

Sunday Service at the PVIC – 02/19/2017

Sermon Series: The Attributes of God:

Goodness, Justice & Mercy (Outline)

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“The Lord executes justice for the oppressed, he gives food to the hungry; the Lord sets the prisoners free; The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous; the Lord protects the foreigners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked, he brings it down to ruin.” Ps.146:7-9

Introduction

We’ve a started a wonderful series on “The attributes of God”, meaning, the character of God! The first Sunday, I gave u an introduction of the subject, showing how important it is for us to have an understanding of the nature of God. Last Sunday, Pastor Billy spoke to u about 3 such attributes: the Infinitude; Immensity; and the Eternalness of God. This morning I would like to share another 3 attributes of God with you: Goodness; Justice; and Mercy of God.

At the very outset of our attempt to describe the attributes of God, the nature of God, I must confess that the reality is that it is absolutely impossible for any human being to describe God or his attributes! However, what we are trying to do is to share with you what God himself revealed to us through his Scriptures with the intension of us knowing him fully to the extend of what he has chosen to reveal himself. As said in the introduction, there is a purpose for this choice God has made. The purpose is given in 2 Peter 1:4, ‘being his children, knowing the nature of our divine Father we’ll become free from the sinful influence of the world and become more like our heavenly Father, truly participating in his nature.’

Goodness of God.

Generally, the word ‘goodness’ is synonymous with God. When someone called Jesus, ‘good teacher’ he replied to him, ‘why do you call me good – no one is good except God alone.’ (Mk. 10:18) Jesus was neither denying his deity nor the fact that he was good; he was making the point that ‘God alone is good.’

Goodness is defined as ‘benevolence exercised in mercy, compassion, longsuffering patience and forgiveness; not sometimes, but eternally and infinitely.’ Since it is the nature of God, his goodness is not influenced by our lack of goodness.

The only basis of God answering anyone’s prayers is the goodness of God himself – not our goodness! That should give us enough reason to pray. From his goodness, his loving kindness, his good-natured benevolence is what we experience all that we do in this world! That should give us enough reason to love him and honor him!

Once the great British novelist Charles Dickens was asked, ‘what was the most influential story he has ever read. He replied, ‘the story of the Prodigal Son’, the story written by God himself and read by his Son in Luke 15. As many of you have already read it, the story begins in verse 11, where Jesus tells us about the two sons of a father; the younger one asks father for his inheritance, and the Father gives him his inheritance without any hesitation. You know the story, he loses everything comes back home thinking to be a servant. But the Father, forgives him and

celebrates his return and restores him to his original place. In this story, we can see the true nature of the goodness of God from his granting of his son the 'free will' to make his choice, to his love that never runs out, to his forgiveness, acceptance and restoration simply by the repentance of his son! The reason why Jesus said that story was to let us all know the goodness, mercy and the grace of our heavenly Father.

Justice of God

Just like any other attributes of God, 'justice' is not outside of God requiring God to be just. Justice is the nature of God, in fact, God is justice! Read Ps. 146:7-9, "The Lord executes justice for the oppressed, he gives food to the hungry; the Lord sets the prisoners free; The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous; the Lord protects the foreigners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked, he brings it down to ruin." Those who honors God will love justice. Prophet Micah speaks on behalf of God in chapter 6:8, "...what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with your God."

As people we all demand justice and we expect our leaders to be just as well. That is good and proper. However, if go to a deeper level, if God implement his justice do we stand a chance? The great theologian, Anselm asked God a question in his writings, "How does thou spare the wicked, if thou are just? Supremely just?" The implication clearly is Rom. 3:23, "There is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is the justice of God that the wicked must die, because the wages of sin that God himself declared is death. The question of Anselm is, 'how can God let the sinful humanity continue to live?' The answer is on the Cross! A.W. Tozer puts it like this: "Today, when God looks at a sinner who still loves his sin and rejects the mystery of the atonement, justice condemns him to die. When God looks at a sinner who has accepted the blood of the everlasting covenant, justice sentences him to live. And God is just in doing both things."

Mercy of God

There is a general thinking among many Christians that the God of the Old Testament is all about Law and justice and the God of the New Testament is all about mercy and grace. I want to let you know that is absolutely a wrong understanding. In fact, the word 'mercy' appears 4 times more in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. It is the same God we see in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. God is immutable – he cannot change; he is the same in the past, present and in the future. Besides, he is perfect, he does not need any improvement or change! He has been good, just and merciful always – both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The only difference is the Old Testament pointed the people towards the Cross; while the New Testament points us back to the Cross!

It is the Cross where both the justice of God and his mercy meets together. One Christian author described the arrangement like this: "...in the infinite goodness of God and in his infinite wisdom He wrought out a plan whereby the second person of the Trinity, incarnated as a man, could die in order that justice might be satisfied while mercy rescued the man for whom he died." That is Christian theology. God did not give up his justice to provide mercy to man kind. He maintained his justice and maintained his mercy at the same time. His method he chose was sacrifice and place was the Cross! At the Cross His justice and his mercy kissed each other. In Psalm 85:10, we read, "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each

other.” It was at the Cross many of God’s attributes coming together to accomplish one impossible mission, that is to save a wretch like you and me.
David Benning described it in the form of a poem:

*“Look upon His cross and dying shame,
Oh, my soul, it was for thee!
Look, He took thy guilt, thy sin, thy blame,
As He died on Calvary.
That day turned to night and from that fight
Sprang salvation’s Genesis;
And above the Cross in shining light
His Mercy and Justice kissed.”*

Conclusion

Let me close here. As we observe the goodness, justice and the mercy of God the first and the most important response that should come out of our heart is praise! We did not deserve anything that we have received in our lives – starting from being born into this world, to the fact that how marvelously and wonderfully made – even in his image with a great number of attributes of God himself! When we lost them by our own choice, he himself restored them for us sacrificing the life of his beloved Son! What a picture of Goodness, Justice and Mercy! Let us not only worship him, but truly represent him as his children, participating in his divine nature!

Questions for Discussion:

1. How would you measure goodness, justice and mercy?
 2. What is goodness? Is there anyone good among men? Can man be made good?
 3. What is Justice? If God is just, supremely just, how could he let the wicked be left unpunished? Did he really?
 4. Where do we see the greatest expression of mercy?
 5. What is the appropriate response to God’s goodness, justice and mercy?
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