

Series: Faith like a Child

**God is Good**

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Matthew 8:1-15, Psalm 34:8

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, March 16, 2025

A reading from Matthew 18, one through 5, and Psalm 34:8: “At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child to Him and placed the child among them, and He said, ‘Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven, therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’” “Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him,” The word of the Lord.

Thanks, Hayley. All right, how is everyone today? I am so excited about these intergenerational services. Brendan was just talking about how we are an intergenerational church here, and we want to pause some of our normal programming throughout the year to just welcome kids into the room. We think that there is a benefit both ways from this. One, kids get to come and worship and experience worship in this room, to learn what it means to follow Jesus. They get to witness their parents or spiritual grandparents worshipping Jesus, but also it is a good reminder for us of what Hayley just read, that following Jesus is faith like a child, and so we have always done intergenerational services, but this year, instead of when we welcome kids in just having them join in with whatever sermon series we are doing, we are going to pause, and throughout the year we are going to do a series that we are calling Faith like a Child, where we are looking at a core truth, a foundational truth about who God is, that we never grow out of, or never grow too old for, and so that is the heart behind this series. This series is built on the conviction that there are core truths of the gospel that are just as essential for kids as they are for adults, so that is really the heart here, and we have a ton of people from different generations in the room. So just to see what an intergenerational church looks like, I am going to ask, is there anyone here in the fifty-five plus category? Where are you guys? Can you guys just raise your hand? Okay, a lot of you, awesome. We are so glad you are here, and then let’s go all the way to the other end, anyone eighteen and under, our students, our kids? Awesome. They are mostly all in the front row. We are so glad you guys are. We have a couple back there, awesome, which is also cool, because it is spring break, and you guys still showed up to church, so good job, and then we have middle age, the thirty-five to forty-five, fifty. Is there anyone in that category there? Oh yeah, some vitality there. I am surprised. You are the ones who never sleep, so well done on showing up, and then we also have young adults. Most of them come on Saturday night. We’ve got a great growing community of young adults. Do we have any young adults in the room this Sunday morning? All right, yeah, our youth pastor, awesome.

So, we are an intergenerational church. We love that about our church, and here is the thing, for some of you kids that are in the room. We have one of these packets, so we’ve got some people around the room, ushers. It is a kids packet for you to color, and honestly, adults, if you think the pastor is boring you, feel free to grab one for yourself too. Like you can totally have one, but do any of you guys need

one? Are you guys good? All right. Yeah, you got it. I am going to toss it. Be careful. All right, good catch. No fingers were sliced off in the throwing of that clipboard, so we are good.

All right, so like we said, childlike faith, foundational truths that we never outgrow, that is the heart behind the series, and as we read in Matthew 18, Jesus has his disciples gather around Him, and they are all debating. They are arguing, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” They want the top dog spot in Jesus’ kingdom that is coming, and Jesus approaches them as they are having this argument, He sees a little kid in the crowd, and He pulls the kid forward, pulls him on his lap, and says, “Listen here guys, you guys are totally missing it. It is not about who is greatest. The kingdom of heaven comes to those who are like little children, and if you do not change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Now when we hear this term, childlike faith or faith like a child, becoming like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven, I feel like there are a few ways that I heard this growing up. One is this idea that you just trust and obey. If you have a childlike faith, then your faith is unquestioning obedience. It sees face through the lens of simply accepting whatever God says about Himself. You never argue. It is like a kid that just needs to sit still, be quiet, and never ask questions. Just obey. Has anyone else had that kind of experience or understanding? Okay, a few of you. All right. Last night, no one in the Saturday night audience did. I was like, “Wow, I am really showing my childhood trauma here,” so that was interesting. The second way we also see this is faith understood as blind belief, that this understanding of child-like faith is believing in God without needing any reasoning or explanation or logic, that faith means never asking why, never doubting, never understanding. It is this idea of a leap of faith, the idea that you just take this blind acceptance towards faith.

Now here is the problem I have with those two understandings of childlike faith. Have you ever spent time around a child? That is not what they do at all, right? “Like if you tell a child, “Hey, I do not want you to do this,” what is their first response? “Okay, I will trust and obey.” No. They are like, “Why? Why would you make me do that? That is not fair,” and they have so many questions. Kids ask the most questions, and while there might be a trust and a dependence on parents, they still are trying to figure out the world and understand what is going on in the world and why it works the way it does. So, I think that actually part of the idea of childlike faith is an invitation for us to accept, to learn, to grow, to question, to doubt, to wrestle with God about the things that He says about Himself, to try to figure out why the world is the way it is, why God is like He is, and so this year is we pause three or four times to do this series, Childlike Faith. We are going to be like children that ask some good questions, and so today the question that we have is this: “Is God good?”

Now we are in church, and so when that question flashes up on the screen, and I ask it, almost the immediate gut level response is, “Yes. God is good. I know God is good. All the time God is good.” I want you to pause for a moment and actually think about this question. Do you believe, do you know, do you experience that God is good? Because so many times in our life, and my experience as a pastor is that many people I interact with, they do not actually question God’s goodness, for the most part. Every once in a while, I will encounter like an atheist or an agnostic, but for the most part, people believe there is some higher being, some God in the universe who is in control of things, and the question is, “Is that God good?”

Most of the time this question arises because what they have been told about God and who they have been told God is does not align with something in their personal experience, and something happens in their life that causes them to question, “I am experiencing this, and if this is happening in my life, then could God be good? For some people that is a deeply philosophical question. It is just like, “Why is there evil in the universe?” and so that takes us to the question of whether or not God is good. For others of us, it is a deeply personal question. “I have experienced some horrible things in my life. Where was God? What did God say? Why did He allow this?” and I can know what some of you parents are feeling in the room, because I have been feeling it this week as I have been thinking through. You are like, “Why are you asking this question when my seven-year-old is sitting next to me? Can’t we do this on the week when kids are not in the room? You are going to ruin our entire spring break, because now you are going to open a can of worms that I am going to have to figure how to answer all week with them,” and I get that, but here is why I think this is such an important question. I think that in many ways this is the question, a foundational question to understanding who God is, and my firm belief is that if you have not asked this question, someday you will, and so what better opportunity do we have as a faith community to engage with this question, to wrestle with this question, to have a childlike faith about this question, than when kids are in the room, because someday they will ask this question, if they have not already? That is where we are going today. It is asking this question, “Is God good?” in our Faith like a Child series.

Now here is the thing. You kids that had the handout, you are going to see today that the structure of this sermon is we are going to build a house together. We are going to do a little construction, and so we are going to look at three ideas about God’s goodness, that God’s goodness is found in his character. That is the foundation, and then we are going to look at the idea that God’s goodness is found in creation. That is the structure, and then we are going to look at the idea that Christ is the ultimate representation of God’s goodness, and that is the roof, but we have to spend a lot of time on the foundation. It is not pleasant. It is not exciting when a foundation is going in, but it is so important to have a solid foundation, and so we are going to spend a little bit of time, most of our time today examining this idea that the foundation of God’s goodness is found in his character, because we have to have a solid foundation in order for our faith to stand. God’s goodness is the foundation, and I pulled this idea from A.W. Tozer, who says this: “That God is good is taught or implied on every page of the Bible. It is a foundation stone for all sound thought about God. The goodness of God is the drive behind all the blessings He daily bestows upon us. God created us because He felt good in his heart, and He redeemed us for the same reason,” so this is the foundation, and I thought a good place for us to go to explore this idea of God’s goodness is all the way back in Exodus chapter 34.

Now some of you may not be familiar with the story. Some of you might be very familiar with the story, but in Exodus 34, Moses is having a conversation with God. God has freed the people from Egypt, He has brought them to the mountainside to worship Him, and as they are worshipping on the mountain, God is establishing a covenant, almost a marriage ceremony with the people of Israel, to say, “You will be my people. I will be your God. We are going to partner together for the redemption of the world,” and as they are saying their wedding vows, the people of Israel turn their backs on God and start worshipping an idol. Kids in the room, do you remember what the idol was that they were worshipping at the mountain? The golden calf. Excellent. That is awesome. I heard it a few places. I am so, but yeah, kids, so glad you

guys did not say like dinosaur or something, because I really would like, we are doing a good job in kids ministry. Awesome. All right, so it is a golden calf, and they are worshipping this idol, and it is literally like at the wedding ceremony, while they are saying the vows, the bride turns around and runs away with the best man. That is what is happening here, and so God is hurt and He is angry about the people rejecting Him. He has just done all of these miracles and amazing things to bring them out of slavery and oppression and brought them to this mountain to make this covenant vow to them that He will love them forever, and they turn their back and start worshipping another idol, and so God in his hurt and his anger says, “You know what? I have made this covenant. I have made this promise. I will send you on ahead of me into the promised land that I promised I would give you, but I am not going to go with you, and I am going to withhold, and I will just stay back here, because it is clear you do not want me,” and in that instance, Moses, on the side of this mountain, gets into an argument with God, and he says, “You promised, you said you would be with us. We do not want to go unless you go with us.”

Is everyone with me so far? Remember the story, and what happens is Moses gets into this debate with God, and God chooses to change his mind and go with the people, and then as a result of that, Moses says, “If you promise to go with us, if you promise your presence will be with us, I need a sign. I want you to show me that your presence will go with us into the promised land, and so I want to see your presence. I need to see your glory. I want to see your face, so that I know when you are with us and when you are not,” and so God says that He will cause his goodness to pass in front of Moses on the side of the mountain. He says, “You can’t see all of my goodness. My goodness is so good that actually experiencing my full goodness would actually take your life, and so I am going to cause you to be up on the side of this mountain, I am going to cover you as I come by, and I am going to declare my goodness. I am going to allow you to see a portion of my goodness, so that you can know what my presence is like, so you can experience who I am.” It is in that scene that we find these verses where God declares the goodness of his character, so in chapter 34, 5 through 7, it says this: “Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with Moses, and proclaimed his name, the Lord, and He passed in front of Moses proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished, and He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and the fourth generation.”

There is so much that is happening in these verses, which is why we are going to spend most of our time today building the foundation of God’s character and goodness, because first, something that happens that is so important to recognize is when God declares who He is, when He shares his goodness, when his goodness passes in front of Moses, He begins by saying his name twice, the Lord, the Lord, and if you have been in our “I am,” series the last couple of weeks, we know what a deeply personal, intimate, and powerful name this is. This is God’s personal name that He has given to his people, Yahweh. “I am with you. I will continue to be what I am and will forever be.” That is what God is saying here, but He puts a double emphasis on it. He says it twice. It is God’s way of saying, “This is my character, not just now in this moment, but always and forever. This is who I am,” and then He goes on, and He gives them several different ideas of characteristics about who He is, and He starts with the idea that He is compassionate and gracious. There is so much to unpack in all of these words, and we do not have time to do all of them

justice, but this idea that God is compassionate, it is this idea that there is a deep parental love within God. Actually, the origins for this word, “compassion,” in Hebrew, it has its origins in the same word that they use for the word “womb.” It is this deeply motherly love, like the intense care a mother has for her newborn child. It is this idea of a God who, when He sees his people suffering, when He sees them under oppression, when He sees them struggling, like a mother who witnesses a child being wounded, He rushes to their aid, like when a kid skins his knee. What God is saying is that He is not distant. He is not indifferent. He feels deeply for his people, like a loving parent, and responds with care and kindness. Then He goes on, and He says that He is gracious. He is giving unmerited kindness. It is this idea of an unearned gift, kindness, not because someone deserves it or earned it or did anything to try to give it to themselves, but because the giver is just that generous and that good. That is it, that God is simply that good and loving, that He wants to give this gift to his people.

Now to help unpack this a little bit, I am going to need a volunteer, and I think probably a volunteer like ten to eleven years old would be perfect. Right there, Reese, you want to come on up? All right, awesome that he shot his hand up so quickly. I am sorry, guys over there. I heard a sigh, like there is a high school kid, “I really wanted to be on stage.” All right, come on up, Reese. All right, give it up for Reese. All right, bud. Okay. All right. Now I, Reese, you did not know this when you came up here. I am going to give you a puppy. Now it is not a real puppy, okay, because if I did, I know that is mean, but if I gave you a real puppy, I think your parents might leave the church. That’s not really fair either, right? I can’t just do that, but I am giving you a puppy. What would you name this puppy? “Fred.” Fred, I love that. I love human names for dogs. I want to name my dog George the next time I get a dog, but I love that. Fred, that is great. Are there any Freds in the room today? Good. We’re good. All right. No offense taken. All right, so your dog is named Fred. You love this puppy. He is full of energy. You take him everywhere with you. You love having this dog in your life. What would you do with Fred to just have fun with him? What would you enjoy doing with this puppy? “I would probably go to the park with him.” Go to the park with him. Awesome. Any other things? I would give him treats if he did something good.” Absolutely, treats. You would be trying to train him, teach him how to be a good dog. Love it.

All right, so now this dog Fred, you love him. You take him everywhere with you. You take him to the park. You feed him treats. One day your sister, and I know you have sisters, leaves the gate open to the back yard, and Fred escapes, and he runs away. What would you do to try to find Fred? “I would put up missing coasters.” Okay, put up some missing posters. Yeah, anything else? Yeah, call people to see if they saw Fred. You might go to your neighbors, see if they saw him, if anybody picked him up. Absolutely, because you love Fred. You want to get him back. You search, and you search, and you search, and you can’t find Fred, so how do you feel about that? “I would feel disappointed and sad.” Disappointed, sad, absolutely, right? You are missing Fred. Now let me say, a few hours later your dad comes home, and he has found Fred. Fred is covered in mud. He has got droopy ears. He is a mess. What would your reaction be at that moment? Do you think when you see Fred coming in all muddy, he ran away, he did not do what he was supposed to do, would you get really mad at Fred and maybe kick him? That would be really bad, or would you just welcome him back, clean him up, give him some food, and make sure he is okay? “Get him cleaned up, and I would get him some food.” Absolutely. You would just welcome him back, right? Make sure he is okay, take care of him, clean him up. Absolutely.

I know there are some parents in the audience who are like, “I would probably kick that dog if he ran away,” right? But that is the right answer. Good job, Reese. Thank you so much for being up here. Can you guys give it up for Reese? All right. Reese is a perfect illustration of God’s response to us in light of this compassionate and gracious God, that when we run away, when we do not do what we are supposed to, when we act out in certain ways, when we rebel against God, his response is this compassionate, gracious response. He chases after us and looks for us when we run away. He welcomes us back when we come home, because He is simply that good. That is just the first two characteristics of this God.

It goes on to say that God is slow to anger, that when He sees people failing or falling, when He is dealing with human failure, God shows restraint, that He does not respond in anger quickly. All right, now a little vulnerability from the audience, and remember, some of your kids are watching, all right? How many of you would say you are slow to anger? You are just like, “I am a pretty patient person. I do not get that angry.” Surely there are a few. Yeah, that’s it. It is okay. That is a good thing. You slow down, and that is awesome. How many would say you are a little quick tempered, and sometimes your anger can get the best of you? Yeah, me too. I see the person that cut me off on the highway, and I am like, “Do I ram them now? What is a justifiable response in this instance?” So, I am like that. That is not God. What this says is that when God deals with people, He is slow to anger. It is like this image of, and probably a lot of us have been there, right? Our kid does something that just, it is the umpteenth time you have told them, “Do not do this,” and so you just fly off the handle, and you respond in anger, but not God. What this really means, and a more literal translation is that God takes a deep breath before He responds, that his anger is never reckless. It is never something like He just flies off the handle. He takes a deep breath before He responds, that it takes a long time for us to experience God’s anger. He is slow to react.

Then it goes on to say that this God is also abounding in love and faithfulness, so not only is God compassionate and gracious and slow to anger. It is this idea that his love and his faithfulness to you and me is abounding and unending. We could never find the depths of his love and faithfulness. It is generous. It is committed. It even continues when a person fails. It is not about a feeling for us. It is an action towards us, that He has so much love that it overflows towards us continually. It is not conditional, and it is not small. That is the idea of God’s unfailing and abounding love and faithfulness.

I heard it said one time that God’s love, this idea of his unending compassion and love for us is like a grandma who has a cookie jar on her counter. You go over there and kids, what is your favorite cookie? Is anyone with me? What’s your favorite cookie, Ike? Chocolate Crinkle, amazing. Chocolate crinkle cookies in this cookie jar, and you go to the cookie jar, and you pull out your favorite cookie, and you eat a cookie, and you go back to the cookie jar, and you pull out another cookie. No matter how many times you go back to this cookie jar, it always has more. It is never ending. That is how deep God’s love is for us. We could never find the end of it. That is God’s love for us, and not only that, but then it goes on to say that this unending love, He maintains this love to a thousand generations, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin, and this is so important that we get this.

All right, kids, I need your help. Sometimes adults are a little slow picking up on the things that we need them to say, so can you help me here? Is this idea of wickedness good or bad? Bad, yes, you crushed it. All right, well done. Is this idea of rebellion good or bad? Bad, yes, absolutely, unless you think about it for a minute, and it is like, well, who are you rebelling against? Like when we rebelled against Great

Britain, maybe that was okay. I am just kidding. We are going too deep there. Rebellion against God is bad, right? And what about sin? Is that good or bad? Bad. Love it. You guys got even more confident there, so these are all the bad things. These are the unintentional or intentional things that we do to damage ourselves, to damage other people, or to damage our relationship with God. It is all the ways that we screw up the world, and God says that no matter how many times we screw up, to a thousand generations, He forgives wickedness and rebellion and sin. It is this idea of forgiveness forever. This number, a thousand generations, really carries with it our number for infinity. It is this unending number. It is this idea that it goes on forever. God forgives all types of failure, whether accidental, intentional, or outright defiant against Him, and you see that the beauty of God's goodness in this passage, this compassion, this grace, this love, this forgiveness, is all so good.

Which makes the next sentence, and some of you have probably already gotten there, a little confusing, because God follows all of those good characteristics up with this: "Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished," which on its face makes sense. If someone is guilty, then maybe punishment is deserved, but it goes one step further. It says He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents, to the third and fourth generation. Is it just me, or does this feel a little bit like a contradiction of everything we just walked through? Like, let's think, kids, for a moment. All right, Colton, can I use you as an example? I think you wanted to be up here earlier now, so let's say for just a moment that I am your parent, and you do something bad. You sneak out of the house one night, you do something you are not supposed to do, and I say, "Colton, you are grounded. You are punished." You would get it, right? Maybe you do not like it, but it makes sense, but then I come down harder and say, "You know what? I am still angry at you. Not only are you grounded, but when you have kids someday, five years from now, I am going to ground them too," and he is like, "Five years? What are you putting on me, man?" He's like, "I am eighteen. Stop it." So okay, so ten years. I don't know. Well, let's figure out the timeline later, so you see that, and I am like, "and not only that, but your kids you have ten to fifteen years from now. Not only that, but when they have kids, your grandkids, I am so angry at you that you sneaked out of the house that I am going to punish them too, and your grandkids are going to feel my anger for what you did on this night." How would that hit you? Not good. Yeah, to put it mildly, it feels a little sadistic, right? It feels a little intense, like "Wait a second, so my parents did something, and so I am going to get that punishment, and then not only me, but my grandkids, and maybe even down to a fourth generation?" Like is it just me, or does that feel like a little bit unfair? Yes, awesome. You guys are tracking with me. Some of you parents are like, "Paul, where are you going with this? Again, my seven-year-old is right here. Why are we opening up this can of worms?" I promise we are going to try to resolve this dispute.

There is this tension about God's goodness, because we see and we read all of these wonderful, lovely, beautiful attributes, and then we get to this part, and we think, "Man, what?" It does not feel congruent, and it is this moment when you come to a place in scripture where you feel that tension that you can have a few different responses. You can have the childlike faith that says, "You know what? I am just going to obey. I am not going to question. I am just going to trust. You should not be asking these questions of your heavenly father, Paul. I can't believe you're writing a sermon about this. We should just leave this alone. Like if God wants to punish my kids for what I do wrong, like that is on Him. He is God. He can do it."

Or we could have blind faith, and we could just have belief without understanding and just believe. Do not think. Ignore the question that is haunting you and keeping you awake at night, or we could have a true childlike faith and ask what it is that God wants to reveal to us about Himself in this tension, because I firmly believe this idea. When you come to scripture, and you feel tension, it is an invitation. It is not something that we are just supposed to gloss over, ignore, and just turn a blind eye to. It is always an invitation to ask questions, because I believe in the questions, God will reveal something even deeper about Himself, and so the question is, “What is going on here in this passage?” and the answer is a lot, and truthfully, I do not know why I do this to myself, and I do not know why I do it to you, because we probably bit off more than we can chew in a thirty-five minute sermon, but I do want to try to provide a little bit of resolution, because the tension is not bad, and the tension we are feeling is something that Christians and Jewish people have been arguing about and wrestling with for generations, because it is in the wrestling that we begin to see more about who God is.

So, the first thing we have to ask about this passage is that it says that He does not leave the guilty unpunished, but that comes right after God saying that He will maintain love to thousands and forgive wickedness, rebellion, and sin. A question for you, when you hear the word “guilty,” does that not seem like the people who are guilty would probably be those who are wicked and rebelling and sinful? Like it seems like that is the same group, so what is the tension? Why is one group forgiven, and then one group experiences punishment for what they have done, because I would say, if you came to me and are like, “Hey, I am really wicked. I am rebellious, and I am sinful,” I would say, “Wow, you sound guilty,” right? So, what is the distinction there?

Well, it actually is a callback. It is a hyperlink to when God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses on the side of the mountain, and in this passage, when God gives the first two commands, to worship no other gods and create no other idols and worship them, and what He says when He gives these two commandments, the follow up to that is this. It says, “For I will punish the children for the sin of the parents, to the third and fourth generation.” Again, pretty comparable to what we have been reading, but listen to this caveat, “of those who hate or reject me, but I will show my love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.” Sound familiar? So, what God is doing here is in this passage He is calling back to that first commandment, and He is saying, “Have no other gods before me, create no other idols, and there will be some of you who rebel.”

He is making this covenant, remember, with the people who are about to go and break the covenant while they are making their vows. God knows that He is working with a people who will continually fail and continually be guilty, but what He says is that the guilty are those who reject God, and that those who are forgiven, who experience the love, are those who turn and repent. The wicked, the rebellious, the sinful are those who do not repent, who just keep going with the rebellion, keep going with their wickedness, keep going with their sin and their guilt, but God recognizes those who repent, and He brings restoration to that relationship, so God is not punishing innocent people. He is punishing those people who are choosing to reject who He is, refusing to repent, living in continual rebellion against Him, but then the question becomes, “Okay, I get it. I get who the guilty are, but then what about the kids of the kids, like the grandkids of the person who is guilty?” That is what the question becomes, right? It seems like the kids are innocent. Why would God punish them? Which is really the crux of this whole question.



There are a few layers to this situation. One is that some of the translation into English of what we are trying to capture in the Hebrew is pretty difficult and challenging, and so some of this has to do with the idea of punishment. It sounds like God is actively trying to punish children for the things that their father has done, and the word for punishment is this word that literally can have the connotation of punishment, but it can also have connotations of consequence, and so it carries with it this idea that there is this consequence that happens to sin, that God does not just declare the guilty innocent, but they will experience the consequences of their action against God, and that is something that is actually not that difficult for us to understand. It carries with it this idea of generational consequences, that the children of the children will feel the consequences of the sin of the parents to the third and the fourth generation, which, let's just be honest with one another. There are many families in this room that are experiencing this reality. I never even knew my grandfather. There are still things that he did in his life that are impacting me and my children because of who he was and what he was about. There are so many of us that have a similar story, that maybe something a parent did is something that we are trying to break this cycle of sin, that we are still feeling the consequences of. That is essentially what God is saying here is that there are so many of us that sin has this effect on, this ability to create a generational impact. It has this cumulative effect on people and families, and these natural consequences of sin do not always just end with the person who is in rebellion. Sometimes they have a generational, long-lasting impact, and God is saying that the people will feel that and experience that.

Then He goes on, and it says this idea of the third and the fourth generation, which is something I learned this week, which I did not know, but essentially it is like a Hebrew phrase that has some meaning behind it. We can read that and think third and fourth generation means literally third and fourth generation. There is some truth to that, but deeper than that, third and fourth generation is a Hebrew way of saying as long as it takes, like until they repent, they will experience the consequences of what they choose to do, and so it is literally this idea of God saying that He is not just going to punish people incessantly and choose to continue punishing them because of things their parents have done, but He will allow them to experience the consequences of what they have done as long as it takes, until they turn and repent. Now notice the contrast, though, in this passage. How long does God's loving faithfulness and forgiveness extend to the generations? Do you remember? It is a big number, a thousand, and how long does He say people will experience the consequences of their sin? The third, maybe to the fourth.

All right, I have up here in these three jars guess how many Hershey's kisses? A thousand, give or take a few. I think my daughter and I maybe sneaked a few, so like we might be, but we are right at about a thousand, and then in this jar we have just four simple Hershey's kisses, but do you see what is happening in this passage as God is outlining his faithfulness, his love, his goodness, his compassion, his forgiveness to a thousand generations, versus the consequences of sin that extend for four generations? Do you see which way the scale is tipping and what God is trying to reveal about Himself, that the consequences have this limited effect, because God is so good that even the consequences of our rebellion against Him will be limited, but his forgiveness, his faithfulness to us, lasts for a thousand generations? It is unending. The weight of the scale tips more to one side, does it not? Also, kids, if you want a Hershey's kiss after the service today, please come up and get them, because I do not want to take a thousand Hershey's kisses home, so I am good. If your parents say it is okay, you can come up and get one.

Do you see what is happening in this passage and what God is trying to do? That He loves even though we fail, that He is gracious and compassionate even though we fail, and while we may feel the consequences, we will feel the consequences of our rebellion against Him, even the consequences have a limitation, and they are for the purpose of restoration. That is how good God is. So that's the foundational understanding of his character, and then we have to go and continue building the house, and I only have, actually I am overtime, so we have really got to get moving. I am so sorry.

So, then we have God's goodness in creation, experiencing God's goodness in creation. We have the solid foundation, and then we look at what God is doing in the world. As you look at a house, you do not really pay attention to the foundation. You see the structure, and that is what you look at. In Genesis 1:31 God says that He saw all that He made, and it was very good, all that he made. Kids, what are some of your favorite things in creation? What are some things that you love to look at? What's that? Video games? Not an answer I was expecting, but still a good one. Mom just goes like this. She is like, "Oh no." All right. So that is a good one. What are some others? Go for it. Food, absolutely. What is your favorite food? Steak, I love that. This is why kids are so good. When you eat steak, you are experiencing God's goodness. That is amazing. Probably when you play video games too, I am not so sure, but you probably are, right? Okay, other things kids love in creation. How about someone from the gallery? Oh, wait, what? We got one over here. I am seeing the hand point right here. Books, absolutely. Yeah, you get into a good story, and you can see and feel God's goodness, absolutely. I can see one more over here somewhere. Oh, way in the back. Let's hit it. Sports. Yes, I love a good sport. You play, you sweat, you have fun, you play with your friends. Awesome. When we experience life, and when we have a good meal or every mountain that we climb every sunset we see is a reflection of God's goodness. When we look at the created world, we see order, and we see what God's goodness can look like, so that is the structure of the house.

Then we move on to the rooftop, experiencing God's goodness in Christ, and the rooftop is necessary for any house. It makes a house complete. None of us want to live in a house without a roof, right? It will snow on you. It will rain on you. You are exposed to the elements. The sun will be too hot in the summertime. A house is not complete without a roof. Jesus completes our understanding of God's goodness and what God is like. Two verses that I want to cover very quickly, John 1:18 says this: "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is Himself God, and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made Him known." It is saying that in Jesus we can experience God, and then it goes on in Colossians 1:15. It says, "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation." Do you remember the story that I told you about Moses? What did he want to see? God's goodness, and what did God say? "You cannot see all of my goodness, because it would be too much for you." Jesus is the revelation of God's goodness. Jesus is the one who allows us to experience, to know, to see the fullness of God's goodness, because of who He is and what He has done. In Christ, God takes all of the consequences of sin upon Himself, all of the damage, all of the broken pieces of our stories and lives, Jesus takes it all upon Himself and redeems, restores, and renews, because He is God, and God is that good. Jesus reveals the fullness of God's goodness.

Moses did not want just to know God's goodness. He wanted to see to experience God's goodness, and we actually have that invitation in scripture. There is an invitation, a table that has been set for us to experience God's goodness. Psalm 34:8 says this: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." It is this calling

to move beyond simply knowing about him personally to personally experiencing his goodness, tasting his goodness the same way you would taste a steak that is delicious, that in the beauty of creation, the kindness of others, there is a peace that we can experience in God's goodness. We taste his goodness by trusting Him in the small and big moments of our life, and that God's goodness is not just a concept we believe intellectually, but a reality that we live in, discover, and savor like the best meal we have ever had. Brendan Manning says this: "In the furious longing of God," and this is the last thing I will say. "If you took all the love of the best mothers and fathers who have ever lived in the course of human history, all of their goodness, their kindness, their patience, their fidelity, their wisdom, their tenderness, strength, and love, and united all of those qualities in a single person, that person's love would only be a faint shadow of the furious love and mercy in the heart of God the Father, addressed to you and to me, at this very moment." God is good. Amen? Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, God, I pray this week, young, old, everyone in between, that we would taste and see your goodness, that we would take up this invitation to experience your goodness in our lives, that as we go through our days, as we have a good cup of coffee, as we have a good meal, as we have a great conversation with a friend, as we see the sun setting or the sun rising, that it would all be a reflection and an invitation to taste and see your goodness, and it is in the name of Jesus Christ, who makes this goodness apparent and revealed, we pray, amen.

In that story where Jesus is talking to his disciples, and they are arguing about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, I think so many times that is a great picture of how we engage with discipleship to Jesus too. We want to figure out our standing. We want to figure out how good we are and what we have to do to become the top person, and we can have this kind of approach to God that if we just work harder, if we do more, if we become the greatest, then maybe God's goodness, we will experience it more, and Jesus just cuts through all of that, and He sees a little kid, and He brings him into the group. He sets him on his lap and says, "No, you guys are missing it. It is not about the performance or the pretense. It is about the dependence and just coming to the Father like a little child, and that is where you will encounter the kingdom of heaven." That is the invitation for us this week as we go from here, to receive the love and goodness of the Father like a child welcomed onto Jesus' lap experiences goodness in that. Taste and see that He is good.

44:35 minutes

---

Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #834