

The Blessing of Simple Goodness

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of simple goodness in making a deeper and more lasting impression on human lives, and how it can be a great blessing in the lives of others.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:17, Matthew 5:16, Romans 12:21, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:15, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Thessalonians 5:15, James 1:22, 1 Peter 2:12

Topics: "Influence of Character", "Simple Goodness"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound impact of simple goodness in serving Christ, arguing that while eloquence and wealth may attract attention, it is the quiet influence of goodness that leaves a lasting impression on lives. He encourages those who feel inadequate or ungifted to recognize that even the smallest acts of kindness and a life of integrity can be a powerful ministry. Miller illustrates this through the life of an ordinary Christian woman whose humble goodness inspired her family and community over decades. He asserts that every believer can embody this simple goodness, which is essential in a world that often values showiness over sincerity. Ultimately, the sermon calls for Christians to cultivate a spirit of Christ-like goodness in their daily lives.

Transcript

After all, there are few ways in which most of us can do better service for Christ in this world--than just by being good. Sir Walter Scott's farewell to Lockhart contained wise counsel: "Be a good man, my friend." Cleverness shines more brightly in society; eloquence makes itself heard more widely, and elicits 'hurrahs' from the throng; wealth yields a greater show of splendor, gives more worldly power for the time, and gets itself talked about by more people; conspicuous almsgiving is more praised of men--it has its reward; but plain, simple goodness is likely to have as bright a crown and as high a place in heaven--as any of her more showy sisters. It is certain, too, that nothing makes a deeper and more lasting impression on human lives; and this is the best test of the real value of living.

Of course no disparagement is cast on the active forms of Christian usefulness and service. There is a place for all of them, and all of them are needed to make the life of the world, complete. Some must give their large gifts to build churches, hospitals, and homes for the aged, the orphan, and the poor. Some must preach the gospel in eloquent words, to tell the lost of the great love of God, and the wonderful sacrifice of Jesus Christ for men's salvation. Some must lead in the service of praise, and fulfill the rich ministry of song. There is a place in God's church for the fullest exercise of every form of gift--the finest,

the most brilliant, and the most conspicuous. Those who have been endowed with qualities for public service, or for doing the great things of the kingdom, are highly favored of God--and as their gifts are, so is their responsibility.

But even in the case of those who serve the world in these active ways, it is the quiet influence of simple goodness which gives to acts and service their greatest value. What a man is--measures the worth of what he does. His character means more as a factor in his usefulness, than do his deeds.

But meanwhile there is the multitude not gifted for great things--the one-talented or two-talented people, who think they can be of but little use in the world. Too often their temptation is to repeat the mistake and sin of the man in the parable, who thought his one talent too small to be used to any profit. But the truth is, no life's endowment is too small to become a real blessing in this world. Even the smallest candle will shed a little brightness, if lighted and set where it can shine. A small match may light the great lamp in the lighthouse tower, whose beams will flash far out to sea, showing vessels their way. Even a single drop of water may refresh a drooping plant, or moisten a fevered lip.

But there is yet another kind of power for good which comes, not from any doing, even of little things--but from simple being. Though it were true of any, that they could not help others by deeds of love, even the smallest--yet there are none who may not learn to live a life of constant helpfulness through the influence of simple goodness which goes out from them. A flower yields no timber to the builder for house or ship, and the utilitarian would say it is of no use. The one-talented man of the parable would say it might as well be buried. Yet we all know that the flower has a ministry of being--if not of doing. In its own humble, silent way it is a great blessing.

So it is with the ministry of simple goodness in a human life. Suppose we are right in saying that "we cannot do anything in Christ's church; that we have no working gifts, and that we have no money to contribute;" it does not follow that we can be of no use whatever. We can at least be good. We can get into our hearts the grace of the Lord Jesus, the mind that was in Christ Jesus. We can become so filled with the Holy Spirit, that the light of divine love will shine out from our dull nature, and transfigure it. We can have something of the beauty of Christ in our life. This will make us sweet-tempered and gentle-spirited. It will make us honest in our dealings with our fellow-men. It will make us kind to all around us. It will make us godly people to live with at home--as wife or husband, as brother or sister, as parent or child. It will make us good neighbors and faithful friends. The unconscious ministry of such a life through long years will leave untold blessings in this world. The words dropped in the commonest fellowship will become inspirations to others.

The light of good cheer that shines in our face as we pass victoriously through the hard things of our condition, puts hope into other discouraged hearts. The faith that overcomes when things seem dark, that meets sorrow and suffers--but is not crushed, helps the faith of others who are in like experiences. Life is contagious. Courage in one struggler, makes all others who know him braver. Joy in one spirit, kindles joy in many other spirits. The ministry of influence is silent--but it never fails. By day and by night it goes on, while men wake and while they sleep. Even death does not interrupt it; but when the voice is hushed, when the hands are folded--it continues to bless and inspire others.

Not long since in a great city, an aged Christian woman closed her earthly life. She had lived always in very plain circumstances. She had enjoyed only the most ordinary privileges of education. She had no peculiar gift for any distinct form of Christian activity. She had never taught a Sunday-school class, nor led

a woman's prayer-meeting, nor taken part in a missionary society, nor been connected with a temperance union or any other sort of organized association. She had never been recognized by her friends as an active worker in any capacity. But for sixty of her eighty years she had been a true, earnest, and sincere Christian. She had been a faithful wife, and a loving, self-denying mother. She had brought up her family in the fear of the Lord. She had lived a quiet, patient, gentle life.

Around her coffin there sat a large circle of her descendants--her own children and grandchildren. Her life-story was a record, not of any great deeds, nor of any fine things done--but of eighty years of plain, simple, humble, Christlike goodness. Yet it never can be known until the Judgment Day, when the books shall be opened, what blessings that humble life left at its close in the world. Its silent, unconscious influence poured out through all the long years into other lives, making them better, happier, holier, sweeter.

Such a ministry of simple goodness is within the reach of every Christian. It requires no brilliant gifts, no great wealth. It is a ministry which the plainest and lowliest may fulfill. Then its influence is incalculable.

In these days of 'fashionable worldliness', the church needs just such simple goodness. It has eloquence in its pulpits, and activity in its pews--but it needs more godly people filled with the spirit of Christ, repeating the life of Christ wherever they move. Of such Christians it may be said, as one said recently of a young Christian whose quiet life had realized this conception of goodness: "Wherever she went--lovely flowers sprung up in her path, and the air was sweeter when she had passed by."

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