

It's time to do good

PERSPECTIVES FROM THREE PARABLES

The concept of “doing good” often raises questions about its role in salvation—whether it’s faith or works that truly matter. While good deeds don’t earn salvation, Jesus’ parables help us understand how they flow naturally from a life transformed by His grace. Through the parables of *The Tree and Its Fruit* (Luke 6:43-45), *The Sheep and the Goats* (Matthew 25:31-46), and *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:25-37), we see that good works reflect Christ living in us. These stories teach us that true goodness comes from love, humility, and a heart focused on serving others, especially when it’s not easy. Ultimately, doing good isn’t just about following rules—it’s a way of living out our faith and advancing God’s kingdom.

A Tree and its Fruit

What inspires us to do good? Jesus explained to His disciples that “a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit” (Luke 6:43-44). Good works are the automatic result of our following Christ with direct consciousness of His grace and love toward us. The fruit on a tree indicates that the tree has life; the fruit doesn’t give the tree life, it’s a result of the tree being alive. There is no affectation: either Christ lives in you and you do good works, or He does not live in you and you do not do good works. As we turn to our next parable from Matthew, there is an interesting connection to note: those on Christ’s right hand were unaware of their acts of kindness, and those on the left did





not recognize their failure to act. Again, doing good is an indication of the life of Christ in us.

The Sheep and the Goats

We are all familiar with Jesus' parable in which the Son of Man separates the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25 and each group questions when they have served, or failed to serve the King. Their deeds are determined by an acid test: what did they do to the "least of these"?

What defines a soul's "least-ness"? I think this refers to humankind's sifting and categorizing of people rather than how Christ views the worth of each soul. He does not categorize people in the same manner that we do. In

His eyes, there are no "least of these" – each soul has the same worth in His eternal perspective, which defies human categorization and the circumstances that people find themselves in here

on earth. When we view one another in the light of His eternal perspective, and His life lives within us, then we will do good to *all*. In such a way, we are not only living in the kingdom now, but also advancing the coming of the eternal kingdom.

The Good Samaritan

In Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us profound lessons about self-sacrifice, humility, and what it truly means to love our neighbor. When a lawyer asks Jesus, "*Who is my neighbor?*", Jesus responds with a narrative that challenges conventional notions of kindness and service, illustrating a love that goes beyond mere acts of charity to encompass a selfless commitment to others and, again, broadens our understanding of "who" we should serve.

The Samaritan in Jesus' parable exemplifies a radical form of compassion - he not only helps the injured man but also invests his time, resources, and personal finances to ensure the man's well-being. Jesus calls us to emulate a similar attitude—sacrificing our time and comfort for others, even when it is costly, inconvenient, and unseen. Our actions, particularly in service to others, should be driven by humility and a genuine desire to reflect Christ's love, rather than by a desire for recognition.

Furthermore, the parable underscores the importance of performing good works as a means of professing and demonstrating faith.



Such acts of service, done with sincerity and selflessness, bear witness to the transformative power of Christ in the life of a believer. As Christians, we are called to be “stoppable” for those we encounter, meaning we should be ready to help and care for those who cross our path.

Conclusion

In the Lord’s Prayer, we express our hope for the kingdom to come, but this request also implicates our active participation. The Apostle Peter emphasizes this role in 1 Peter 2:9, where he describes believers as a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [God’s] own special people.” In this calling, we are tasked with reflecting God’s will by actively bringing His goodness into the world. As extensions of His kingdom, we serve as conduits of His divine purpose, thereby helping to make the reality of the coming kingdom tangible to others. Through our actions and witness, we participate in the fulfillment of this prayer, embodying the kingdom of God on earth.

In light of these three teachings of Jesus Christ – *it’s always time to do good!* We live according to the message of the gospel 24/7 – seeing with the perspective of Christ, letting His life bear fruit through our actions, and serving others with self-sacrifice and compassion, especially when it’s hardest to do so.



The Journey of Repentance

Repentance is a profound and transformative journey that culminates in a new way of living. It is both a personal and communal process that involves recognizing our own contributions to wrongdoing and seeking spiritual renewal. We will explore the essential elements of repentance, drawing on biblical examples and doctrinal insights to illustrate how repentance leads to salvation and a life committed to contributing to the salvation of others.

Understanding Repentance

Awareness: Repentance begins with awareness - the recognition that we are all co-contributors to the influence of evil. This concept is rooted in the story of Adam and Eve, whose choices introduced sin into the world. This awareness is crucial because it forces us to confront our own roles in perpetuating moral failings and evil. The discipline of self-reflection and contemplation, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, will enable us to become aware of our sin.

Penitence (i.e. remorse/regret) is a God-given barometer that helps us gauge our spiritual state. These are not merely emotional responses but indicators that we have strayed from God's will. The question is whether we choose to bury, ignore, or deflect these feelings, or whether we use them as a call to return to



God. We must also guard against becoming overwhelmed with remorse: “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:8-11). When, burdened by guilt, we begin to hate ourselves and turn away from God, this is the sorrow of the world. Rather, godly sorrow leads us to loathe our sin, and in so doing, turn to God knowing He loves us and, in His grace and forgiveness, will help us begin again.

Returning to God: The Bible shows us that the process of repentance involves returning to God through **confession**, as exemplified in the lives of David and Jonah. David's penitence is captured in Psalm 51, where he acknowledges his sin and pleads for God's mercy: “Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...” (Psalm 51:4). While David's sin affected many around him, he realized that his first sin was against God in rebelling against God's will and thinking that he knew what was

best for his life. Jonah's story demonstrates a turning back to God through his confessional prayer from the belly of the fish: "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You" (Jonah 2:7). These examples show that repentance involves acknowledging one's sins, feeling sorry for what we have done, and turning to God in prayers of confession to ask for His forgiveness.

Conversion (resolution to change) is a critical aspect of repentance. It involves a complete transformation of mentality, moving from old patterns of behavior to a new way of life. The Apostle Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 5:7—"Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump"—symbolizes the need to rid ourselves of old, sinful behaviors, often referred to as the "old Adam." David also realized the need for radical change, asking God to "create in me a clean heart... and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). He could not stay as he was. We have the love and life of God in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which empowers us to overcome and begin the difficult work of **restoring and repairing relationships**. As the last step of the process of repentance, once we have confessed our sin to God, we must also reconcile with those we have hurt, or those who have hurt us. Repairing our relationships, and seeking and granting forgiveness helps us transform further into the image of Jesus Christ.



Salvation and Repentance

Salvation, as offered by Jesus Christ, is fundamentally a spiritual gift from God – "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (see Ephesians 2:4-9). It is not something we can earn, but requires a sustained effort to live in a manner worthy of this grace (Philippians 2:12). Repentance is an essential component of this effort. Jesus' call to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17) underscores the urgency of our spiritual work.

God's salvific activity aims to enable humanity to live in fellowship with Him and one another, in the new creation. Those who have been reborn through water and Spirit are called to contribute to this longed-for future by killing the old Adam, growing



into the image of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45), and sharing the gospel in the kingdom of peace. It is in this way that we can “look for and hasten” the ultimate deliverance of humanity (2 Peter 3:11-13).

Practical Implications

Preaching repentance involves demonstrating the transformative power of repentance in our own lives. By embodying repentance, we show that we are both part of the problem and part of the solution. This is evident in all areas of life, including marriage, family, community, and society. Repentance is not only about individual change but also about collective contribution to the salvation of others.

Once changed, we are sent out to share our experience of repentance and God’s grace with others. David, after his personal journey of repentance, vows to teach others God’s will and lead them to conversion (Psalm 51:13-15). Similarly, Peter’s role after his denial is to strengthen his brothers – “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32).

The process of repentance is facilitated through prayer, absolution, and Holy Communion. In prayer we turn to God for His guidance and forgiveness. Further than our personal prayers of confession, each week we communally ask God to

“Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.” The absolution assures us of God’s forgiveness, affirming that despite our sinfulness, we are still loved and accepted. Through the peace of the Risen One we can make a new start. Holy Communion strengthens our resolve to imitate Christ’s life and make the sacrifices required by repentance.

Conclusion

Repentance is a journey that involves recognizing our contributions to evil, turning back to God, and undergoing a profound conversion. It requires a shift from old behaviors to new ones, aimed at living a life of grace and contributing to the salvation of others. Through repentance, we not only transform ourselves but also play a crucial role in the broader mission of salvation, working together to bring about the ultimate deliverance of humanity.



A report on the 50th Anniversary of the **New Apostolic Church in Panama**

The history of the New Apostolic Church in Panama began in 1974 with the establishment of its first congregation. During the early years, many ministers played a vital role in building the foundation for the Church's work in the region.

In 1992, Panama became the base of operations for Apostle Yepez, whose leadership extended beyond Panama to include many other countries over the next 30 years. Under his guidance, the Church in Panama was richly blessed, and the country emerged as a significant source of support for the Church's mission.

Today, Bishop Rangel continues to provide steadfast leadership, caring for and serving the Church family across the region. His dedication ensures the ongoing growth and strengthening of our community of faith.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Church's work in Panama, District Apostle Schnabel delivered a meaningful message, drawing from Ruth 1:16: "... for wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God my God." This passage highlights the heart of the Church's mission in Panama: a simple but powerful desire



to follow and serve. This attitude has been the key to God's abundant blessings and it will continue to pave the way for future growth and outreach.

While the intricacies of God's plan may not always be fully understood, the members place their trust in His perfect will. Even when His ways seem unexpected, there is confidence that His guidance is always for the best, and His work will continue to unfold in His perfect timing.

The 50th anniversary of the church in Panama marks not only a milestone in its history but also a reminder of the faithfulness and trust that have guided its growth. As our family in Christ looks to the future, they remain committed to following God's will, confident that His blessings will continue to flow.



Looking ahead

IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2025

Chief Apostle Visit to Colombia

National Synod

New Minister Conference

Chief Apostle Visit to Florida

February 15-16

March 22-23

October 4-5

November 15-16