

## "THE LORD IS GOOD"

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13)

August 3, 2025

Zion Lutheran Church

Fort Wayne, Indiana

### TEXT:

*The Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.*

*Psalm 100:5 (ESV)*

I doubt that you would find too many Christians who would disagree with the statement: "God is good." It's when you start discussing what it is about God that makes Him good that you start having arguments. Different Christians see God's goodness in His various different characteristics. For example, Reformed theologians see God's goodness in His sovereignty. From their perspective it shouldn't really matter all that much if the things that happen in our lives are good or bad, because whatever happens, it's all to the greater glory of God. Liberal theologians see God's love as the supreme example of His goodness, and therefore they conclude that there couldn't possibly be such a place as hell, because God is too good for that--too loving. Environmentalists see the goodness of God in the beauty of nature--beauty that (according to them) is far too magnificent for man to tamper with, even if his very survival depends on it. Others see God's goodness in His perfect justice. These people take comfort in the fact that in the end there will be a day of reckoning when all wrongs will be righted and all evildoers punished.

We Lutherans have always seen the goodness of God in how He has reconciled the obvious tension between His perfect justice and His perfect grace. Being a holy God of perfect justice, the Lord cannot tolerate sin in His presence and He demands that every sin be punished. But being a God of perfect grace, He will not impose upon His children a burden that is too heavy for them to bear--a burden of responsibility and guilt that will no doubt land them in hell--forever separated from the grace and mercy of God. These two characteristics of God--His perfect justice and His perfect grace--intersect at the cross of Jesus Christ. Here and only here are both the perfect justice of God and the perfect grace of God completely satisfied. Here and only here does God manifest the fullness of His perfect grace and love without compromising His perfect justice in the least. With this understanding of God's goodness in mind, let's meditate this morning on the psalmist's famous hymn in which he praises the Lord for His goodness.

The psalmist describes the Lord's goodness by saying: "His steadfast love endures forever." The love of God is unconditional. I know you've heard that many times before, but the truth of the matter is that neither you nor I have a clue as to what unconditional love really is. We don't know what it is because that's not the way that we love and it's not the way that we are loved in this world. Human love always has a condition. When our love is rejected again and again, we will eventually stop loving the person who is rejecting it. In fact, if we don't stop loving that person, our love is considered to be unhealthy. You've probably heard that in the original language of the New Testament there are three different words for love. One describes romantic or sexual love and another refers to brotherly love. The third one, agape, is the word for total, unconditional, self-sacrificing love. It is a love that is directed completely away from self--a love that is directed totally toward the one who is loved. Even though we are commanded to love in this way, only God is really capable of this kind of love, and He has expressed it in all its fullness in the cross of Jesus.

This agape love of God, expressed in Jesus Christ, is also everlasting. It goes on forever. It doesn't stop when we do something that displeases God. It doesn't stop when we reject Him again and again and choose instead to live in selfishness and sin. It doesn't even stop when we die. On the contrary, it carries us out of this vale of tears into the loving arms of our Savior in heavenly glory. And His everlasting love for

sinners is not limited to just us. Even those who permanently reject His love and therefore cannot benefit from it are nevertheless loved by Him. Indeed, the lost souls burning in hell are not there because they are not loved by a merciful God; they are there because they will have no part of this merciful God or of His redeeming love for them. And the merciful God continues to grieve over those who He died to save but who refuse to be saved.

The psalmist further expounds on the goodness of the Lord when he says: "His faithfulness [endures] to all generations." The redeeming love of God, expressed toward lost sinners in His Son Jesus Christ, began as a promise that the Lord uttered in the midst of His words of judgment directed against the very first sinners in history. Right after sin made its ugly appearance in the world and ruined God's perfect creation, the Creator confronted the offenders and the tempter and doled out to them the harsh consequences of their deeds. But His word of judgment against the deceiver was in fact a word of hope for the deceived. In Eden the Lord said to Satan: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (*Genesis 3:15*). Contrary to what some interpreters would have you believe, this is not just a general observation of the antagonistic relationship that exists between men and snakes in the wild; it is the very first Messianic prophecy--the first of many to be found throughout the Old Testament.

That promise of God, which goes all the way back to the beginning, also goes all the way ahead to the end. The Lord's faithfulness does indeed endure through all generations. What that means, dear friends in Christ, is that there is no such thing as it being too late to share the riches of the Gospel of Christ with anyone who is still alive. No sinner is so far gone--no unbeliever is so confirmed in his unbelief--that the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot forgive him and awaken saving faith in him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Until the Lord Himself returns in glory to bring all things to completion, there is still time (and the responsibility) for us to proclaim the Good News of forgiveness and salvation through the blood of Jesus. The Gospel itself provides us with both the motivation and the strength that we need to do this, and the Spirit's promise is that He works through that Gospel to forgive--to reconcile--to restore.

In all of this God is good--certainly good to us. Because "His steadfast love endures forever," we need never doubt that He will forgive us when we turn to Him in repentance in the name of Jesus. No matter how many times we have come to the foot of the cross before, confessing the same old sins, He is there for us to declare us not guilty and to give us the power of His Spirit to amend our sinful lives. Because "His faithfulness [endures] to all generations," we can be sure that the God who has been, as the hymn writer puts it, "our Help in ages past," will also be "our Hope for years to come" (*Lutheran Service Book #733, stanza 1*). This comforting knowledge gives us all the confidence that we need to forge ahead boldly in Jesus' name, mindful of our sins and shortcomings but nevertheless secure in His goodness.

Amen.

*May the Lord bless your hearing of His Word, using it to accomplish in you those things for which He gave it. May you be enriched and strengthened in faith that you may leave here today to go out into our world armed with the whole armor of God, prepared to be able ambassadors of your Savior Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it. Amen.*