

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Doing Good*

**SERIES:** *Titus*

**SCRIPTURES:** *Titus 3*

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*\*Credit to Bible Gateway; Bible Project; New Community Commentary on Titus;*

I have a question for you to think about as we get started this morning: **When you get to the end of your life, how would you like for someone to look back on it and describe it?** Or to simplify the question...when you get to the end of this day, how would you like people to describe what you did today?

There's a well-known theologian John Wesley who once made the following statement:

***“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”***

Imagine that's how someone would describe what you did today...Or what you did with your life.

We have been on this journey, exploring a little-known book of the Bible in the New Testament called **Titus (Series Graphic)**.

I hope that through this series, you have gained a better understanding of who Titus was and some of the themes that Paul writes about in this letter. And I hope you

found there to be some practical applications and lessons for your own life. This morning we come to Titus chapter 3 and the final message in our series.

And once again, there is much more in here than we can unpack today. So I just want to highlight kind of one theme that pervades this chapter. There is one command that summarizes all of the others in the book of Titus. It comes up over and over again. Three times in the last chapter, but as I'll show you in just a moment it permeates the entire book. It can sound so simple, that we may even think, it's not worth saying. That theme is:

### **I. Doing good.**

So, if you have your Bible open to Titus and I just want you to watch how this theme shows up, over and over again in Paul's letter:

Starting in chapter 1 and just be ready to move through this with me...when Paul describes the kinds of leaders Titus should be looking for he says, <sup>8</sup> **one who loves what is good,**

**2:3 - <sup>3</sup>teach what is good.**

**2:7 - ...set them an example by doing what is good.**

**2:14 - ...eager to do what is good.**

**3:1 - be ready to do whatever is good...**

**3:8 - be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.**

And then he kind of sums it up in verse 14...

**3:14 - <sup>14</sup> Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good...**

So any questions? Pretty obvious what Paul's central instruction for follows of Jesus is.

It's interesting, this concept "doing good" or "good deeds" or "good works" has actually fallen on hard times among church people. And is often viewed in a negative

light. Part of the reason is because of the emphasis we tend to place in our theology. We often think of our **good works** in relation to a conversation about our **salvation**. And we say things like. ***“There is nothing you can do, we are saved by grace alone, not good works. You don’t earn salvation it is a free gift. Your good works do not make you worthy of God’s love or salvation.”***

And that is all true. But what we end up doing then is pitting **doing good** against **God’s grace**, as if they are enemies working against each other. And there are two responses we might have:

*I don’t have to do good in order to earn God’s love, therefore I don’t participate or take seriously or devote myself to doing good.*

*I don’t have to do good in order to earn God’s love, but when I accept God’s love, the thing I truly want is...to do good .*

Scripturally speaking, these two concepts are not enemies working against each other, they are partners that go hand in hand.

Paul clarifies this in one of the most famous passages in his letter to the church in Ephesus. He says, **Ephesians 2:8-9 - <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.**

See, there you have it, we are saved by grace through faith. But we shouldn’t stop reading at verse 9. Look at the very next verse...

**<sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

This is not an either-or conversation...this a both-and conversation. When you commit your life to Jesus as Lord, the result is that you start to live a life of doing good. So, lets just talk for a few minutes about the value of doing.

The first thing you need to know is that:

**A. God likes doing good.**

Or we might say, “our doing good flows from a God who likes doing good.”

Remember in the first week of the sermon series we talked about how Paul emphasized **truth and honesty**. He said, in his introduction to the letter that he was writing this letter **“to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth...which God, who does not lie, promised...”**

And so we said, because God values truth and honesty, we, his people should also value truth and honesty. The same is true when it comes to doing good. We do good because God does good. Look at Titus 3, verse 8 again...

**those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.**

Notice that the people who are told to devote themselves to doing good are those who have trusted in God. Doing good, flows from a God who does good. And when you look carefully at the totality of Scripture, you begin to find this theme all throughout. Look at some of these Psalms for example.

**Psalm 100:5 - For the LORD is good and his love endures forever...**

**Psalm 119:68 - You are good, and what you do is good;**

**Psalm 145:9 - The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.**

Sometimes our perceptions about God don't help us. There's a theologian AW Tozer has said, **"What you believe about God is the most important thing about you?"**

Because what you believe about God will impact how you live. Do you believe that God likes to do good? Some of you may remember a few years ago we talked about some common misconceptions regarding God. And that for many people in our world today, their perception of God is that he's up in heaven watching to see when you mess up so he can smite you.

Remember I showed you there's this great Farside comic that kind of depicts how many people view God...

### **PIC of Farside comic**

God is sitting at his computer...and there's a guy kind of walking along the street, just minding his own business...but there's a piano hanging over his head and God has finger on the smite button.

Is that what God is like?

We find this concept in relation to the insurance business. Did you ever notice this, something happens like a flood, earthquake, hurricane, sometimes worldwide pandemic...do you know what these events are called in the insurance business? **"Acts of God"**. This doesn't sound like the image of a God who likes to do good! On the other hand, somebody gets a big insurance pay out. That's good fortune. But earthquake...Act of God. And it begs the question, is that what God is like?

But you see an image of God with his finger on the smite button is not accurate and it's also not the kind of thing that will draw people to follow God. If our emphasis is you better follow God or he'll punish you for all the bad things you've done. I'm not

sure we have the right emphasis. **Isn't it the stories of Jesus' goodness that draw us into loving Jesus?**

If you were going to describe Jesus' life to someone who maybe doesn't have much knowledge of Jesus, what would say about Jesus? Look, how Luke, Jesus disciple describes Jesus life...this is

**Acts 10 - <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea...<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good...because God was with him.**

Jesus went around doing good because that's what God is like. The miracle stories we read about Jesus, were not because Jesus enjoyed impressing crowds with his super-powers. Jesus genuinely wanted to help other people by doing good things for them. When Jesus met a blind man who was ostracized by his society and the religious elite, I think Jesus simply took great pleasure in giving him the ability to see for the very first time in his life. I can sense the anticipation and joy in Jesus... "Oh man, you're gonna love this. You'll see colors for the first time. You'll see the face of your friends and family for the first time." When Jesus met a lame man who could not walk, who had spent his life watching other little boys and girls learn how to run and play and climb trees...I think Jesus simply took great pleasure that day in giving this man the ability to take his first steps. Jesus went around doing good. God loves to do good. When we do good we are reflecting Jesus to the people around us. Doing good becomes a marker of our faith.

**Matthew 5 - Let your shine before others that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven.**

We do good, because we follow a God who loves doing good. And this brings us to the second important thing about doing good.

## **B. Doing good does not require special skills.**

Sometimes when we look at Jesus we think, “*Man, he’s going around doing these miraculous kinds of things, I can’t do that.*” Jesus doesn’t expect you to do miracles, he just asks you to be faithful and obedient.

There’s a great passage in Mark 9, where Jesus tells his disciples...

**Mark 9:41: Truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.**

Good deeds are as simple as that. Giving a cup of water. Practical, simple acts of love that meet people’s needs. Our ordinary acts of good are examples of and witnesses to the divine life living in and through us!

Mother Theresa once said... **“Let us not be afraid to be humble, small, helpless to prove our love for God. The cup of water you give the sick, the way you lift a dying man, the way you feed a baby, the way you teach a child, the way you give medicine to a sufferer of leprosy, the joy with which you smile at your own at home - all this is God's love in the world today.”**

Any mom’s or dads out there? When you wake up at 2am to comfort your crying child. Or change that dirty diaper. You’re acting out the example of Jesus. You’re participating in the divine life of doing good. It may not feel like a divine experience in the moment, but this world needs moms and dads doing good like that.

When everyone’s tired at the end of the day and no one feels like cleaning up the dirty dinner dishes and you step up to do it...

You’re walking through the hallway at work and you notice the piece of trash on the floor and stop to pick it up...

When you choose to speak kindly when you could have raised your voice...

When you take notice of the disadvantaged and take a practical step to help meet their needs.

When you use your privilege and power to speak up on behalf of the voiceless and  
When you help to build a ramp for someone who has not been able to leave their  
home...

When you take a meal or visit an elderly, perhaps lonely, shut in...

In one sense none of these simple, practical acts of love requires special degrees...and  
yet at the same time, every practical act of love...is a reflection of the heart of Jesus.  
In other words, it carries divine significance. In all of these ways, you are  
participating in the divine life of Jesus Kingdom.

The novelist George Eliot put it like this, “[The] **good of the world is partly  
dependent on unhistoric acts...half owing to the number who lived faithfully a  
hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.**”

Eliot, who some of you may know is a penname for a lady named Mary Ann Evans, is  
saying the world, your community, your family...becomes a better place, transformed,  
healed...not when you do something spectacular, but when ordinary people like you  
and me, follow Jesus example and go around doing simple acts of good.

This week don't try to do something extraordinary. Just go around giving cups of  
water to drink. Jesus will use that for his kingdom.

Third, doing good requires...

### **C. Embracing inconvenience.**

I kind of want to know the look on Titus' face or the conversation when Paul said,  
*“Hey you know the Island of Crete...I think we should start a church there. I think I'm  
sending you to start that church.”*

*“Hey Paul, that's really nice of you to think of me. But I'm pretty sure I'm busy that  
day. Why don't you ask Timothy, Timothy seems like a great guy?”*



Truth is to participate in doing good often requires learning to accept and even embrace inconvenience and interruptions in your life.

If you get to know me at all, one of the things you'll soon learn is that I'm a pretty routine person. I like my routine, schedules. I like to make plans and follow those plans. I don't like surprises and I don't like interruptions in my schedule.

Jesus was not like that. For Jesus interruptions were often seen as perfect opportunities to do good to other people.

***“If you had slept in the same house or field with Jesus, awakened with him, eaten with him and helped him, what would you have observed? One thing we always think of is that Jesus gave himself almost entirely to what we would consider interruptions. Most of the teaching, healing and wonders we see in his life were responsive...seemingly unplanned. He trusted that what the Father allowed to cross his path was exactly that...from the Father. Jesus always seemed willing for things to get messy.”*** (Marcia Lebharr)

One of my favorite stories about Jesus, is in Matthew 19. Jesus is in the middle of teaching and people start bringing their children to Jesus so he can bless them...like right in the middle of his sermon.

**13 Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them;**

The disciples quickly say *“Jesus doesn't have time for your kids. Please don't interrupt him.”* And I just love it, can't you picture this happening? *“Hey folks this is Jesus. Don't you realize he's a rabbi? In fact, this is the Messiah that people have been waiting a few hundred years for.”* If we were listening that day we might

*add...He's the Son of God, God in human flesh, he has more important things to do. He has people to heal, crowds to teach, He's kind of trying to save the universe right now. If you could just step back a little bit."*

It's very much the way that most of us think about ourselves and our own schedules. See I start thinking to myself *"I'm pretty important. I have these pastoral duties I need to take care of. There people to pray with and visit in the hospital, theological books to read, there sermons to write about unconditional love...Don't people understand I'm kind of a big deal. So please don't interrupt."*

And Jesus kind of shatters all of that, he says, **"Let the little children come to me."** Why does he say that? Because Jesus loves to do good to other people and interruptions and inconveniences are the perfect opportunity. Jesus loves to make time for the little children. Sure he had his routines, but for Jesus, interruptions in his schedule, became one of the primary places he could do good.

Do any of you know who these folks are? **Mark & Maggie Roth.** For quite a number of years they worshiped with us here at Five Forks Church. They served in our youth ministry and on our church leadership board. They're both incredibly gifted people. Mark is doctor, a surgeon and Maggie is one of the most multi-talented people you'll ever meet. I'm pretty sure she can communicate and in 3 or 4 languages. They raised 4 children who are all graduated from college now.

About 6 years ago, I'm pretty sure they were planning ahead, probably beginning to think about retirement and life after kids and settling down all of those kinds of things...and then they discovered there was a need for a doctor to continue work at a BIC hospital in Zambia, Africa. **Macha Hospital (PIC).** But it's across the world, in the middle of nowhere, different culture, different language. Now at their stage of life, when they heard about this need I think I would have thought, "I'll be praying they can find the right person for this job." But that's not how Mark and Maggie saw it.

Instead they thought, “We could do this. What a great opportunity to do good for Jesus Kingdom.”

I don’t know if they would say, it was an inconvenience or an interruption on their lives but certainly it’s not the normal path for many Americans. But for Mark and Maggie, it was a chance to practice doing good as followers of Jesus, in the midst of a major interruption in their lives.

By the way, Mark & Maggie are going to be here at Five Forks church in two weeks to tell us about the ministry they’ve been doing. In a small way, we get to share in this with them. We are their “sending church” and have been supporting them during their time overseas. I suspect they have something incredibly valuable to teach all of us about seeing the interruptions in our lives as opportunities for God to do good.

***“The great thing, if one can, is to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's 'own,' or 'real' life. The truth is of course that what one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life -- the life God is sending one day by day.”*** (C.S. Lewis)

**This week, can you take a new perspective on the interruptions and inconveniences that come your way?** Like Jesus, like Titus...see them as your opportunity to do good!

And then finally, when it comes to doing good...

#### **D. Motivation Matters.**

Often our motivations are crucial to our discipleship. Jesus isn’t just concerned about our outward actions, he’s often interested in our heart motivations. It’s not just what are you doing but why are you doing it.

Jesus talked about this one time in [Matthew 6](#) - **“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Your left hand not knowing what your right hand is doing, isn't about some kind of cool magic trick that the Holy Spirit helps you to do. Jesus is talking here about your intentions and motivations.

This is what was happening in that world. **Rich patrons** were giving to the needy, doing good deeds and they actually had an entourage blowing trumpets before them to let everyone know how generous they were.

There's a historian named Peter Leithart who talks about this and he says, ***“A patron expected his clients to form an entourage to blow trumpets and shout his praises as the patrons passed through the streets of Rome.”***

These people were doing good deeds not because they actually wanted to help other people, but because they simply wanted notoriety. They wanted other people to notice them and praise them for how generous they were. Jesus says, if that's you, your heart is in the wrong place.

So one of the best ways to practice doing good is **the discipline of secrecy.**

The idea here is learning to do good that nobody else will find out about.

This week, if you're at work and the opportunity arises that you could help somebody else win, you could make somebody else look good, and it won't advance your career a bit, do it.

If you find out about somebody who is in need, and you won't benefit in any way, find a way to give to that person without them ever finding out.

Get somebody a gift but don't let them know you are the one who got it.

Write somebody a note of encouragement but don't let them know you are the one who wrote it.

Accomplish something but don't tell other people about it.

Dallas Willard says, **“If you want to experience the flow of love as never before, the next time you are in a competitive situation, pray that the others around you will be more outstanding, more praised, and more used of God than yourself. Really pull for them and rejoice their successes. If Christians were universally to do this for each other, the earth would soon be filled with the knowledge of God’s glory. The discipline of secrecy can lead us into this sort of wonderful experience.”**

You see doing good isn't about what we'll get out of it, it isn't about other people noticing us, it isn't even about getting God to love us more or bless us more...doing good is simply what following Jesus in living out the Kingdom of Heaven life looks like. And it's a great way to live!