 38] Remember, we just talked about the Holy Spirit lives within us. We have godly power that lives within us by the grace of God. We can be encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

We can be led by the Holy Spirit. He will guide us. He will give us strength to go on. Just ask. God provides Christians with strength through the Holy Spirit to continue on their journey.

We're on a journey, right? Whether you feel like you're running a race or you're kind of hobbling along, God will give you strength to continue and to be faithful as you do that.

Second, God's goodness shows up in his forbearance. How many people use that word in everyday language? Not I.

Forbearance comes from a Greek word which is enoche, which means a holding back or a pause in action. And it often describes God's purposeful restraint in holding back judgment, in offering space for repentance.

[15 : 53] repentance, right? I think lots of us go through life thinking, oh, he's going to get me for that one. Actually, he's not because he is eternally gracious, eternally merciful.

What amazing patience and grace and kindness he sends towards us. We can also recognize God's forbearance in the story of Israel, right?

There's an obvious one. we can see it in the present because God's final judgment, while we may deserve it by now, has not come yet.

God is patient. God wants people to come to him. Third, God's goodness shows up in his long suffering. Are you forbearing in your long suffering?

There's a phrase you need to write it in a greeting card. Be forbearing in your long suffering. Come on, that was kind of funny. Long suffering comes from a Greek word, makrothumia.

[16 : 58] Put that in a greeting card. Which is described as a slowness in avenging wrath, showing patience or being slow in becoming angry.

That's what long suffering means. And we see God's long suffering and patience in the days of Noah before the flood. I've had conversations with a few people saying, you know, I've often thought this in my mind is, where were Sodom and Gomorrah at?

Where was the earth at before God said, enough? Are we not there yet? How close are we? We don't know.

But we have a patient and grace filled God. 1 Peter 3. 20 says, to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built, in it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.

2 Peter 3. 9 says, the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

[18 : 21] So while we know the day of God's final judgment is coming, he is allowing time for all people to turn to him. Can you imagine any greater grace or mercy than that?

I think Psalm 86 verse 15 gives us a really great picture, a really great summary of God's goodness, when it says, but you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

So God is good. What's the purpose? Maybe it's common sense, maybe not. So having recognized that nature of God, goodness is part of his nature and part of his core character.

Let's consider for a moment the purpose of it. So again, maybe that seems like common sense, but let's see what we can recognize here. First, God's goodness should lead people to repent.

Does that seem like a simple equation? God's goodness is intended to cause man, humanity, to repent. God's And in the way Paul describes repentance everywhere, God's goodness should produce godly sorrow for our sin.

[19 : 43] Godly sorrow for our selfish choices. And that should lead us to repentance. And as evidence of true repentance, we should then see a change of mind in ourselves as well.

in response turning from sin to God. Second, God's goodness should lead people to do good themselves.

By being forgiven, by being shown kindness and mercy and grace, we should then show the same to others.

Being moved to do that, being moved to do good in response to recognizing that God has been gracious to us, being grateful for what he has done, it's a clear sign that someone has genuinely and sincerely repented from their sin.

Paul makes it clear in our text this morning that God will reward gratitude and thankfulness and doing good in response to the goodness of God that we have received what's the reward?

[20 : 51] Eternal life. Just as God has been patient and slow to anger with us, we're to show patience in doing good for other people, recognizing that our ultimate and eternal reward will come when Jesus returns.

Keep hoping for an amen, just once in a while. So, eternal life will be given then to those who are properly motivated by God's goodness. Now, don't hear me saying your salvation comes from the good works that you do.

