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Easter 6 B -May 5, 2024 –

Power Points of Life – The Power to Do Good

Read Acts 10:34–38, 44–48 and/or Memorize: Acts 10: 38

If you think about it, there are generally only two types of people who populate the earth. There are those who put in more than they take out and those who take out more than they put in. Sometimes people simply say it this way, there are givers and getters.

As people think about Jesus, they say many positive things about him. He was a brilliant teacher, a prophetic change agent; even savior of the world. Here's how Peter describes Him: "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good!" Based on that, we might come to the conclusion that all that's needed of us is to do good. That certainly ought to get us into heaven, if it was good enough for Jesus.

But perhaps before we head out the door to do our good, we may want to recognize who the good that Jesus did came from and what He accomplished. We hear it in Acts 10: 38: "And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." The power He used was from God. The good Jesus did was to free people from the oppression of the devil.

Here are some thoughts on doing good. For goodness' sake, develop your conscience. The Bible says the conscience is the law written on the heart. It is an inward principle which determines the character of one's actions. Our conscience is a guiding light, an internal road map, to lead us through the twists and turns of life to a purposeful destination.

At one time, we probably could say that there was a common foundation of what it means to do good: Tell the truth. Do not kill. Do not steal. Honor your parents and other such moral imperatives. Things that we were all familiar with and agreed to.

Unfortunately, times have changed and some see the world differently. Misinformation, disinformation and the truth are now being seen as what people believe to be the truth for themselves. That kind of thinking causes many problems. So, we dare not assume we hold these in common.

So, it might be wise of us to inscribe the truths on our hearts and honor them in our lives. In fact, in Romans 2:16 Paul tells us that people who have never heard the Gospel will be saved by following their conscience. He says, "they are a law unto themselves." It seems, in His love, God was providing for those who would never hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. Perhaps that's where the idea to let your conscience be your guide comes in. But remember this, your conscience is like a computer. It spits out what you put in.

As a 15-year-old, I believed, I heard God's call to become a pastor. To accomplish that I enrolled at a high school called Concordia, to begin my journey towards being a pastor. The school was in a suburb of New York City. It was run by our national church to help young men prepare to be pastors.

There was such a concern on the part of the faculty that we not be tempted that we were not allowed to have any other kind of dances, but square dances, so that we wouldn't hold girls too closely. They took a very rigid view of what they understood the Bible was saying. We were teenagers and thought they were crazy. Looking back, it's obvious that they didn't understand that it was not the dancing that was the temptation. It was the world we lived in.

The content of the conscious can go one way or the other. Everything in the conscience can be weakened by neglect and erased by culture. I would suggest to you that not letting young people dance seemed perfectly logical to those who were in charge. But the world had already changed at that point. We continue to see the world change. So, we need something more than conscience to guide us. Or else we may be led to an attitude that says anything goes when influenced by our culture.

So, let's look at what guided Jesus in his life. What stands out to me was that Jesus was guided by compassion. As Luke said, "He went around doing good." As we read the pages of scripture, we see that when people were hungry, He had compassion on them and fed them. When the rich young ruler was searching for a deeper purpose and meaning in life, He had compassion on him and loved him. He offered him the opportunity to find a deeper purpose.

Jesus had the power to feel the touch, hear the cry, sense the need of those who came around Him. It wasn't that He had to wander around to find people in need, they were all around Him. Instead, He would focus in on the neediest of the needy surrounding Him.

In Luke 8 we hear an interesting story about a needy person: One day, Jesus was on His way to help a child who was dying. The crowds were so intense that they were crushing in around Him. In the crowd was a woman. She had a gynecologic problem that caused bleeding for 12 years.

This meant that she could have no contact with people. I'm sure it was an embarrassment, but it also meant that she had to live in isolation. Perhaps out of embarrassment or fear she did not ask Jesus to help her. She believed that if she could just touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed and she was. She had hoped that it would go unnoticed.

But it wasn't unnoticed by Jesus. When he tells His disciples that He has felt power go out of Him, they try to convince Him that there is no way to figure out who has touched Him. He's surrounded by people on all sides, jostled by the crowd, they say. Anyway, what difference does it make, but Jesus won't let it go.

He sensed that power going out and wanted to know to whom it had gone. Recognizing that she cannot remain unnoticed, she explained her reason for touching Him and the result, a healing. Now Jesus shows her His compassion. He says to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." Jesus sets us the example to heal hurts with His compassion. The question is, can we be as responsive to the needs of others around us?

Fred Craddock, a pastor and author, tells the story of his father and mother. She was a pillar of the church; he wanted nothing to do with it. He stayed home on Sundays and would complain about all the hypocrites who went to church. When the new preacher came to visit him, Mr. Craddock would say, "You're not really interested in me; all you want is another name on your role and a pledge for your budget."

Then something happened that changed that story. As Fred tells it, "One day my father became seriously ill. They operated on him, but it was too late. I flew home to be with him. The room was filled with flowers, plants, gifts and cards from the church. My dad had a tube down his throat and couldn't talk.

"As I sat by his bed, he asked for a pencil and the tissue box. On the side of the box, he wrote these words from Hamlet: 'In this harsh world, draw your breath in pain and tell my story.' Fred asked, 'What's your story, dad?' Once more he took the pencil and wrote on the tissue box. 'Tell them I was wrong.'" Life can be tough. Will you let the Holy Spirit make you tender?

For goodness' sake, alert your concerns. What gets under your skin? What irritates you in the night. What are the wrongs of the world that you have the power to make right. Sometimes, we do not just sit! We do not just talk about the problem. Sometimes, we are called to action in the name of Jesus Christ. When we sense that call, Jesus wants us to respond, just as He did.

In the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, there is a plaque that says, "Thou shall not be a victim, thou shall not be a perpetrator, but above all, thou shall not be a bystander." A movie that made an tremendous impression on me was "Schindler's List." I had never heard of Mr. Schindler or what he did until I saw the movie.

At first, he functions from vested self-interest. He needs workers. Doesn't want to pay them much. Has friends in high places who offer him a cheap, continuous supply of labor and he accepts. As time goes on, as he learns from these people of their suffering, it triggers something in him that changes him.

He is transformed and it becomes his passion to save as many Jewish people as he can. He is credited with saving over 1,100 people. He takes all kinds of risks; uses his own money to accomplish this. His only regret, at the end of the movie, is that he had not taken action earlier and that he had not saved more people. The descendants of those who were saved by Schindler would gather for many years to celebrate his compassion.

Schindler might not have recognized it, but he was following his passion. His compassion became a calling. Perhaps you have heard this before?

I expect to pass through this life, but once.
Therefore, if there be any kindness I can show
Any good I can do and I can make,
Let me neither defer nor neglect it –
Let me do it now – for I shall not pass this way again

You don't follow your calling because it's neat or cool. You follow your calling because it is a constant whisperer in the night that will not let you go. A calling is a need that is not being fulfilled. Some people think the most important thing you can do is fulfill your career, but the greater good is to fulfil a calling.

We are not our own. We belong to Jesus. We are called by Jesus to become what He made us to be. We are called to use the resources that He has blessed us with, our time, talents or treasures to bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. The challenge: are you following your calling?

Jesus showed us the way. "He went about doing good!" He shared His compassion with those He met as a way of sharing God's love with the world. May God help you to follow Jesus' example and to finish well what you have first begun in His Name.