

WD July 1, 2024

Title: "Do The Good That Needs to Be Done"

Text: Galatians 6:1-10

Many of us have heard of Washington's crossing of the Delaware on Christmas 1776. Many of us have seen the painting by Emanuel Leutze, a German-born painter in 1850. It's a big painting at 12.4 by 21.3 feet and it is probably not historically inaccurate for a number of reasons, the size of the boat, George standing up heroically while rowing was done by the soldiers sitting down. But accuracy was not his purpose in painting it. It was to create inspiration for a revolution in Europe that eventually would never come to fruition.

The Painting captures perhaps the most pivotal moment in the Revolutionary War. 1776 was cold and miserable. Washington had many defeats and men were abandoning the cause. Disease and starvation were also claiming lives and morale had bottomed out. George needed a win. So, Washington attacked the Hessian military base in Trenton, New Jersey. Hessians were hired guns from Germany who fought for the British. Christmas day 1776 Washington and his army quietly crossed the icy Delaware River unbeknownst to Hessians who were celebrating Christmas. The cargo boats they crossed in were probably more like 50 feet long and able to carry horses, artillery, and lots of soldiers. With less than ten losses Washington captured over a thousand Hessians. It was a much-needed win. It was a huge morale boost and provided a strong motivator for recruiting and for carrying on the cause of liberty. It provided the motivation to carry on the war.

248 years later motivation is still one of the greatest battles we face. Being motivated to do anything is internal. Somewhere inside of ourselves a conversation happens. And depending on what needs to be done motivation becomes the right mixture of attitude, emotion, and energy.

2000 years ago in Galatians 6:9-10 Paul says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Let's face it to be motivated we have to believe that something good is worth our time and effort.

There are actually two words of good being used here. The first is *Kalos*. "Let us not become weary in doing good..." This is a praiseworthy goodness, something beautiful and inspirational helping a neighbor with his lawn while he was sick. On the other hand, "Let us do good to all people..." is *agathos*. This word is more intrinsic, "be the good that happens to people."

The greatest goodness we know is Jesus. Jesus is the personification of goodness and what He does on Good Friday on the cross is the good produced. And we know what motivated Jesus. A non-stop love for humanity. Jesus never gives up on us. We are made good by Jesus' forgiveness on the cross. The good works we do reveal who we are on the inside. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). This goodness was the mark of the church in the earliest days. In a pagan culture Christians stood out because they cared for the sick, the orphans, and outcasts. It was inspirational and because of their witness the church exploded and spread far and wide.

A distinction of what is good and what is not is something learned. Lord knows, we need more good in our country right now. But the lines between what is good and what is evil has blurred tremendously. For example, vs. 1 says, "If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." Being spiritual is distinguished from being of the flesh.

Paul goes on to talk about the *sarx* or flesh in 11ff in terms of circumcision. Pressure was being put upon Christians by others to be circumcised first. Christians were giving into this in order to be accepted by other Jews rather than be persecuted by them. Christians give into a lot of things that are not good in order to fit in. Rather than argue we just don't say anything. And then we make excuses for it, and even participate. But often it is just easier to go along to get along. And for some unfortunately, we buy into the modern secularist philosophies believing them to be good things.

We learn what is good from scripture. For example, consider what we actually learn about love. Love is good but love without obedience to the Word is not good. Love without forgiveness or compassion is not

good. Love is only the mortar that connects the patience and kindness, forgiveness, faithfulness, the goodness, the self-control. Love without gentleness or respect is still just a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. People toss around love pretty casually. But love has a specific look in scripture. We learn what love really is in Jesus. For Jesus love was doing the Father's will on the cross. Jesus' love was demonstrated. It was sacrifice and hope too. Being Spiritual means learning and practicing spiritual things defined by God's Word as the standard.

In spite of all that is bad Galatians 6 says "don't give up on Good." To give up on something is easy. The hard work, as we know, is finding motivation to press on. It's hard work because inside of you and me is this conversation I mentioned before. Inside we are evaluating whether something or someone is worthy of my time. Inside we torture ourselves with what we know we should do and what else we might do and think about what we'd rather do. In the end the hard work is a contest within ourselves. Unfortunately, that is usually a battle with our sinful nature. We are sinners so we generally aim for what is selfish or easy. So, note this point: You are not the only one that struggles with motivation at times. So, allow me to offer some observations.

The motivation to do good requires humility—to put something good before oneself. Paul says restore someone gently. But he also says watch out so that you aren't tempted either; tempted to anger, or impatience, or saying something that breaks the spirit. Paul also says, Test your own actions without comparing yourself to anyone else. Notice that Paul is saying that restoring another person isn't about you. Paul is warning us against pride. If our focus is self-fulfillment, or some gossip material, or winning an argument, or looking important you are missing the point. The point is to restore your brother, not compare yourself to your brother. Remember the Pharisee and the Tax Collector who went to church in Jesus' parable in Luke 18:9-14? The Pharisee went to the front few and reminded God how awesome he was. The tax collector stayed in the back begging for forgiveness. Jesus concluded the parable by saying, "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

When the disciples were arguing over who among them was the greatest disciple Jesus took a towel and wrapped it around his waist and washed the disciple's feet. In an act of humility Jesus demonstrated how to take the focus off of self. "Love one another as I have loved You", Jesus taught. Jesus was humility incarnate. He was meek, meaning he had the power to do anything but chose instead to die for sinners. Humility brings more good than pride does. Good has the power to offer more motivation because humility will experience gratitude more often, giving thanks for what one has—which then brings a peace. There is a greater fulfillment in accomplishing something good and with that is a greater peace. Peace leads to generosity--generosity leads to motivation driven by godly love. And one who is humble is more likely to take responsibility for oneself rather than blame others for our plans getting all messed up. And again, one only need look at Jesus to understand the depths of true humility.

Finally, consider the company you keep. If you are hanging out with Mr. Downer or Mrs. Miserable, the indifferent, or apathetic, you may want to change who your friends are. We generally absorb the emotions and personalities of the company we keep. If you are having trouble with motivation this is not the crowd for you. Such company puts a load onto us.

248 years ago, our country set out with revolution. However, the real revolution is happening inside of ourselves when we find the motivation to do good. The world can use a lot more goodness. By God's grace we are it—made good by God's grace, able to do good by God's grace. Our families, our faith, our neighbors, and ourselves are more blessed when we find the motivation to carry it out. In Jesus' name.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30