



## *Seventh Sunday after Pentecost*

July 11, 2021

*"Taste and see that the Lord is good.  
Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!"*

Psalm 34:8 (NLT)

\*Call to Worship

Based on Psalm 100

*Shout with joy to God, all the earth!  
**Remember that our God is the only God—  
the One who made us,  
the One who sustains us,  
the One whose Spirit lives within us.**  
Let us enter God's house with thanksgiving;  
and come into God's presence with praise.  
**For God is good,  
with unfailing love that lasts forever,  
and faithfulness that extends to all generations.***

\*Opening Prayer

*Lord, sometimes we are blind to the expressions of Your goodness all around us. We miss the signposts that would otherwise point us toward You. During worship today awaken us to Your goodness. Help us see our lives through the lens of Your goodness. May Your unfailing love and faithfulness anchor our lives forever. Move us to come into Your presence with praise and songs of joy. Amen.*

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

A Prayer of Gratitude for God's Goodness

*God of gracious love, we come with thanksgiving in our hearts for all the evidence of your goodness and mercy. Your goodness surrounds us and saturates our lives more than we could ever fathom. Your heart towards us is kindness, grace, mercy, thoughtfulness, and peace. We discover your goodness not only in stories of old, but in lives today.*

*Lives bruised with trouble and even tragedy find consolation when touched by your gracious Spirit; lives scarred with suffering and rejection have hope renewed through the power of the living Christ. We praise and adore you for hearts and lives transformed by your grace and mercy and we pray that our lives will reflect your great acts of kindness.*

*Arouse in us we pray, a goodness and love like yours so that we reach out to this wounded and troubled world with the compassion of Christ, proclaiming the gospel with integrity to friends and strangers alike. This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

God's Word

Psalm 34 (NLT)

*The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!*

Message

***"God Alone Is Good"***

Pastor Clark

See Message Below

\*Hymn of Faith

***"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"***

UMH 140

Blessing

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT)

*May the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.*

Taste and see that the Lord is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

**Psalm 34:8**



## Psalm 34

<sup>1</sup> I will praise the Lord at all times.

I will constantly speak his praises.

<sup>2</sup> I will boast only in the Lord;

let all who are helpless take heart.

<sup>3</sup> Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness;

let us exalt his name together.

<sup>4</sup> I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me.

He freed me from all my fears.

<sup>5</sup> Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;

no shadow of shame will darken their faces.

<sup>6</sup> In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened;

he saved me from all my troubles.

<sup>7</sup> For the angel of the Lord is a guard;

he surrounds and defends all who fear him.

<sup>8</sup> ***Taste and see that the Lord is good.***

***Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!***

<sup>9</sup> Fear the Lord, you his godly people,

for those who fear him will have all they need.

<sup>10</sup> Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry,

but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.

<sup>11</sup> Come, my children, and listen to me,

and I will teach you to fear the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Does anyone want to live a life

that is long and prosperous?

<sup>13</sup> Then keep your tongue from speaking evil

and your lips from telling lies!

<sup>14</sup> Turn away from evil and do good.

Search for peace, and work to maintain it.

<sup>15</sup> The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right;

his ears are open to their cries for help.

<sup>16</sup> But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil;

he will erase their memory from the earth.

<sup>17</sup> The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help.

He rescues them from all their troubles.

<sup>18</sup> The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;

he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

<sup>19</sup> The righteous person faces many troubles,

but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.

<sup>20</sup> For the Lord protects the bones of the righteous;

not one of them is broken!

<sup>21</sup> Calamity will surely destroy the wicked,

and those who hate the righteous will be punished.

<sup>22</sup> But the Lord will redeem those who serve him.

No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

#### Footnotes

- a. [34](#) This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

#### **This Is My Father's World**

1. This is my Father's world,  
and to my listening ears  
all nature sings, and round me rings  
the music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world:  
I rest me in the thought  
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;  
his hand the wonders wrought.

2. This is my Father's world,  
the birds their carols raise,  
the morning light, the lily white,  
declare their maker's praise.  
This is my Father's world:  
he shines in all that's fair;  
in the rustling grass I hear him pass;  
he speaks to me everywhere.

3. This is my Father's world.  
O let me ne'er forget  
that though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world:  
why should my heart be sad?  
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring!  
God reigns; let the earth be glad!

### **Great Is Thy Faithfulness**

1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;  
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

2 Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. Refrain

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! Refrain

# **God Alone Is Good**

## **Psalm 34**

### **Introduction**

**Goodness** by Paul David Tripp

*I have one place of confidence,  
one place of rest  
and peace and hope.*

*I have one place of surety,  
where courage  
can be found  
and strength  
waits for the taking.*

*I have one place of wisdom  
where foolishness wanes  
and truth grants freedom.*

*Alone I am not confident,  
no pride in strength  
or knowledge  
or character.*

*I know who I am,  
the duplicity of my heart,  
the weakness of resolve,  
the covert disloyalty  
that makes me susceptible  
to temptation's hook.*

*I have one place of confidence,  
it isn't a theology  
a book  
a set of principles  
a well-researched observation  
a worldview.*

*No, my confidence is in You.  
You are my hope because  
You are Good.*

*I rest in the goodness of your  
sovereignty,*

*in the goodness of your  
power,  
in the goodness of your  
faithfulness,  
in the goodness of your  
wisdom,  
in the goodness of your  
patience,  
in the goodness of your  
mercy,  
in the goodness of your  
holiness,  
in the goodness of your  
grace.*

*I have learned  
and I am learning  
that the physical delights  
of the created world  
were not designed to be  
the source and hope  
of my confidence.  
No, all of those things  
in their temporary elegance  
were meant to be  
signposts  
that point me to the eternal  
never-failing  
always available  
never-changing  
always holy  
grace-infused  
goodness that can only be found  
in You.*

*I have learned  
and I am learning  
that confident living  
always rests its foundation  
on You.*



*I am confident  
because of this solitary thing,  
You are  
and you are good.*

## ***The Most Glorious Thing About God***

Though it is not part of Psalm 34, I wanted to begin here in **Exodus 33:19:**

***“The LORD replied, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.’”***

*One day Moses was talking with God, and he said, "Show me your glory." It was a remarkable moment in human history. Have you ever asked God for that? "Show me your glory." How do you think God would respond? If you were God, what would you show Moses? Would you show him thunder and lightning, a tremendous earthquake, huge galaxies, or special effects? The Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you." In other words, the most glorious thing about God is not his power, majesty, strength; the most glorious thing about God is how good he is. God passed by Moses and proclaimed his goodness, kindness, love, mercy, and compassion. That was God's glory. (John Ortberg)*

In comparison to God's glorious goodness, we humans pale. While we are made in God's image and have the potential for goodness, in our current state we need God's unfailing love and mercy to transform us into goodness.

So to begin with today, we affirm, God alone is good. Any goodness in us or coming from us flows from God, the Source of all goodness!

## ***God's Goodness Is Everything We Need for Life***

God's goodness embraces everything that is beneficial for life, pleasing to life, and harmonious with life. As we experience the Lord's provisions for life, we see that the Lord is good. We are, though, prone to take that for granted. We are surrounded by God's goodness; we are saturated with God's goodness. And yet, we so often are blind to it...especially in our everyday lives. I read this intriguing piece from Dan Meyer on how we experience God's goodness everyday:

*But I got up this morning and gravity worked perfectly again. From the look of everybody I passed on the way to church, the miracle of cellular life was still operating quite remarkably. The sun was still just the right distance from this earth to keep me from freezing or frying. Throughout this morning, I've been able to enjoy all kinds of experiences that theologians call common graces, the simple gifts that come with being made a human being. I could taste coffee, smell perfume, hear music, see beauty, feel the touch of warm hands. And just think what opportunities to love, laugh, and learn—or to share with those who have less of these gifts—await me and you this afternoon.*

We are invited to taste and see that the Lord is good! What an invitation! And our experience of these things, move us to ponder then embrace that God is good! Consider this:

That God provides all we need...God will supply for us every good thing that we need to be what he's called us to be and to do what he's called us to do in the place where he's put us. Peter puts a spotlight on that in 2 Peter 1:3-4 (NLT):

*"By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises."*

By way of contrast, note as well what God will **not** do. God never toys with us. God never is foolish in the way he dispenses his gifts. God never plays favorites. God never mocks our neediness. God never plays bait and switch. God never teases or toys with us. God's timing is always right and the gifts that he gives are always appropriate to the moment. God is kind, faithful, loving, merciful, and good.

God in His goodness will not relent, will not quit, will not rest until every promise he has made been fully delivered. God in his goodness will not turn from his work until every one of his children has been totally transformed. God in his goodness will not turn away when we call upon him in anxious cry for help. God in his goodness will not stop until his mission in and through us is complete!

As Paul David Tripp reminds us, *"God will continue to fight until the last enemy is under his feet. As long as sin exists, he will shower us with forgiving, empowering, and delivering grace. He will defend us against attack and attack the enemy on our behalf. He will be faithful to convict, rebuke, encourage, and comfort. He will continue to open the warehouse of his wisdom and unfold for us the glorious mysteries of his truth. He will stand with us through the darkness and the light. He will guide us on a path we could never have discovered or would never have been wise enough to choose."*

Wow! Isn't that encouraging! Just imagine where we'd be without God's goodness!

### ***Is God Still Good When Our Lives Are Not?***

Jesus said, *"...in this world, you will have trouble."* (John 16:33) Yes, trouble happens...in your life and mine. My question, and I believe it is a question we all wrestle with in some way or another, is this: *"Is God still good, when our life isn't?"* When trouble comes and we experience bad things in our lives, is this proof that God isn't good?

Even though trouble comes, God prevails over the trouble. Look at the life of Joseph in the OT. He encountered all kinds of evil in his life, but God wove it into good. God prevails over evil. We do, however, most definitely need a **long view** of those circumstances. If you fixate on the specific circumstances of one slice of life, it could likely appear as if God is not good all the time. But when you

take the long view and look with discerning eyes to see how God weaves those bad things into good things, we see a far different picture.

**Christine Caine** is walking proof of this promise. She is an Australian spark plug. Five feet three inches of energy, passion, and love. To sit down with Christine is to share a meal with a modern-day Joseph. She is at war with one of the greatest calamities of our generation: sex slavery. She travels three hundred days a year. She meets with cabinets, presidents, and parliaments.

Pretty impressive for a girl whose world was turned upside down. At the age of thirty she stumbled upon the stunning news of her adoption. The couple who raised her never intended for her to know. When Christine happened upon the truth, she tracked down her biological parents.

The official records of her birth told her this much: she was born to a Greek mother named Panagiota. The box designated "Father's Name" bore the word "Unknown." But there was more. Next to the box marked "Child's Name" was another seven-letter word. It sucked the air out of Christine. "Unnamed."

Abandoned by those who conceived and bore you. Could anything be worse? Actually, yes. To be sexually abused by members of your family. Time and time again they took advantage of her.

Yet what they intended for evil, God used for good. Christine laid hold of Isaiah 49: *"The Lord has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name"* (v. 1).

Years later when she heard of the plight of girls caught in the sex trade, she knew she had to respond. When she saw their faces on missing-person posters and heard of the abuse at the hands of captors, this unnamed, abused girl set out to rescue the nameless and abused girls of her day. Satan's plan to destroy her actually emboldened her resolve to help others. Her A21 Mission has offices around the world. And as of the writing of these words, several hundred young women have been assisted and released.

If you looked at one slice of Christine's life, you could easily assume that it was proof that God cannot be good...at least not all the time. And if he's not good all the time, is he really good at all? But seeing her life from the long view, you can see so much more. You can see God's artistry of taking dark, tragic circumstances and weave them into something beautiful!

***God's goodness is not an escape from pain and suffering but a refuge of strength in the midst of it.***

Pretending like our lives are immune from the difficult things in life is an obvious form of denial. God's goodness, however, leads us toward reality not away from it. So, instead of being an escape from the pain and suffering that all humans encounter at some point along their life journey, God's goodness is a refuge in the midst of it.

Listen to the many ways this remarkable Psalm reveals this:

*I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces. In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened; he saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. (34:4-7)*

*The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time. For the Lord protects the bones of the righteous; not one of them is broken! (34:17-20)*

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!”*

**James Bryan Smith and his wife Meghan found that refuge in a tough spot in their lives...** they had their world’s rocked when doctors told that the little girl Meghan had been carrying for eight months had a rare chromosomal disorder that would likely cause her to die at birth. They went home completely disoriented and full of tears. The doctors were so matter-of-fact in announcing this bad news that James wanted to grab them and shake them and say, *“This is our daughter you’re talking about, not some medical malfunction!”* This was the toughest test they had yet faced. Now they were staring down the coming death of a child. How does a person survive this kind of news? Take refuge in God’s presence!

It turned out the doctor’s prognosis was wrong. She did have a chromosomal disorder, but not one that was immediately fatal. Their little **Madeline** (ironically, her name means “tower of strength”) survived birth but weighed only a few pounds, had a heart defect, was deaf, and could not keep food down. The medical experts then told them that she would not live more than a year or two.

During this time both James and Meghan felt as if they had been kicked in the stomach—over and again. It just would not end. Madeline lived for just over two years and then her little body finally gave up the fight.

A few years later after Madeline died, when James was in the middle of a day of solitude. His mind went over the last few years, thinking about the pain of hearing the news from the doctor, the countless sleepless nights on hospital floors, and the dark and rainy day we placed her body in the earth. He turned to God and said, *“Maybe it would have been better if she had never been born.”*

That was when James received one of the clearest experiences of God responding to him that he’d ever had in his life. On this day, at that moment, a little voice penetrated my mind, the voice of a little girl, a voice he had never heard but immediately recognized as Madeline’s. *“Daddy, you should never say that. If I had never been born, I would not be here now. I am so happy here in heaven, and one day you and Mom and Jacob (their son) will come and see me, and we will live forever together. And,*

*Daddy, there is more good that has happened because of me that you can't see now but will one day understand."*

He immediately repented of those thoughts...ever so thankful to hear her voice. Another narrative entered his mind—the story about the promise of heaven. James was beginning to see how a person could face tragedy and still say, *"God is good to me."* To understand how Job could say, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."* (Job 13:15)

Then he found another narrative welling up in his mind, how the Lord had been a refuge through that long journey. Trusting the Lord through the thick of it was indeed their lifeline.

Two years after Madeline's death Meghan became pregnant. For eight months they lived with a lot of anxiety, mixed with a little faith. When it came time to have that final sonogram, their hearts were in their throats, bracing for whatever news came their way. The technician, who did not know their story, kept saying things we loved to hear: *"Perfect hand, perfect heart, your baby looks perfect. Do you want to know the gender?" "Yes!" "It's a little girl. What are you going to name her?"* At the very same moment both James and Meghan said, *"Hope."*

## **Conclusion**

In this world we will have trouble, Jesus tells us. That doesn't mean God is not good. Take the long view to discover God's goodness even through the most difficult experiences of life. What would be different in your life if you took refuge in the Lord in times of trouble? What's one thing you could do this week to take that ***taste test for the soul and experience the Lord's goodness*** more than ever before in your life?

How about this: ***put your mind on the goodness of God!*** We have the tendency to put our minds on our problems, our troubles, our weaknesses, our inabilities, our failures. When we do that our faith grows weaker by the minute. What if with the help of the Holy Spirit we shift our focus to the goodness of God? That's what the apostle Paul implored us to do:

***"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."*** Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

As a result, we grow stronger and as well this: joy! *"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!"*