



GOOD JOB

YOUR WORK MATTERS

Most of our life happens outside of church, and for many of us that means it happens at work. Some have careers in the workforce, others have work to do at home with family or volunteering in retirement. Your work matters to God. Your job can be glorious if you glorify God in your job.

GOOD JOB • Titus 3:1–8 • Jennifer Holz • February 23, 2020

Today we finish our *Good Job* series. I hope you've found it meaningful. Every day we wake up and we find ourselves at "work" in this world. Every day, we are making our contribution whether as a student, an intern, an employee of a company, a stay-at-home parent, an athlete, living in retirement, or something else. We have the immense privilege of helping shape this world for God's glory, to be involved in "good work."

Our Scripture today is Titus 3:1-8. We've spent some time in Titus in the past few weeks, and today we come back to this book to finish our series. Paul has left Titus in Crete to carry on the church-planting work that they started together. This letter is Paul's encouragement to Titus. This is Paul's way of saying, "Good job, Titus. Keep up the good work. For God is at work in Crete."

Listen to God's Word, Titus 3:1-8: "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

Do you remember what you wanted to be when you grew up? Maybe some of you are still waiting to grow up. What did you want to be? Can you remember? And how many of you did what you thought you would do? I love that we ask that question when kids are little. At different points in their lives, my kids have wanted to be a rock star, a veterinarian, a video game programmer, a teacher. I remember wanting to be a marine biologist when I was young because I loved the ocean. I think we start imagining at a fairly young age what we want to be when we grow up. What we choose is often what we have seen modeled to us.

Scripture points us to the reality that what work we end up doing is not nearly as important as who we are becoming in the work that we do. We don't know much about the jobs of the Christians in Titus' church, but we do know that Paul was encouraging the young church to be faithful to the Lord in all they did. They were to be responsible and engaged citizens, kind and generous people in everything.

Christ First, Work Second

Paul instructs Titus that the people of God are to be involved in good work, good deeds, doing what is good . . . in the church, in the city and in their homes. In chapter 3, Paul returns to this idea that followers of Jesus are to devote themselves to doing what is good. Three times in this chapter Paul writes about this: be ready to do what is good (vs. 1), devote yourselves to doing what is good (vs. 8 and 14). What Paul writes here is echoed in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

But as Paul closes this letter, and as we close our *Good Job* series today, Paul's big reminder to Titus is this: trusting Christ comes first. Our primary work as Christians is to trust Jesus and to trust His good work in our world and in our lives. Our first call is to give ourselves to the Lord daily and nurture relationship with Him in everything.

In verse 8 Paul writes, "I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good." Trust Christ first. Out of that place of trust flows a commitment to doing what is good. Christ first. Our work second. If we get these backwards, we will fall into the false belief that God loves us because of the "good work" or the "good job" that we do. And that is a dark place to live. Our striving will never cease because we can never do enough. Trust Christ first. Write that down, because that's the main message of today.

There are several things in this passage that Paul is calling us to live out, but the weightiness of this chapter, the anchor point of Paul's words, begins in verse 4 and follows. Everything else hangs on these words. Let's start there: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." This is a trustworthy saying. Paul describes that whole statement (vs. 4-7) as a trustworthy saying (vs. 8). In other words, this is a statement you can go back to again and again to remember how much God loves you. If we simply work our way through the pronouns here in this statement, we are reminded that salvation is God's work. Not yours and not mine.

- When the kindness and love of God appeared . . .
- He saved us.
- Because of his mercy.
- He saved us.
- By the Holy Spirit.
- Through Jesus Christ.
- He poured out the Spirit.
- We are justified by His grace.

Do you see that? Do you hear that? This saving work is God's work. It's all God. And lest any of us miss it, the only thing said about us is that salvation has nothing to do with the righteous things we have done or will do. The work of salvation is God's alone—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, working together. Good news. Good job, God. Thank you! If you ever find yourself lost in your day, lost in your work, wondering why you are doing what you are doing, go back to these three verses, for this is a trustworthy statement. Maybe even mark it in your Bibles.

The Kindness of God

As I have been studying this passage, I keep coming back to how Paul opens his little creed—and I keep getting drawn to the kindness of God: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us." What I believe God wants me to spend some time on today is the mighty, never-ending ocean of God's kindness toward you. Somebody in this room must need to hear about God's kindness today—because I can't get away from the beauty and truth of this part of Paul's message. Right here Paul doubles down on God's kindness toward us, and how it is God's kindness that thaws our frozen and hardened hearts. It is God's

kindness that finds us, picks us up, draws us in close and begins to work itself into the hardened soil of our hearts.

There seems to be this desperation right now for kindness toward one another in our world. We seem to be struggling with the practice of kindness. As we read Titus, it's clearly a struggle in ancient Crete as well. Can we all just be kinder to one another? Well, yes, we should, of course. February 17th is now officially "Random Act of Kindness Day." I guess we have to name a day of kindness to get people to stop and be intentional about being considerate toward others. But I might just have a little skepticism here. I'm not sure one can make themselves kind. Yes, do a kind deed—absolutely, so important! But become a kind person? That's a tough one. Have a heart that is kind, loving, good and other-centered? I'm not sure that's completely within my power.

Scripture teaches us that we can't heal ourselves. Pastor Tim has reminded us that the hardest thing in the world to change is the human heart.

I came across a story recently about an orchestra in Budapest that, because of the vision of their conductor, has made possible the experience of Beethoven's great music for the hearing-impaired in his city. Beethoven's own hearing began to disintegrate as he got older, and he wrote his famous 5th Symphony having already lost a great deal of his hearing. Later in his life, he would compose music by feeling the vibration of the notes through his piano. Conductor Mate Hamori wanted to give those in his community who were hearing-impaired like Beethoven an opportunity to enjoy his music. So, he brought together a hearing-impaired audience of all ages—children to the elderly—to an unusual performance of the Symphony. Some of them sat right next to the instruments and were able to touch the instruments while they were played—so they could feel the music. Others held balloons to feel the vibrations and some were given a special hearing aid with extra sensitivity. They were all able to feel and enjoy the music much like Beethoven himself would have experienced later in his life.

What an amazing gesture of kindness! It reminds me of a God who is moved by kindness and grace to reach across the impossible chasm between us and Him and close the gap to give us life and joy and a bit of heaven right here on earth. Paul writes a great deal about the kindness of God. In Romans 2:4, Paul reminds the church that it is God's kindness that leads us to repentance. The love of God is patient and kind, he writes to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 13:4. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). We don't quite have a word in our language that captures the meaning of this word that we translate "kindness." In other versions it's "loving kindness," or "the riches of God's goodness and kindness." There is a divine quality to this kindness; it doesn't run out. It is a loving kindness that the Spirit gives, a fruit of the Spirit-filled life. God's love is woven from the threads of kindness and goodness ... the indication here is that God has an endless well or pool or fountain of kindness that is poured out by the Spirit. And as it is poured out into our lives, it causes us to run away from our sin and our destructive behaviors, and sprint toward God.

Do you know God's kindness toward you today?
Do you know how much God loves you?

I get the privilege along with many of our elders to hear the faith stories of our new members. They each write out their testimony of faith and share it with their small groups. There (was) a new mem-

bers class meeting (Sunday), and they all (did) that. It's important to write out or share our stories with one another from time to time—remembering the freedom we first experienced from hatred or deception or envy or malice or addiction to false passions (as Paul writes here in vs. 3). Sharing our stories is a powerful exercise in experiencing the flood of God's unflinching kindness once again. Every time I hear the stories of our new members, my heart is softened; it's filled with the generosity of Christ's love once again. Maybe it's time to tell your story again to someone, or to hear theirs, to remember God's kindness.

My family moved to Colorado Springs when I was 3 years old. I remember giving my life to Jesus around 4 years old right here. In this place, the kindness of God made itself known to me through the adults who taught children's Sunday School and volunteered in youth group. They helped me see what I might want to be when I grew up, but more than that they encouraged me in my faith to grow and trust Jesus. As Paul writes earlier in Titus, the older men and women are to teach and model for the younger ones in the church. I hope you have someone older who is pouring into you and someone younger you are pouring into. One generation prepares the next for the whole life of faith—pouring the kindness and love of God into their lives.

The Rest of the Passage

Let's finish the rest of this passage, and I think it will become easy to see why it's so important to trust Jesus first. Paul's words to Titus in verse 2 are a tall order: "to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone" (Titus 3:2). Always be gentle toward everyone. No exceptions. And those commands are linked to our civic life in the verse right before it: Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good ... " (Titus 3:1). Paul is not just talking about being kind within the church, but also in the city where they live, in Crete. Be kind and considerate and gentle to everyone.

The historian Polybius writes this about the civic life in Crete (perhaps instructive for us): it was almost "... impossible to find personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than in Crete" (Word Commentary, Pastoral Letters). Even so, Paul reminds them that they are not off the hook for treating their fellow citizens with gentleness and consideration. Jesus is Lord over all, and our allegiance is to Him, but we are part of a city. And while we are not to participate in evil, we are not off the hook from obeying the rulers and authorities over us. We are to be engaged, kind citizens.

Followers of Jesus in every nation have to grapple with the form of government they are under, and prayerfully consider together what it means to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's. And above all, they have to wrestle with what it means to treat others well at all times. Perhaps Paul gives us a good word for this election year. Let's just say we will have ample opportunity to practice what Paul commands of us. God's word is clear: as followers of Jesus we are not to slander others but we are to be considerate, gentle and humble. It doesn't matter how others treat you. We live for the Lord, and we know that God's kindness is what we are to pass along. Our family will be heading to Egypt with our Family Mission Team over spring break, and I am looking forward to engaging with our brothers and sisters in Cairo as to how they live this out in their context. I think the stories are going to be quite instructive.

Speaking of spring break, I will close with this story. I have a clear memory of a spring break I went on in college with my Christian Fellowship Group. We went to New Jersey to serve in some different ways. We were staying at a place where there was a missions conference taking place. One of our serving duties that week was to serve dinners at this conference. Now none of us had skills in this area, so we were learning on the spot. I remember being totally overwhelmed. I was getting the coffee orders all wrong and I knew it because I was being told! I couldn't keep track of what everyone needed. I could tell some of the dinner guests were really annoyed with me. I was almost at the end of my rope, feeling terrible about my work, when this gentleman at the head table must have recognized my struggle. He looked up from his plate and his conversation, looked me in the eyes, smiled and said intently, "Jennifer, you are doing a fantastic job. Thank you for serving us."

The man's name was Floyd McLung and I knew him because I had heard him speak at the Urbana Missions Conference about his work in Amsterdam. His kindness to me in that moment was so profound, I would have served that room for the next three days. There are moments in our lives where God's kindness is given to us so clearly by another person, that we can't mistake it. There is a quality to God's kindness that elevates it above all the rest. And I could tell that how Floyd related to me wasn't a "random act of kindness." His kindness to me flowed from a heart that was saturated with the kindness of Jesus. Floyd was Jesus to me in that moment. I will never forget it.

Here's the thing. Jesus isn't a model of "niceness" inspiring us to be nicer people. Jesus is the very kindness and love of God appearing in our world inviting us to give our hearts to Him for a total transformation. Apart from the heart of Jesus, our ability to be kind to others (especially those who hate you) will run out. But the news today couldn't be better: you can't heal your unkind heart. But you don't have to. Jesus took care of that on the cross when He took your broken and battered and bruised heart and left it on the cross so that He could give you a new heart, a soft heart that beats with the kindness and goodness of God.

Has your heart met the heart of Jesus?

Today we are going to pray together, and if you've never experienced the kindness and love of God for you and you want that today, I'm going to invite you to pray after me so that you might experience the kindness of God this morning. And if you have gotten too distant from the kindness of God and your heart is cold and hurting today, this prayer is for also for you. I'm going to ask you all to close your eyes, and if you are in need of God's kindness today (for the first time or the 500th time), open your hands while we pray to be in a posture of receiving from God today. I invite you to pray after me.

Jesus, I need to know Your kindness to me today.
I can't live this life on my own.
I give my cold and tired heart to You.
Pour out Your mercy, Your kindness and Your gentleness on me right now.
Save me, Lord.
I receive the love that You have for me.
On this day.
In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

STUDY GUIDE

GOOD JOB • "For Christ"

Titus 3:1–8

UP: UP: Connect with God through Spending Time in His Word

Begin your study in prayer. Read and reflect on Titus 3:1–8.

- 1) What appears to be the most significant Kingdom reality at play within these two texts?
- 2) What are we taught about rulers and authorities from Titus 3:1 (c.f. Romans 13:1–7)? How are we instructed to conduct ourselves in Titus 3:2?
- 3) According to Titus 3:3–7, why is salvation offered to people? What does this tell us about the nature of God? What, if any, aspects of our own salvation are we responsible for?

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)

- 4) Read Ephesians 2:10 and Titus 3:8. What do we learn about Christian identity and conduct from these two passages?
- 5) In our text this week, "those who have trusted in God" are able and called to do what?
- 6) How do we walk in our context (Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, 2020 ...) as first and foremost citizens of the Kingdom of God? Instead of joining the world in fueling greater and greater division, how can we join Christ in healing our communities? How can we purpose our actions for the healing of our city, our nation, our world?

IN: Connect with Each Other

Pastor Jennifer writes, "God's love is woven from the threads of kindness and goodness ... the indication here is that God has an endless well, or pool or fountain of kindness, that is poured out by the Spirit. And as it is poured out into our lives, it causes us to run away from our sin and sprint toward God... It's good to write out or share our stories with one another from time to time—sometimes we can get far away from those early stories of first experiencing the love and grace of God—remembering the freedom we first experienced from hatred or deception or envy or malice or addiction to false passions (as Paul writes here in vs. 3).

In your small group, share your story of God's kindness appearing in your life. Pray that you daily recognize the kindness of God in your life.