

Do Not grow Weary of Doing Good
Galatians 6:7-10, Luke 19:1-10

Brothers and sisters, as we start this new sermon series today, we need to be honest with ourselves and admit that it's not always easy for us... to keep up the good work. Because doing what's good means that we have to challenge the status quo, we may have to sacrifice something, there might be consequences that we will face...

Additionally, we may find that we are tired and we lack sufficient motivation... and we have become weary of doing what is good.

So I asked a few people to tell me what is it that makes you become weary of doing good, when do you get tired of doing what's right? And they listed things like; when people are ungrateful, when unrealistic expectations are put on you, when you get the sense that you are obligated to help someone, or when people ignore your wise advice and then complain to you about the consequences.

Can you relate to this brothers and sisters?

I'm sure you can, and you probably could add a few more reasons to this list. And I have no doubt that our pandemic circumstances also contribute to making us weary of doing good.

It's difficult right now to get out and be around other people and come across opportunities to do good. We didn't expect this to go on for this long, and there's a lot of hostility and division in society right now, we are seeing behavior that's not very inspiring, and dealing with this takes up a lot of our energy and emotional resources and its wearisome

So, we don't have much left over to put towards doing good... especially when we are frustrated with how people are acting, and that's why we need to hear what God says in Galatians 6:9 *"let us not become weary in doing good!"*

Now this passage has some motivational reasons to help us overcome weariness, it starts out with the warning – *Don't be deceived, God cannot be mocked, we will reap what we sow...*

So if we use weariness as an excuse to disobey God's command that we must do good, as the expression of our gratitude for His free gift of salvation, then we will reap the consequences of that in our life. It is destructive to our faith.

But reaping what we sow is also a positive motivator, and in vs. 9 we read that there is a harvest that will come in the future if we persevere and continue to do good in spite of feeling weary. Doing good will lead to future blessings.

So let me encourage us to be obedient to God's plan for us to go out and get back to blessing people.

Now brothers and sisters I'm not just saying the Blessing Project is part of God's plan in a broad sort of generic way – this is actually something our elders and I know that God has specifically intended for all of us to participate in and accomplish - because of how we received this money. (tell story)

So let's not mock God in what He has called us to do by being disobedient in this matter, let us each obey and reap the blessings of that obedience for Valleyview and for ourselves.

Now I'm not saying it like this to guilt us or to bribe us to get back to blessing people - I say it like this so that we will see our participation in this as sowing according to the Spirit and then reaping from the Spirit, because we reap what we sow.

If I try to persuade you to and motivate you to get back to blessing people without telling you that this is a command from God – I'm not sowing according to the Spirit, and your actions won't produce Spiritual benefits... right?? Because we reap what we sow.

But because I'm telling you that participating in blessing project is being obedient to God – then when you go out and bless people it will produce spiritual benefits related to being obedient to God – both for you and for the person you bless and for all of us at Valleyview.

Now maybe this puts the blessing project in a new light for you – and it’s motivating you to get out this afternoon to go and do some good, and obey what God has called us to do - Amen? Brothers and sisters I pray that it would be so...

But if we reap what we sow, then let’s not stop with this...

Let’s look to increase what we will reap in this blessing project... by increasing what we sow. Let’s sow into ourselves this morning what the scriptures can teach us about doing good to ALL people as we have opportunity to do so - by looking at the story of Zacchaeus, and then we will reap greater effectiveness in blessing others AND... we will reap increasing enthusiasm that will overcome our weariness and help us to persevere in doing good.

Now the story of Zacchaeus takes place in the city of Jericho and from Luke’s account of the story in 9:1 we learn that Jesus had come to Jericho – and was inside the city, but was not planning to stay or do anything there. He was just going to pass through.

Now this might seem odd to us - because we’re used to reading about Jesus traveling to different towns and cities where he ministered to the people by teaching and healing them and doing miracles.

But, as important as this work was – Jesus knew it was not enough to accomplish God’s plan. To fulfill the purpose for which He was sent He need to make his way down to Jerusalem to offer his life as a sacrifice for the covenant unfaithfulness of humanity.

And so in Luke 13:32-33 Jesus says *“I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”*

And so Jesus begins to make his way towards Jerusalem and tries to explain to the disciples why they are going there

In Luke 18:31-34 it says *“Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.”*

Now the disciples would have been able to understand the first part of Jesus’ explanation for why they were going to Jerusalem. It would make sense to them that the Messiah would go to Jerusalem in order to proclaim himself King and start the liberation of God’s people from there.

But they would not understand what Jesus was trying to explain to them that He was going to Jerusalem to be tortured and mocked and handed over to the Gentiles to be killed... and then rise again.

However – they were Jesus’ followers... so regardless of whether they understood him or not they followed Jesus, the Son of Man, on his determined path down to Jerusalem where He would offer his life for ALL of humanity.

This was Jesus’ ultimate mission in fulfilling God’s plan – Jesus goes to Jerusalem to offer his life... and so it makes sense that Jesus intends to just pass through Jericho. There were no plans to linger, to visit... to shop... or even to do some teaching and healing for the many people in this city who most certainly were in need of it – the importance of Jesus arriving at Jerusalem in time for the Passover was far greater, and perhaps Jesus was feeling a bit weary of doing such good??

No matter how much of it he did – the crowds didn’t really grasp the kind of Messiah he had come to be, not even his disciples grasped it, and there are a few instances in the gospels where we see Jesus express his frustration and weariness with this ignorance. In Mark 9:19 Jesus says *“You unbelieving generation how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?”*

Is there a part of Jesus' humanity that perhaps just wants to get to cross and get it over and done with? If there was we could certainly understand it because its how many of us would be feeling no doubt.

And yet... regardless of how Jesus was feeling about continuing to do good with His ministry and the importance of getting down to Jerusalem to full-fill God's plan, Jesus does not pass up an opportunity to do good for someone who was an opportunistic traitor. He makes an unexpected stop in Jericho and insists on visiting Zacchaeus's home.

Brothers and sisters, if you are not familiar with this story – you are most certainly familiar with the dislike that people throughout history have had for those who have to collect taxes, and even more so when that person is one of your own countrymen who is treacherously getting rich off of you by working for the occupying enemy.

And Zacchaeus was the leader of this group of people...

And as such he was a bit of an opportunistic fellow – maybe he had heard a bit about this Jesus who was travelling in the countryside teaching and doing miracles – but since you can't tax teaching and miracles, at least not if they are happening outside your jurisdiction- he probably hadn't paid much attention.

So Zacchaeus is a bit late to the party when Jesus arrives in Jericho. The crowds of people have already lined the street when this comes to Zacchaeus' attention and probably more out of sheer curiosity than anything else Zacchaeus wants to see this person, this Jesus, whom the people are so eager to see.

But, it could also very well be that Zacchaeus – being a Jew himself – was familiar with the prophecy of a messiah, the Son of Man, who would come to deliver Israel from Roman oppression.

And now that Jesus had entered a major city center Zacchaeus might have wanted see Jesus, take stock of him, determine for

himself if this so-called messiah had the goods to lead a rebellion and drive out the Romans.

If Jesus did... then Zacchaeus might need to reconsider where his loyalties lay, and figure out how to switch sides.

So – since he was a short man and he could not see over the crowds of people along the road, Zacchaeus quickly moved ahead on the route through the city and found a low growing tree with sturdy branches which he could easily climb on to and have a better vantage point to take stock of this Jesus.

However, instead of Zacchaeus taking stock of Jesus, Jesus stops and takes stock of Zacchaeus.

Instead of Zacchaeus being able to determine if Jesus has the needed qualities to pull off a rebellion, Jesus determines that Zacchaeus is someone who needed to be drawn back from his own rebellion and greed and what it has done to him spiritually and socially.

So in spite of His important agenda of getting to Jerusalem to fulfill the Father's plan undeterred... Jesus pauses for this greedy, unscrupulous, traitor and does some good to him. He insists that He fellowship with Zacchaeus right then and there.

So Zacchaeus doesn't need to worry about switching sides – Jesus has recruited him, in fact Jesus' has done more than that. Jesus' willingness to associate with him changes Zacchaeus' heart, and when the crowds of people start to protest this action by Jesus pointing out the truth about Zacchaeus, Jesus does not deny his sins – rather He has very skillfully given Zacchaeus an opportunity to admit to his sins, and make restitution for what he had done wrong.

And by the mysterious grace of God Zacchaeus does.

And lest anyone charge that Zacchaeus is simply being pragmatic here and is taking advantage of the opportunity to switch sides and avoid recrimination from the Messiah who will judge all traitors when He comes into power in Jerusalem, Zacchaeus goes above and beyond in his restitution.

He gives half of his possessions to the poor – an act of generosity which reveals his heart was no longer controlled by greed. And instead of the minimum 1 and 1/5 which the Law of Moses required to be paid back for cheating and swindling someone, Zacchaeus willingly offers to pay back four times the amount.

So this is no legalistic calculated move on his part – it is a genuine act of repentance – in fact Jesus considers it to be an act of faith in God’s Covenant promises to be a gracious and forgiving God because He calls Zacchaeus a son of Abraham – meaning he is someone who lived by faith in God’s promises.

Promises which were given and had to be accepted and received by faith because they wouldn’t be fulfilled until much later on...

And in calling Zacchaeus a son of Abraham, Jesus makes the point that Zacchaeus’ repayment and his charity are not what restores him - as if God could be paid off, but instead that

these provisions for repentance under the Law of Moses anticipate the reason Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem.

So Jesus brings the focus back to the purpose of His mission to Jerusalem, where He will pay the true cost of Zacchaeus’ sins, the sins of his household – for all of Israel... for all humanity... by offering his life in their place, in our place.

And thus it is implied in Jesus’ words here that the Son of Man is not the kind of messiah who is coming to destroy the enemies of God and of God’s people – but to reconcile them to God, to restore them back into the family of God... and if we’re talking about Abraham, we can’t forget that God’s intentions were to bless ALL nations through him... and certainly Paul is echoing that in Gal 6:10 in telling us “*to do good to ALL people.*”

So the story of Zacchaeus shows us our Lord’s example of continuing to do good in spite of being weary – both because of his circumstances, and because of how people misunderstood him, and because there was really no one who

was truly worthy and deserving of the good that Jesus was ministering to them.

But brothers and sisters, this story is not meant to inspire us and help us overcome any weariness by emulating Jesus' example but through understanding that we are just like Zacchaeus in being unworthy of receiving the good that God gives to us – and yet God blesses us in Jesus Christ anyways.

When we understand this, we apprehend God's grace, we are reminded of how we have received God's grace, and we are re-energized by the gratitude that grace produces in us.

Remember this – justice is when we get what we deserve, and the truth is our sins make us all deserving of death, and eternal punishment in hell... and if you think that's overdoing it then you're not fully aware yet of how serious sin is and how great an offence it is to God and what sin really is. *(talk to me so we can help you better understand this)*

So, justice is when we get what we deserve, Mercy... is when we are spared from what we deserve – like not seeing that flash go off in our rearview mirror when we speed past a photo radar set-up.

But Grace – grace is not just being let off from the consequences that we had coming to us, grace is getting the reward instead of the consequences. It's getting something we don't deserve at all...

And when we stop and reflect on the grace we receive in Jesus... how we are able to have a life-giving, and eternal life-giving relationship with God Almighty because Jesus forgives our sin and gives us His covenant faithfulness instead of our own unfaithfulness - it refreshes us, it renews us, it re-energizes us, it motivates us, and we need to live out this grace and express it.

And brothers and sisters this is what it means to go and Bless someone in Jesus name, this is why we do it, and this is why we can continue to do it.

So I pray that as we have sowed into ourselves this morning with this scripture – to please the Holy Spirit, that we would reap eternal life...

That we would be blessed with vitality and energy and enthusiasm that will renew us and re-energize us to respond in obedience to God’s call for us to get back to blessing people.

That each of us would see our obedience to this as the way in which we are sowing to please the Holy Spirit and contributing to what we as the Body of Christ at Valleyview will reap for a harvest in the future.

May we ALL be sensitive and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as our Lord was – to continue to do good to ALL people... to be observant and look up and see the opportunities that the Lord puts in front of us.

To see these as part of how we express our Kingdom calling which the Lord has given us in our careers and in our families.

That would not neglect these opportunities because we are so focused on our careers and families to respond to an opportunity, or create an opportunity to do good and bless someone and express the gratitude of the grace of Jesus in our lives to them.

Instead – just as Jesus encountered Zacchaeus on his way through Jericho to Jerusalem, our careers, our families, whatever it is that the Lord has called us to in the bigger picture will provide us with the opportunity, with the opportunity to create an opportunity, to bless someone.

Brothers and sisters I believe that all of us have the opportunity and can create the opportunity to do good to someone like Zacchaeus. We all have a Zacchaeus in our lives, someone who does not have any visible or discernable need for healing or charity – in fact like Zacchaeus they are wealthy and healthy.

But Jesus knew Zacchaeus had a spiritual need, he had a need for grace - and Jesus took the opportunity to do good to him

and to bless him and gave him the grace of fellowshiping with him and this brought about a great harvest in Zacchaeus' life.

So brothers and sisters – as we have looked at what we can learn from scripture this morning, as we are sowing this into ourselves today – may we reap a good harvest from it by realizing that we don't have to be looking for people with obvious financial or charitable needs in order to bless them.

In fact if we reap what we sow – and we sow a blessing project strictly for financial or charitable needs – it will only produce harvest along those lines.

But when we go out to bless people because we are living out of the grace of Jesus Christ, and we see past people's health and wealth to see where they have a need for grace... and we bless them in Jesus name in that way...

Then that \$100 or \$200 of cash that we are giving them is being sown to please the Spirit and we are investing in the

Kingdom of Heaven, using our material blessings to produce spiritual results. The blessing money will bring about a spiritual harvest in their lives.

Now we may not get to see that happen quickly like it did in the story of Zacchaeus, we may not get to see it happen at all - but it will happen eventually – we can trust that brothers and sisters.

And that is why – as we get back to blessing people, in obedience to God's plan for Valleyview – we should not grow weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people!

Brothers and sisters – keep up the good work. Amen.