

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Two Sermons preached at
Thanksgiving Services
Shoreham by Sea
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of Croydon

*Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God;
for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. Psalm 147:1*

The Word of God in this psalm brings live subjects together. The child of God is exhorted to praise God as the Creator, and as the God of grace. There is a danger of overlooking our daily mercies – what we call common mercies. I am afraid they don't find a place either in our conversation, **gracious** conversation, or in our prayers, in the same proportion as they are found in God's Word. God's Word is not only **truth**, but it is the truth in the right proportion and from a right perspective. And if you and I are led by the Spirit, He will lead us as His Word directs us – I am sure of it. And we shall find His Word have a bearing in our experience according to its own statements. We shall.

This is the point, my friends. It is not so much for what we thank God, as thanking God for what He has done. You see what I mean: it is the object of praise, and the spirit in which we engage in it – **those** are the two important things in praise. And if you have a right sense of the goodness of God, you may thank God for a glass of water, because it would be very expensive if God had not given it. If man had to make water out of the atmosphere by a chemical process, that glass of water would cost a shilling. You see, God's mercies are so free, and so great, and so perfect, and so good that, by virtue of the qualities of mercies being so good, so perfect in themselves, so agreeable to our needs, that we receive them every moment, and are dependent every moment upon God our Creator.

Paul says to the Athenians: *For (it is) in Him we live etc.* – not only **from**. (*Acts 17:28*) We are always surrounded by God, wherever we

may be, or whatever spirit we may be in – we are surrounded by the mercies of God. And the prophet says: *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22,23)*

Sometimes, my friends, the only thing that is great is, from a sense of goodness, what the Lord is to us; that is the only thing that is great sometimes, when we are in some frames of mind – ungracious, unthankful, unmindful, murmuring and repining, pitying ourselves, indirectly if not directly, finding fault with God's ways and works in our experience. My friends, how many times have you come to your table, and never had a thankful heart for the Lord providing what is on it? We owe everything that is good to this, that God is good.

There is an outlet to God's goodness, my friends; His goodness is not shut up. None can add to the goodness of God; there is not one of us that makes God good, or that God requires that we should. But God is good to all; He is good to the vilest blasphemer; He is good to the most unthankful; He is good to the most afflicted. And if we could only give a person grace, open their eyes to see, touch their hearts to feel, the goodness of God, every one of us should praise God, and be thankful this day in the house of prayer. I am sure we should.

Now, I just want to mention for a minute *Mr. Hart's* comparative word:

*But what are seas, or skies, or hills,
Or verdant vales, or gliding rills,
To wonders man was born to prove –
The wonders of redeeming love?*

(Gadsby's 88)

That is a **comparative** word, not a **disparaging** word. Now, all that I have read in *1st Genesis* – you notice you have these wonderful things: God, who alone doeth wondrous things – you see, everything was made according to God's Word, and everything was settled by God's Word. God's Word does not come to pieces in Creation, my friends. God's Word is as strong in Creation as it is in grace. Yes! And if you notice: God gave everything a **being**, which means a **beginning**. To give everything a **being**, He gave everything a **continuing**. He said, "Let it be so; let it commence, and let it continue." You see, what God created

is what His wisdom created, and His mercy created, and His power created and sustained.

And that Word runs an endless round; it is as strong today as it was when He created. He made time; He made every creature; and every creature is a wonder of creation. You cannot examine anything, either animate or inanimate, but what it has effect, it has purpose, it has part in the economy of Creation. It fills that place exactly that God designed it should, and it never wanders, it never goes astray, out of the path, or in the use according to the nature that God decided upon.

It is like that today. It was all done with the Word, and that Word settled it. And God said: *Let there be...and it was so*. Only take one word, and you get volumes in every verse of Scripture. No man could write fully on the Creation, if he wrote all his life, if he had all the collective wisdom of man himself, he could never write all that is to be said or known about God's Creation.

And God said: *Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear*. The volume of water, the retention of water in the sea – it doesn't overflow. When man wants to keep back the sea, he makes a strong wall. When God wants to keep back the sea, He makes the sea build its own wall. And you see, there is that wonderful formation to hold all the waters in the world, and man is lost when he comes to think of God's arithmetic. His comparatively little mind is overwhelmed, and every expert will tell you that, whatever branch of knowledge the mind is exercised in, we all come to a closed door, we cannot go further. Why cannot they go further? Because they are creatures, and because they are dealing with a work of God. And there is a folly of men thinking they are wise. The greatest folly of men comes from their pride. It doesn't matter what subject it is – you see, man comes to that, and he cannot go further.

A friend of mine who is the gardener at ___ College, got into the same compartment as a professor from the college – a Professor of Botany – and he said to him: "What happens in the sensitive plants which, if you touch them, they fold up? What happens?" "I cannot tell you," the professor said. "We don't know. We know the plant is affected, but we can't tell the process by which it is affected, that a touch of the human

hand will make it all fall as if it is dead.” That is just one little illustration. The man was talking to the head gardener, who knew and understood about the **treatment** of the plants; the professor was supposed to understand the **life** of the plants, the scientific side of the plant. He said: “I don’t know.” That was because of this wonderful work, my friends, and God’s wonderful goodness.

My friends, if you and I could only understand how wonderfully we are made even, we should say as the psalmist says in the 139th Psalm: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made...and that my soul knoweth full well.* (v.14) My friends, a right sense of the wonderful power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the goodness of God, that we are the examples of! It is not only that we **see** the goodness of God, or that we **live on** the goodness of God, but we are ourselves a wonderful exhibition of the goodness of God, as the psalmist says: *It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.* (Psalms 100:3 & 95:7)

Now my friends, everything that you and I possess as creatures, that is good; everything we have, except sin; we owe it to a good, a merciful, a faithful, a compassionate and kind Creator. And if you and I spent all our lives in praising Him, if we did not have any feeling of murmuring, or repining, or any sin, and praise occupied our thoughts, while we realise what a wonderful and gracious God we have to do with, and that has to do with us, we should be happy, oh, we should be happy! You see, praise is the upland of experience; it is the highland of experience; prayer is the lowland of experience. Prayer is when we are in need, but when the Lord supplies that need, and gives us to realise that goodness, He sets us, as it were, on the summit of His mercy, that we might show forth His praise. *Dr. Watts* said in that wonderful hymn of his:

*Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad,
From everlasting was the Word;
With God He was; the Word was God;
And must divinely be adored.*

*Ere sin was born, or Satan fell,
He led the host of morning stars;
(Thy generation who can tell,
Or count the number of the years?)*

*But lo! He leaves those heavenly forms;
The Word descends and dwells in clay,
That he may hold converse with worms,
Dressed in such feeble flesh as they.*

(Gadsby’s 20)

My friends, in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Nature, in His Deity, in His Humanity, *Dr. Watts* might well say:

*God, in the Person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone.*

(Gadsby’s 18)

Sin has marred the Creation; it has brought death into God’s wonderful works; it has brought everything and everyone under a sentence of death, which cannot be avoided or escaped in any way. But, my friends, when you begin to speak of grace, you begin to speak of something that is superior to the Fall, something that is superior to sin, and not only that, but something that comes to fallen man. We are, every one of us, under a sentence of death with regard to what I might call the **shell** of it. There is no sting in death to the believer; and it was the Lord Jesus Christ took the sting out of death. Death could not sting Him and retain its sting. That is a wonderful thing. Death stung the Lord Jesus Christ, but when it did that, it was destroyed itself. Yes, it was! And there is no one – if all the angels in heaven were united, and all their sufferings and offerings were put together into one, it would be of no avail, because all of it would not meet the requirements of God’s holy law, and it would not be sufficient to wash sin from the conscience.

I would just like to sum up this part by making this more clear. Creation is a manifestation of God’s almighty power, of God’s inscrutable wisdom, and God’s faithfulness. But you see, grace is an exhibition, a manifestation, of His love, not merely of His hand, but of His heart. I believe that is why Mr. Hart uses that word – not because he thought lightly of the one, but because he thought so much of the other, because he could see so much in the other. My friends, we must learn that experimentally; you cannot read it out of a book. You cannot read grace out of a book; you must learn that in your own heart to know it aright. We cannot learn it **for** one another; we cannot learn it **with** one another.

All thy children shall be taught of the LORD. (Isaiah 54:15) And it is individual tuition.

Praise ye the LORD. I always feel, my friends, when I come to speak of the Lord, how little one can say – and it is mercy to **know** we can say but little. It is not happiness to know we can say but little, but it is a mercy. Some people's God is less than their praise in their estimation. But if you know anything about the Lord in grace, and in covenant, you know this: that He is what He is, and that none can take from Him what He is. He is God over all, and it doesn't matter what you say, God is above it. You may speak of Satan; God is above Satan. You may speak of sin; God is above sin. You may speak of death; God is above that. You may speak of Creation, you may speak of judgement, you may speak of man, you may speak of nations; but if you read the 40th *Isaiah*, it will show you; it speaks of Him: *The nations are as a drop of a bucket...less than nothing, and vanity (v.15,17)* when compared to God.

Now here is the marvel to me, my friends, that we should know anything of Him by gracious revelation, by gracious dealings, that you and I should be engaged in this occupation: *Praise ye the LORD.* It is a marvellous thing, my friends, that you and I should ever be brought to have matter for praise, and a heart to praise, and a tongue to praise. If you praise the Lord, you have got something in your experience, and you know something about Him. If your heart goes out towards God aright, it is because of what the Holy Ghost has wrought in your heart. Grace is in a circle, and if you want to unite a circle you will finish where you began, you will go right back again to where you began. And that is what praise is, my friends. We should never have praised the Lord if there had not been in Him *thoughts of peace and not of evil*; if there had not been in Him His own gracious will of grace and redemption and mercy.

The apostle says: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which...hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)* ...who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (*Ephesians 1:3*) You see, the stream of grace picks us up; we don't start it when we praise the Lord, as *Mr. Hart* says:

*The Father sent the Son to die;
The willing Son obeyed;
The witness Thou, to ratify
The purchase Christ has made. (Gadsby's 28)*

Now, in praise to God, my friends, there must be the ability in the person, and if there is the ability to praise the Lord in the sense in which it is used in this psalm, it will be in this way: you will see God has dealt with you with two hands – the right hand of His grace, and the left hand of His providence. And nobody knows so much about Providence as His grace-taught people; no one sees so much in Providence as those that have grace, and they would not overlook providential mercies.

But if we look through all our life, we shall have to say this, my friends: what belongs to us is shame of face before God. It belongs to me, I know, and it belongs to you. I can say I feel it, because I have behind me words that no one else knows about but God with regard to unworthiness. But see, notwithstanding our unworthiness, isn't it wonderful that our sight and hearing, and the different benefits and mercies we receive – and for the most part in a thoughtless way, in a prayerless way, and is a careless way – how the Fall is round us even with regard to the poorest acknowledgements of the goodness of God to us.

You see, sinners destroyed every claim; no one can claim anything from God. You may plead, if you plead for Christ's sake; you may ask, but you cannot claim. You see, it is **mercy**. Now the Lord has been good to us this last year. As soon as men begin to serve you, they begin to charge you, send you in a bill. But you see, the Lord does us good freely; He does us good in such a way that none other can do us good. Words of mine would fail to speak about the priceless mercies with regard to our health and strength. I think it very likely that not one of us has retired without anything in the house – always something to begin the next day. And not only this, but the Lord has opened ways when we could not see any way; He has been better to us than our fears. Sometimes our sin makes us afraid, and Satan comes on the back and says: "How do you think that God could favour you? Don't you think that you have wearied Him with your sins? He has turned His back upon you, and won't look upon you any more." Ah, my friends, He is

the Lord – that is our mercy; and He is as much above your sinfulness as you are beneath it; He can deliver you from it, and bless you notwithstanding it. O the Lord can bless us freely, because, you see, it isn't anyone who can lay the law down to Him; no one can tell the Lord He shall **not** bless a sinner. Satan cannot. He is the Lord; He is in heaven; He is the same. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. (Psalm 103:13,14)*

O we have reason to praise the Lord. Where praise is, my friends, I am sure there is sincerity. You cannot praise God without sincerity. There is no form of praise acceptable to God, only that which comes from the heart. I wish I had my eye to be more single, and to look to the Lord alone, to Him who alone is worthy. Yes, He alone is worthy – even in providential things, He is worthy. And then again, you cannot really praise God without humility. Every soul that praises God is humble. You see, the more you can feel the goodness of God, the more that will lay you at His feet; and the more access you have to the Lord, the more you will be in the dust. And we should have more access to the throne of grace if we were more truly humble before God.

And there is rest in it. It is pride that spoils our rest, and mars our comfort, and mars our communion. But O when our pride is subdued, and we can really be willing to be where the Lord will have us be, and see mercy in every dispensation, there is rest. There is nothing so holy as when you don't want anything altered, and you don't want it altered because you see the Lord's goodness in it. That is where you will praise God, only when you can leave the world behind. It is not divided hearts that praise God. It is like as when it is in real prayer – you look over everybody's head when you pray. And the same when you praise, because it will be to the Lord. And it is a good thing to be favoured to be found in a position to praise God.

Praise ye the LORD. I would like to notice for a moment that word *ye*. Honest people want it to be **them**. It says: *Praise ye the LORD.* I wonder how many people this finds out. I can tell you who it finds out – it is the people who **want** to praise Him, and who want to have a right sense of the goodness of God, and the favour and the mercy of God. *Praise ye the LORD.* It is nice to be among those who are included among those

who praise God – and for the reason, my friends, that it is an employment most like heaven. That is why it is such a good thing; there is nothing so much like heaven as when sinners praise the Lord on the earth, because it is the **same** Lord. When we praise the Lord, we praise the Lord that is in heaven; it is the same Lord that the angels bow before and worship; it is the same Lord whose glory shines forth through the glorified countenance of an exalted Saviour. O what the countenance of the Lord Jesus Christ must be in heaven! We cannot look upon it, you know, in **full**, while we are in the body; we are too gross, and too earth-bound; we are too fleshly to view it. A person must be made perfect in spirit, and must be *freed from a body of sin and death*, before they can look upon that countenance of Jesus Christ. They view Him without a veil between, and they can bear it. But mark: it is the **same** Saviour – that is the point! It is the **same** Saviour; it is the **same** Jesus; it is the **same** God. And saints on earth, and saints in heaven, are one in Jesus; they are one in spirit; they are one in occupation.

Praise ye the LORD. There is nothing so clean; there is nothing so pure, nothing so good, and nothing so acceptable to God. Why, my friends, it gives (if we might speak with reverence) enjoyment to God. We might speak with reverence, and say it is God's **heaven** for His people to praise Him. Then: *Praise ye the LORD.*

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.