

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

November 22, 2020

Honoring Jesus from the Inside Out

I Peter 3:8-17

Pastor Paul Jackson

[song: "Oh Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer"]

Ben Rico:

Amen. Would you allow me, please, to read from Psalm 33?

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance. The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; from His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works. The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His loving kindness, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let your loving kindness, Oh LORD, be upon us, according as we have hoped in You."

Amen. As we hear this song of God's greatness, let our hearts ponder and let us join in with the song of our hearts.

[music: "How Great Thou Art"]

Pastor Paul:

Thank you so very much, Colleen. And thank you; thank you for joining us this morning in person and joining us together online. How fitting that we move into Thanksgiving with a song about how great and how majestic and how good God is. This morning we've shaped a service that we intend to thank God for His goodness to us and in us.

But first, I want to talk about the last thing you want me to talk about. I'm going to talk about COVID, and I'm going to get it out of the way so we can get back to the meal that we have before us. Last Sunday, our governor revised one primary requirement about gathering together in worship services such as this one. It was a significant shift, change, for us, and that is a restriction on congregational singing. We intend to comply as a church for the next four weeks with the governor's changing requirements. We have agonized over the decision as a leadership team. We've revisited the Word of God and how important it is for us to give voice in the presence of God and each other. We are, in these next weeks, going to seek other ways - responsive readings, other ways - to involve the congregation in ways that are right and good. But we have chosen to submit. And in choosing to do so, we contacted some other churches in the community, and we found out that we're not alone, that there is really a good group of Jesus-loving, God-honoring churches who are making, for similar reasons, the same choice.

I know some will disagree. Since COVID began, almost every decision we have had to make--we know it will incur disagreement. But we need to make a decision, and this is the one that our leadership team has made, and I hope we can keep moving forward in unity. We are grateful to meet in person and in the presence of others. We were one of the first in Clark County to gather as a church, on-site, in-person, because we believe in the power of presence and the presence of God. We believe that when we gather, even though it's not like it used to be, that we still can encourage other people. We can see, in sense, the presence of others, and be an

encouragement for them as they follow Christ. We're grateful for the way that you have--that you're still with us. Thank you. I know this is not natural to us, but we do believe it's for the glory of God and the good of others, and that God will use this for our own good.

I also am grateful for the way that you worship outside of this room in the giving of yourselves to the work of Christ. Thank you to the thirty-some people who gathered yesterday to go down to the FISH warehouse to pack food boxes. Some of you packed food boxes in the warehouse; others of you handed those food boxes out to homeless people who came to the warehouse, and they received also hats and gloves to keep warm in this time of year. Some of you, then, went out, and you gave those food boxes and those hats and those gloves to people who are homeless and on the street. Thank you.

Thank you to those of you who brought boxes for Operation Christmas Child. In a time of this kind of a circumstance and experience, we still revived five hundred and forty-one boxes from you, people who went out of their way to pick the boxes up and then went out of their way to bring them back here in a way that was appropriate to the protocols that we have before us. We also received a \$142 dollars from the scrubbies to fund the discipleship curriculum, The Greatest Journey, through Samaritan's Purse, that have gone out around the world to resource, to share the Gospel in tangible ways with children around the world.

There are some upcoming opportunities that we encourage you to participate in. In two weeks, we have an open house for Eric and Lindsey Melan, here, after the second hour; it will be from 12:00-1:00 P.M., in this room, as they've returned from Hungary and they're going to be reporting on their ministry in Hungary. You can see on the screen, the [website](#), how you can register. You'll need to register.

And then we also want to thank you for your generosity. It really is extraordinary. There is this sheet of paper in the foyer--if you're interested, you might want to pick one up. It shows that through October, you have given sacrificially more than

we have spent in ministry, so that we enter into the last quarter of a COVID year, 2020, with excess in the general fund. We're going to invite you, these last weeks and month of the year, to continue to give, to give anticipating our ministry and mission for 2021. As tumultuous as has 2020 been, we're hoping that 2021 leaves it all behind, but I don't think it will. So, we invite you to give, first to the general fund at Glenwood, and secondly to the short-term mission fund at Glenwood, which helps us to fund missions and ministry around the world.

In just a moment, we're going to pray and thank God for His goodness, and even in the midst of such a time as this. But following the prayer, we have a video collage of people in our congregation who want to share their thankfulness to God with the rest of us. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, thank You. Thank You for Your abundant mercy that's new this morning, that it's fresh and vivid with the day. Thank You for Your kindness that surrounds us, that goes before us, that follows us; that Your goodness and mercy stay with us all the days of our life. Open the eyes of our heart to see Your kindness and Your blessing and Your goodness even in times like this. Father, thank You for these people, for the men and women and students and children who comprise Glenwood Community Church, who love You, who follow You, who give to honor You, who give of their spiritual gifts for Your purposes and for Your mission. I ask that we would be a light, a winsome presence, in our culture, in our community, Vancouver, Clark County, around the world, that people would see that we love You, love each other, and love them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Video]

I'm thankful for God's faithfulness, just how many really good spiritual conversations I've had with my kids.

Well, without a doubt, my family is the number one there.

I'm thankful for just being able to in discipleship groups, I really enjoy it.

This is the day that the Lord hath made; we should rejoice and be thankful in it. And I am thankful for the day and what He's done.

I'm very grateful for Caroline Nichols and the ministry she has started through teaching me and others how to quilt.

And I stopped to think about all the good things that had happened in 2020. And as I started thinking, I realized there were so many more things to be thankful for than to complain about. And as I sat and wrote out my list, it was just a huge list.

So, I was part of the graduating class of 2020, and I don't really need to go into detail about what happened during the graduation process, but I turned to God in that, and I was thinking He helped me ponder about the entire rest of my high school career. Rather than focusing on the negative aspect of that, on missing out of the short, little bit of stuff, God, when He showed me, He was like, "Reese, you got to do all this stuff that I gifted you." And looking through it through the lens of thankfulness, God really showed me that, wow, I am blessed. He has given me so much stuff that I get to be thankful for.

I'm married to a man that was in the military for years and years and years, and we moved from place to place. And he retired, and wouldn't you know, God, in His humor, decided to give him a job in Brazil. I had traveled all over the world; I was ready to settle down. I was kind of like Jonah going to Nineveh; I really didn't want to go to Brazil. I can remember that our son came down, and I proceeded to tell him how hard I had it; this was a bad situation. And he said, "Mom, you maybe need to change your attitude a bit." And that was just God's way of saying, "Realize how much I have given you."

Four years later, we left the country of Brazil. I was kicking and screaming, because God had met me in every possible way.

I would have to say that the thing that I'm most thankful for is my faith in Jesus Christ. That was very poignant when my mother passed away in May very suddenly, and my older brother--he said to me after we had our goodbye with my mom, "I want to have strength like you do." He said, "How do you have strength?" And he said he wanted to have peace like my mom, and for the first time, he was open to hearing about Jesus Christ.

Because, if we're really thinking about God and what there is to be thankful for and grateful for, we're not focused on the things that we want. And so that changes our countenance, because if we're looking to His character, then we're looking to be more like Him.

It's just a attitude of thankfulness that helps you see who God is and what he's done and just how over everything He is, and He's in control of everything.

So, choosing an attitude of thanksgiving and talking about what we can be grateful for has really impacted us, because it's really easy to get caught up in some of the more difficult things of life. But when you can really focus on the ways that God has blessed you, it really increases your positivity; it increases the way that you can look towards God and look at the blessings that He has put in your life.

That thankfulness leads me to acknowledge God's presence in that moment, so it just gives me a thankfulness for His presence in my day to day life.

Practicing thankfulness in my everyday life just helps remind me of God's love that He has for me each and every day. If I don't practice thankfulness, I forget the blessing and the love that God has for each and every one of us

and me, and it's hard to feel loved if you don't remember that. But I get to be so thankful that I have a God who loves and cares for me so much.

Ben Rico:

Thank you to everyone who participated. I wish we could have a bonus footage session; it would probably take about three hours. There's so much thankfulness in this body, and there's so much thankfulness to God in this body. And that's what I'm really thankful for. You notice my face wasn't in that video, for good reason, but if I could just share with you how thankful I am for your thankfulness, for your reliance on God and showing me how to do that in my own life; I think that reverberates much farther than we could ever know. And as we play this next song, would you reflect in your own hearts about God's provision, and reflect in thanksgiving for what He has done in your life, and even bringing us to Himself in Christ, showing His love in Christ.

[music: "Great is Thy Faithfulness"]

Pastor Paul:

Please take your Bibles and open to the book of I Peter. We'll spend most of our time in I Peter 3, but we're going to start in I Peter 1:3. Jesus Christ is alive. Because He is alive, He shares resurrection life with us. Because of the life of Jesus, we have a living hope. A living hope in who He is and in what He has given to us, will give to us, and we will one day experience in full when we are in His presence. Verse 3, I Peter 1. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* He is alive, our hope is alive.

Verse 4, *"To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."* That's our future that God has given to us, an inheritance in and through His Son, so that we share all of the blessings of God in and through the risen Savior Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 7. *"So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* When Jesus Christ returns, when He shows up, when He takes us either through our death or through His return as He promises one day, you and I will fully embrace the inheritance that He has given to us. And until then, we get to show that we love God, that we are sons and daughters of God, that there would be proof in this time of testing, a testing that will test the metal of our deeper internal convictions and confidence in our living hope.

By looking beyond today, we can really live today. And that's the message of I Peter. By looking beyond today, we can really live right now, right here, in this moment. If you were with us last week, Ben Cunningham did a great job engaging I Peter 3, that shows that when the grace of God invades the heart of a wife, that it transforms her, and it can transform the culture of the home, even when a husband is disobedient to God. When God's grace invades the heart of a husband, he can better engage his wife in ways that flourish her whole person.

Recently, couple weeks ago, somebody reminded me, "Paul, people are just people." We are. But times like this test what kind of people we will be. If we live very long, we'll be wronged by others. When wronged by others, what kind of people will we be? When others do wrong, will we take our cue from them and do wrong in return? Or will we lean into the person and Word of Jesus Christ, and, when wronged by others, will we take our cue from Him and do right by others for the glory of God and the good of others?

42 is a movie based on the true story of the breaking of the racial barrier in major league baseball. 42 is the number of the uniform that Jackie Robinson wore to break the racial barrier. It was broken, not only by Jackie Robinson, but by the president of the then Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickey. And Rickey recruited Robinson, not only because he was a phenomenal baseball player and athlete, but he was a man of high character. Robinson and Rickey both expected Robinson to encounter overt racial hostility, and they did. But Rickey was looking for a different kind of a ball player, a different kind of man in Jackie Robinson. He was looking for a man who would refuse to return evil for evil. Rickey thought Robinson was that man. Rickey would later say of Robinson, "He's a methodist, I'm a methodist, and God's a methodist. What can go wrong?"

Well, the first time Robinson and Rickey met, Rickey said, "Your enemy will be out in force, but you cannot meet him on his own low ground." And Jackie asked Branch, "You want a player that doesn't have the guts to fight back?" And Rickey answered, "No, I want a player who's got the guts not to fight back. We win by hitting, running, fielding, only that. We win only if the world is convinced of two things: that you're a fine gentleman and a great ball player. Like our Savior, you've got to have the guts to turn the other cheek. Can you do it?" Robinson said, "You give me a uniform; you give me a number on my back; I'll give you the guts." And so he did. And it's one of the most inspirational stories of the twentieth century. In some part, to some degree, not fully, but somewhat, God won the day. God likes it when we have a small part in the doing of good to the attention and notice of our people, of our city, of our county, of our nation, so that good wins the day. And that is what I Peter 3:18-17 is all about.

If you would open to I Peter 3:8-17. Why? Why should we do good in the face of wrong? Well, first, when wronged, we're called to do good because God has already and will drench us with His own goodness. Chapter 3:8-9; as I read this, check the last part of the verses 9 out. *"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for this very purpose, that*

you might inherit a blessing." We're called for a purpose. God's voice calls us on purpose.

When our kids were little we lived in a cul de sac, and our kids roamed the neighborhood freely with their friends. But when it was time to gather our children, Nancy would go out in the front yard, and she would whistle with two fingers, and you could hear it a mile away. And our kids would come running, and the neighborhood kids would come running, and dogs within a radius of a mile would come running. But when they returned in response to the whistle, they didn't know why. They just knew that Mom wanted them. It was an effective call. But they didn't know why Mom was calling them home.

Not so with God. God's call is effective, and we know why. Why He blesses us, in part, is so that we'll bless others, so that, as we have received of God's heavenly eternal goodness, and that when we see Him we'll be like Him, He wants to bless us right now in real time. The blessing is our present experience, and right now the testing of our faith proves the legitimacy of our faith, so that, as we are blessed and we bless, we're becoming more like Christ.

When He was reviled, He didn't return in kind. Instead, He blessed. He's blessed us. We don't deserve the blessing He gives to us. He's not looking down and saying, "You know, Paul Jackson? You have been so good that I'm going to save you." No. He looks down at me, and He says, "Paul Jackson, even though you were my enemy, I reached out to you before you knew me. Before you know me, I gave Myself to you." So He would have us look at others who don't yet know God through the same lens, through the same eyes. That as we're blessed, we will bless.

And in verse 8 there are five virtues that bless, that bless others. In fact, these virtues are contagious. I was just reading an article about contagious emotions, and it was about from Thanksgiving to Christmas. You know what one of the most contagious feelings on the planet is during that time period? Loneliness. Especially

for people who are getting older, people over the age of 65, 70. They start to feel the encroach of loneliness and even feeling, in some circles, marginalized. And it's a contagious feeling, so that when lonely people get around lonely people, it just multiplies. Well here's the positive. These are highly contagious virtues. They are life-giving, soul-restoring. It's like the tide when it comes in, it floats your boat.

So these five virtues, the first one, "*All of you be harmonious.*" That's what my Bible translates it. I like better--some of the other translations would say "*unity of the mind,*" "*unity of attitude*" in the way that we related to God and to each other. And when we embrace the mind of Christ, we look around and we'll find ourself in the same place. Oh, the details may differ, but when we think like Christ, then we'll think in unity.

Secondly, sympathy. Sharing with others in the highs and the lows of life requires an alertness to the other person, another focus, so that even if they're sad, we allow ourself to feel their sadness, but if they're pumped and they're excited and they're happy and there are great things that they can see God doing in their life, then that influences us so that now we can celebrate with them.

Thirdly, love for our sisters and brothers in Jesus. That's what he commands in I Peter 1:22. "*Who through Him are believers*"--or "*Since,*" he says in verse 22, "*you have an obedience to the truth, purify your souls for a sincere love of your brothers and sisters. Fervently love one another from the heart.*" So that as we're loved, now--now, we love others in the same way that God has loved us.

Fourth, "*kind-hearted.*" Some of your Bibles translate "*compassionate.*" It's a tender heart; it's internal; it's visceral. It's that feeling you get in your gut when you see someone who hurts. It's inside-out kindness that goes from God to us, and from us to another.

And the fifth virtue, "*be humble in spirit.*" That is the consideration of others, that we would consider their interests as more important than our own, that we would be humble in our spirit.

So now, as we're on the cusp of Thanksgiving, and we're going to move into a different kind of Thanksgiving and, most likely, a different kind of Christmas, let's truly be grateful from the heart. Let's truly celebrate God's gift of His Son and the sending of His Son to be born like us, but without sin, and to die our death for our sin. But as we enter into that season of heartfelt celebration, let's get really practical in trying to figure out how we can live out those five virtues even in a time like this.

So how can we love others even under our current restrictions? By writing notes like we've never written them before. By picking up the phone. By calling people. By praying for others. By trying to find some way to message and encourage and affirm. To Facetime other people. That we would be kind-hearted to them. And the way of Jesus is contagious.

It also cuts against the grain of our fallen humanity. How are we to live when wronged? Well, we deescalate conflict. There is a way to interrupt conflict with kindness and self-control. That's in verse 9. "*Don't return insult for insult.*" Anybody can do that. We learn that from early on; it's in us. We are hurt; it's easy to return the hurt. But what did Jesus do? He incurred our hurt for our good. So, He didn't revile and return. That's the last part of chapter 2 that we engaged a few weeks ago. So, we can de-escalate; we can desire God's good for them. So that we can, instead of returning the insult, we return a blessing.

I remember, one time I was at a soccer game for my children. And the other coach from the other team got really angry, and he started after the game screaming and cussing out our team and our coach. And our coach was wrong in what he did. So, now the other coach is mad, and he's screaming and he's ranting. And I went up to him, and he started telling us what we did that was wrong, and I said, "You're

right." And it just flummoxed him. His jaw dropped. I said, "You're right. We were wrong; we should not have done what we did, and I should have intervened with our coach to do what is right. Will you forgive me?" It was like--

Next morning, Sunday morning, I look out; that guy's here; he's in the back row. Afterwards, he came up and he goes, "I just told my wife you were the guy last night. We had no idea what you did. We don't go to church, but this morning we got up and we just thought, 'Let's go to church,' and we'd seen this one." So, he came in, and I was in the book of Proverbs, and I was talking about anger. And he's here.

When we return insult with God's good, that's what a blessing is. It's God's goodness for the other person. When we just embrace the wrong, and as we have been blessed, we bless. Mercy for mercy, forgiveness for forgiveness because we are forgiven, patient because God is patient with us.

Why do good in the face of wrong? Secondly, because we are called to do good for others for our own good. Verses 10-14, but I only want to read 10-12 at first. *"For the one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."* That's from Psalm 34 - three verses plucked out of Psalm 34 - and they tell us what God wants to see in us when we suffer for Him. If we want to be happy with ourselves tomorrow, if we want to love and live, then right now, today, love and live like Christ.

Peter is not saying that if you do good, then you'll be "healthy, wealthy, and wise." In fact, you're going to see the new year, when we turn the corner and we go onto I Peter 4 and--"Get ready to suffer," he says. And then he tells us how to suffer. Not everybody does suffer all the time. But here he is saying that, if we want to complicate our lives, and if we want to mess up our relationships, then do the

opposite of verses 8 and 9. If we want to ruin our lives, then tear down others with our speech, throw kindling on the fires of conflict, one-up each other with insults, and when tomorrow comes, you'll look around and you won't like the life you have.

"The one who desires life,"--this is a God-led life--*"to love and see good days,"* is the one who keeps their lips from speaking lies, who turns away from evil, who seeks to do good. And then the proactive peace of verse 11--*"He must seek peace and pursue it."* The word "pursue" was used in the New Testament world-- the hunter pursuing game, as if they're hunting an animal or a deer; they're looking for signs, for the path. They're looking for it, and then they actively seek the path of peace. And he gives three practical ways for us to really like our life better tomorrow: keep our tongue from evil, turn away from evil, take a different path, seek peace and pursue it. Hunt for it; look for it. The peace he's talking about is not avoiding conflict. It's not the avoidance of truth, better said, in the midst of conflict. But it's speaking truth in a loving way that is characteristic of love and the virtues in verse 8. Peacemakers are not passive. Rather, peacemakers intercede with a calm and love and a goodness and a speaking of truth toward resolution of a relationship.

And God loves it when we seek peace. It says here His eyes are on us, and His ears are open to us. It does not mean that, if we want to experience good, then we have to do good, and we're not going to experience any suffering if we do good. That is not His logic; that's not His reasoning. It doesn't mean that life won't get really hard. But it does mean that God hears the heart of the person who seeks Him. He's writing to followers of Jesus who turn away from evil, which is repentance and confession and obedience, and it says that God hears repentant followers of Jesus even in their time of trouble. He resources us; He sustains us.

We're called to do good for our own good. Look at verse 13-14. *"Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled."* Verse 13 is the question. *"Who is there to harm you if you do*

what is good?" Well, let me turn that question around; let me put it in the opposite. Who is there to harm you if you seek evil and do it? Well, you know the answer to that one. Who is there to harm you if you seek evil and do it? Well, you know it's going to get ugly quickly. Here, if we seek God's good and the good of others, it's a different story. People can see the good that God is doing, but when they don't, if there is a moment, if there is a time, even if - verse 14 - even if you suffer for doing good, it's as if suffering is not an all-day, everyday, all-over-the-world experience for followers of Jesus. But when you do obey Him, and you suffer for doing that which is right, don't be afraid of that person, and don't internally be troubled. Cast all your cares on Him; He cares for you, and He guarantees blessing to come in and through His Son Jesus Christ. And it may be in this life; we know for sure that it will be when we see Him in heaven.

Why do good? Thirdly, when we do right by others, we have credibility to speak of Jesus with others. And that's in verse 15. Verse 15, *"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."* Simply put, when people see Jesus in you, get ready to tell them about Jesus. Because, when people see this kind of life in the midst of wrong, the wrong that others do--where's that come from? How do you explain that? It's as we just heard in the video presentation, in the midst of loss, of somebody that you love, others notice, "I want that peace." Where does that peace come from? And now, you're ready to give account. This isn't some graduate level course that explains the entire Bible; this is an in-the-moment, on-point explanation of what God has done in you in that moment, so that the way God worked in you in that moment now gives us a platform to explain who Jesus is and the Gospel and the way that God works in the heart of the obedient. He says, *"Sanctify Christ as Lord in our heart."* Honor Christ the Lord. I Peter 1:16, He is holy. *"Be holy as I am holy."* That to sanctify Him is to honor Him above all else, the one who is pure and lovely and right in all He is and does; He is gracious; that we honor Him from an inside-out honor, ready to answer for our living hope with gentleness and respect for the person we're telling about Jesus.

Why do good? Well, fourth reason, when we do good, it's easier to sleep at night. *"Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you're slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right, rather than for doing what is wrong."* We learned that at an early age. When I was a child, one of the best feelings in the world is to be in a classroom or on a football field with a coach, or at home with my parents, and somebody does something wrong, and I know I didn't do it! Not this time. I mean, isn't that the best feeling in the world? When, "Paul, did you--?" "Not this time." Well, you know what just about the worst feeling in the world is? When you did it, and you don't get caught. And there is this thing inside of us; this internal awareness is like a baseball umpire behind the plate, only God put it in us, and we know the truth.

Now, what do you do with the truth that we know? Now, we have a conscience that is provoked. And if we ignore the conscience provoking us long enough, the sound and the voice of the conscience gets weaker and weaker and weaker. But when our conscience is informed by the word of God and the Spirit of God, and we step out in confident faith and obedience to God, our conscience helps us to better call the balls and strikes that we're going to experience in our life. Our internal umpire becomes better equipped to speak to us and direct us.

And our conscience is a key player in conflict, so that here in 16-17, when our critics say something about us that is not true, then let's prove them wrong. Let's prove them wrong by our behavior, by our actions. It's a terrible feeling to make your critics right, whenever you know, "I didn't do that," but now we step into something that is just as wrong as what they did. So, we can prove by the way we live that we are stepping out in obedience to the Jesus of the Bible, so that those who misrepresent us will be put to shame or proven wrong. And maybe, just maybe, whether a believer drawn back to the person and ways of Jesus or someone who is not yet a follower of Jesus Christ--perhaps they'll be more interested in hearing about this person who has so shaped and changed our life.

And verse 17 finds us in the sweetest place that we can be, and that is smack in the middle of God's will. And if, in the middle of God's will, we do His will and we suffer for it, it is better for us to suffer for doing what's good than for us to suffer and get what we deserve for our willful rebellion against God.

Why do good? God calls us to do good for Him because He has done good for us. And when we do God's good, it is for our own good. And when we honor Jesus above our own hurt, then we have credibility to speak of the Jesus that we honor. And when we do good for Jesus, our conscience lets us know we've done good, and we'll be grateful for the good Jesus is and does through us. Let's pray together.

Jesus, thank You. Thank You for the good You have done, are doing, and will do in us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

[music: "Jesus Thank You"]

Ben Rico:

Amen. Seek good, do good, in Christ our highest good and our unending joy. Go in peace.