

GOODNESS

FINDING GOODNESS WHEN EVERYTHING LOOKS BAD

“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

PSALM 27:13 NIV

WHEN EVERYTHING LOOKS BAD

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you look around and everything just looks bad? You don't know why it's happening. You don't know what's going to happen next. And you don't even know if there is anything you can do to make it better. These kinds of situations can be incredibly difficult and even heart breaking, depending on the circumstances. Life is full of ups and downs of course, but when everything in front of you looks bad, it is hard to find the good in our world.

FINDING GOODNESS

Finding the good in our world may seem like a fairy tale dream to someone undergoing a tremendous amount of stress and pain, especially if our world and the circumstances surrounding us are unfathomable or unwarranted. This is when we need the strength and insight of the Lord. Finding goodness, when everything around us looks bad, isn't just about the practice of gratitude, though you can certainly start there as we've previously shared. It is also about a deep and abiding trust in the one who is goodness and who brings the good.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”[1]

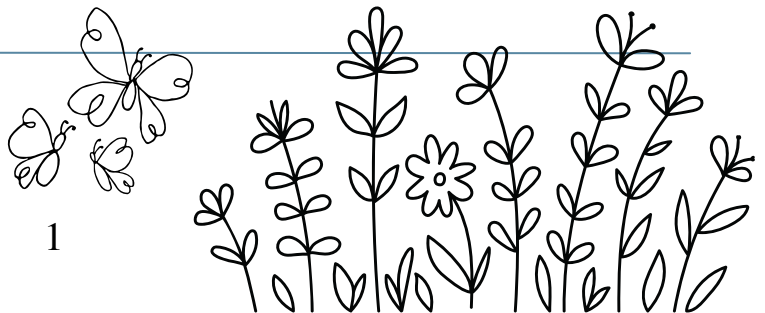
“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”[2]

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”[3]

[1]Romans 8:28 (NIV)

[2] James 1:17 (NIV)

[3] Psalms 23:1-6 (NIV)



These verses attest to God’s goodness and his faithfulness to see us through any and all of the bad times in this life.

JESUS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The story of Jesus’ death and resurrection can be found in all four gospels of the bible. It is, at the beginning, a heart wrenching tale of deception and corruption, fear and denial, brutality, pain, and death and every kind of evil and bad imaginable. But this is not how the story ends. The story ends, or rather begins anew, with joy and hope and the promise of new life and all things good.

For the disciples everything looked bad at first. The teacher that they had followed for the past three years, the one whom they had come to realize was the messiah, was now dead. How could this have happened? What would happen to all of them next? What could ever be good again? It seemed like the worst thing that could ever happen - the death of Jesus. Three days later came the good news of Jesus’s resurrection, and with that joy and hope and life eternal.

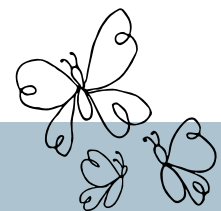
“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”[1]

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”[2]

All that looked bad the Lord had planned for good. God had allowed the worst imaginable thing to happen, the death of his own son, Jesus, for the ultimate good of all humankind, for all eternity.

[1]John 10:10-11 (NIV)

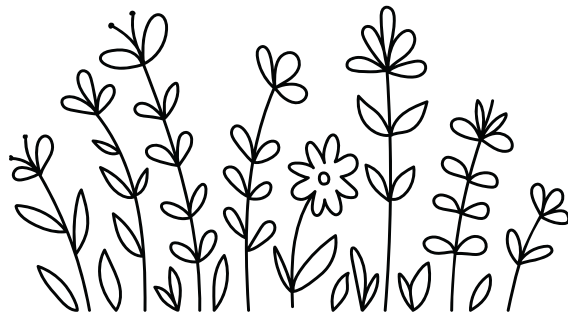
[2]John 3:16 (NIV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Read John 18-20. Can you identify with the disciple’s grief, confusion, fear when everything around them looked bad? Have you ever faced a situation that looked so bad that you could not see a way forward or toward anything good?
- 2.** When the circumstances surrounding you look bad, how have you been able to find goodness in your life?
- 3.** Read Psalms 23:1-6. What are the phrases that stand out to you?

4. What are the actions of God described in this passage? What does that say about God's character to you?
5. What are the responses of King David, the author, in this passage? Does this encourage you in any way?



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