**GOODNESS OF GOD**

Passages:

First Scripture: Psalm 145

Second Scripture: James 1: 2-18

When Pastor Tim first came to us, he shared a small portion of his life and journey with us so that we might get to know a little bit of who he is. As Pastor Tim shared, I came to realize that the church family that I am privileged to be a part of today is different from the church family that was here even just a few years ago. Some are the same, but there are those who don’t really know who I am. So I want to take a few minutes to share with you a brief portion of my life and journey in the hopes of offering encouragement for others of you to share your journeys with us. I believe that as we share our journeys with each other we will become more united in our call and vision as a church family.

Prayer

I grew up in a single parent home with a mom who had to place all her trust in a God who would be faithful to her. At the age of six we moved from Harrisburg to a farm in Grantville against doctors advise as I had severe episodes with asthma to the point that so much of 2nd grade was missed that I repeated that grade at our new home. God healed me sometime in this period because everything that was cautioned to my mom with a farm did not affect me. In fact, I never had another attack.

The farm I grew up on was a home for the intellectually disabled. My mom was a house parent for 8 challenged individuals and would eventually become the programs secretary than administrative assistant. With-in a short time of moving there I met a man that worked evenings as a maintenance person. I would come home from school and look for him. He took me under his wing and taught me general maintenance and carpentry skills. It was early in my life while working along side John that I knew that I wanted to work in the trades.

Fast forward to 1981 and while employed now as a maintenance person at what I called home I met Wendy who began working there also as a social worker. We were married in 1982 with John being old enough to be my dad as my best man. John passed away earlier this year. My wife and I will be celebrating 38 years this coming Saturday. We have three children, Ashlee, Hannah, and Elias, two grandchildren from Hannah, Reagan who will be two in a few weeks and Farryn who was born July 19th of this year.

Over the years since our marriage I have worked in the construction industry. In 1987 I began working at my current place of employment as a carpenter. 1997 brought many challenges to me as I was faced with an accident that to this day has its days that cause some pain and discomfort. After months of rehabilitation it was determined that I would not be able to return to field work on a daily basis and I was given the opportunity to move into the office to learn the estimating side of the business.

As a child I grew up in a Pentecostal church. It was a church similar in size to ours. I would go to Bible camp for a week each summer while in grade school. I don’t remember the exact year, but one of the first camps I went to is when I remember meeting Christ and giving my life to him. I was a member of our schools Bible club and in my teenage years went on a field trip to Pinecrest Bible Training Center where God impacted my life again. In 1998 I began the process of becoming a certified layspeaker for our church and have had many opportunities to share with you and one other church things that God lays on my heart. It has been a truly humbling experience as I dig into God’s word to share. I can tell you that each time God is speaking and dealing with me as I prepare.

 In 2012 I was presented the opportunity to purchase the company I worked for and through much prayer and a direct word from God to move forward without fear I finalized a purchase late in 2013. God has clearly been good to me as I trust in him.

I have been met with many difficult and trying circumstances over the years just as I am sure each of you have, but I can tell you that God’s goodness has been with me as I recognize that it is through him that my life is sustained.

James offers some words to us about our trials and God’s goodness amid them.

James 1:2-18

**2** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

**3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

**4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

**6** But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

**7** That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

**8** Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

**9** Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.

**10** But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wildflower.

**11** For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

**12** Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

**13** When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

**14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

**15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

**16** Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.

**17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

**18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

 What is it that you and I consider as good? Many of us here this morning got here by good and dependable transportation. Hopefully we were able to get a good night’s rest, so we feel refreshed this morning. Some may have had a good breakfast for nourishment. All these good things fulfill a purpose for us. Very early in scripture we find that good fulfilled a need or a purpose. Genesis 1: 3-4 we recall a portion of creation. “Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw that the light was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Light had a purpose; it was practical and useful. It filled the need that God designed it for. We can go through scripture and find other verses that express good in practical ways.

We also see that God’s intentions for us is good. Joseph shares with his brothers who had intentions of killing him but instead placed him in a well, then sold him into slavery, taking his coat back to their father soaked in blood to show that he had been attacked by a wild animal. Joseph had risen to a powerful position in Egypt and his family came to him in the midst of severe drought in the land for grain. At this time they did not know it was Joseph. After his father died his brothers approached him asking forgiveness. Joseph shared with them in Genesis 50:20, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives”.

But scripture also uses good to describe character. We find in Psalm 25:8 it’s use to describe the character of God. “Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore he will teach sinners in the way. Good is one of many attributes that God encompasses. We determine the character of those we know by what they have done. The quality of God’s character in his goodness is something that we cannot fully comprehend. He gave to us a means to live in His grace through the sacrifice of His son to take on all our sins. We are forgiven totally because of his goodness to us. You and I exist because of his goodness towards us.

 But when our existence seems to be more than we can bear, how do we experience the goodness of God? How does someone learn to experience the goodness in a favorite food? If it is never eaten, we cannot say if it is good or not.

David expresses to us in Psalm 34 “Taste and see that the Lord is good”. James tells us to consider it joy because our trials will produce perseverance as we place our faith in the goodness of God.

 We are to be steadfast in our approaching God. Do we believe he will see us through in more than just the good times of our lives when often we forget to give God all that we are in praise and honor, but also in those times that we are in despair. We often come to God more in these times. Thankful am I for his grace towards me in my overlooking Him when all is going well. James is clear that we should not expect anything from God when we approach him with doubts. Be steadfast, be clear, be definitive of your need.

 When I was approached in 2012 with the opportunity to purchase the company I worked for, I did all the research and leg work to know that it was something that I could feasibly work out. I prayed continuously for a direct answer from God because I did not want to get into something that was not God’s will for my life. I was determined I would not move forward with-out knowing directly from Him. He answered me in His timing a little over a year later as I was fishing on a jetty at the shore. A stranger and I were the only ones left at the end of that jetty as the fishing had dried up and we struck up a conversation on religious things. I saw time was getting late and decided I needed to leave. Before leaving this man in our departing said, can I pray for you. I agreed. During his praying for me he laid his hand on my shoulder and moved it down over my heart and said these words direct from God. “You are worried about a decision you need to make and God is telling you to move forward without fear”. Nothing ever came up in our conversation concerning my work. For over a year I had asked God for a direct answer. My persistence in needing to hear from him directly was not in vain. I left the jetty that day with no fish, but with a heart full of joy knowing God’s goodness in hearing my prayers I would have been okay with an answer of not moving forward and believe I would still have had joy leaving that day knowing that the answer was directly from God.

 I hope this morning that in some way through the music that was chosen, our call to worship, the scriptures that were read, the sharing of some of my journey, that I have encouraged you to seek out the goodness of God. We will never fully understand the immensity of his goodness. We are encouraged in our first scripture to exalt and praise the Lord always and to tell of His greatness from generation to generation. As we close this morning consider the thought of sharing your journey for the benefit of this church family. Approach God with no doubt in your heart and trust that the perseverance of your faith will be that which strengthens your relationship with God who has given all for you and me.

Shall we pray:

Benediction:

As we leave this place this morning and go into the world around us, consider your journey and the light of God’s presence that it could be to others.

**Now, may the Lord bless you and keep you.**

**The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.**