

## GOD'S GOODNESS IS FREE AND BOUNDLESS

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Series: Let All Things Rise  
April 7, 2019  
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Good God,  
Psalm 56

Welcome to Lent at Trinity Nakuru. Lent is a season in the church calendar where believers focus on the Death and resurrection of Jesus. The interesting thing is that the cross is one a very common thing across the world today. People wear it as an accessory, others adorn their houses with it. Many have it on their skin as art, yet there was nothing beautiful about the cross.

Death on a cross was one of the most brutal forms of murder perfected by the Roman Empire. And they would crucify people at the entrance of cities or right on the roads hoping it would deter common people from even thinking about Rebelling.

So hanging on a cross, stripped naked, flogged and in pain, Jesus waited but still never lost faith. What happened on this cross changed the world completely and even made the cross that was meant to kill become a symbol of victory, salvation, hope. The cross meant to kill became a symbol for life

***It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.***

***The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."***

Jesus hangs on this cross and still does not lose his faith in God and in humanity. In this kind of pain and humiliation, would you not expect Jesus to give up on Humanity and give up on God? What did He know about God that kept him holding on to His trust in His father? Jesus had confidence in How Good God is. How Good his father is. And how in His Goodness He will rise again and through Him, all things once sown in weakness will follow.

***Let's pray***

One of the things that always baffles people is meeting someone who keeps to hold on to his faith even in the most difficult times in life. I have often heard people give their excuse for not having faith as the amount of suffering some people go through in the world and that they just could not have faith in God who lets that happen.

In an interesting turn, a lot of people who are sometimes in these very hard positions and in deep suffering seem to have more faith and hope and even peace.

And that sometimes is removed from us because it begins to touch on global suffering and some of us are just not in touch with that. But it becomes real when you meet someone in your own family who is way worse off than you. Who maybe has just been given the news of just a few days left to live and their eyes are still beaming with hope. One would expect that they would hate God and granted some do. One would think that they would be broken and demand that God fixes things or at least makes people around them shut up about God's goodness.

Some of us considered faith because we met some people in these places and they would not lose their faith in God. And you immediately knew that there was something about that faith. Whether or not you could put everything together or even believed what that person believed, you knew they had something that you did not and it was more than a crutch. They had more peace and grace as they navigated life and even very hard moments of life. They lived life with an assurance that they would be fine even when you thought things were looking so oblique for them. And you, on the other hand, had or have no peace and no hope. And you wondered how they could be in that place.

Every time we meet people going through an extremely difficult time we all wonder how we would respond in such situations. And when we meet such people we are amazed at the very least.

There is a guy called Dr Francis Collins and he was in charge of mapping out the entire human genome. So he was such a brilliant guy that he was the director of the Human Genome Center. Currently the head of the National Institute of Science in the US. So, a very brilliant guy. The genome is an organisms complete set of DNA including all of their genes. The human genome contains 3.1 billion letters in each of our cells. And this was a remarkable accomplishment because gene mapping is obviously very useful in medicine, healing and even just development ...

When he was in med school he would meet a lot of people who were dying and some of them were believers and they would talk about their faith and being reunited with loved ones and going to be with Jesus. And like any of us would ask ourselves when we meet people in this position we wonder why they do not give up? It confronts us with the reality that faith is not just a crutch because if it was these people would have let go at this point because it seems that God had not come through for them.

So it definitely shook him because he had grown up in a home where they were not atheist but it did not matter whether God existed or not because they believed that truth is unknowable. So finding people with such deep faith really rocked him. Especially when they would not abandon their faith in such times. Here is what he said

***“If Faith was a psychological crutch, then it must be a very powerful one. If it was nothing more than a veneer of cultural tradition (if this is just what people who don’t know better do to get through life) then why were these people not shaking their fists at God and demanding their friends and family stop all this talk about, this nonsense about a loving and benevolent supernatural power...”***

They were dying and God seemed to not be doing anything. And this question and other events led this brilliant scientist and geneticist to faith. Because contrary to popular belief, you can be a man of science and faith. He was faced with the same question that we face today in any way? What about God had these people gotten to know?

And one of the things is that God’s Goodness is free and boundless. And in His goodness, All things will rise again. That even pain that at the moment seems to be swallowing us up, that even when sometimes even death seems to be having victory it is all momentary because God is Good and his goodness is free and boundless. And in his goodness, all things will rise again.

There was a King in Israel called David. And he is one of the important Kind of the Nation. Even when Israel started looking forward to restoration they knew that the only rightful King chosen by God would have to come from David’s lineage.

But before David was King he was not even in the royal lineage for a country whose leadership was hereditary. He started off as a shepherd boy who got anointed to be

King even before the incumbent King had died. Now, it does not take a lot of science to know that is going to be trouble. No one looks favourably at the person coming for their job.

David then famously rises to fame when he kills the giant Goliath. This was such a threat to the existence of Israel as a Nation. Should they have lost this battle to Goliath they were to be slaughtered and their nation taken into slavery. Then a young boy comes into the picture and just with some rocks and a string fells the giant and with the giants on sword chops off his head.

From that moment, people within Israel started to regard David as King. This was before the incumbent had even died. People in Israel would sing of David's praise instead of Saul who was the King then. Enemies of Israel called David the King of the land. In fact, they wanted more to kill David than they wanted to Kill Saul.

What do you think will be happening? Saul the King will hate David the threat and want to kill him. So David was not safe in Israel. And as he was being pursued by Saul he ran. But where would he run too? Israel was surrounded by enemy nations who at this time wanted more to Kill David. Not safe at home and not safe away. But he kept running.

And one day he was captured by an enemy Nation. And it is this time that he writes this poem or song

Psalms 56

***Take my side, God—I'm getting kicked around,  
stomped on every day.  
Not a day goes by  
but somebody beats me up;  
They make it their duty  
to beat me up.  
When I get really afraid  
I come to you in trust.  
I'm proud to praise God;  
fearless now, I trust in God.  
What can mere mortals do?***

***They don't let up—***

*they smear my reputation  
and huddle to plot my collapse.*

*They gang up,  
sneak together through the alleys  
To take me by surprise,  
wait their chance to get me.*

*Pay them back in evil!  
Get angry, God!  
Down with these people!*

*You've kept track of my every toss and turn  
through the sleepless nights,  
Each tear entered in your ledger,  
each ache written in your book.*

*If my enemies run away,  
turn tail when I yell at them,  
Then I'll know  
that God is on my side.*

*I'm proud to praise God,  
proud to praise God.  
Fearless now, I trust in God;  
what can mere mortals do to me?*

*God, you did everything you promised,  
and I'm thanking you with all my heart.  
You pulled me from the brink of death,  
my feet from the cliff-edge of doom.  
Now I stroll at leisure with God  
in the sunlit fields of life.*

This is David's poem and prayer when he was captured. Still, he ran to God. This probably would have been the end of his life. He was facing death threats on every side. But I love his refrain

*I am so proud to praise God,*

***Proud to praise God.  
Fearless now, I trust God;  
What can mortals do to me?***

David has an awareness that God has no challenger. That even when faced with the fiercest of enemies and maybe even every increasing trouble nothing really rises enough to challenge God in His Goodness. Nothing holds God back and nothing puts God down.

And I think this is a journey that David had taken with God. David had been able to see God's goodness in his life over and over again and knew He could trust God to be good again. David had seen God keep his promises before and trusted that He would keep His promises now.

David had been a young shepherd boy when his flock was attacked by a bear and a lion and both times he was able to single-handedly defend his flock. And when we hear that story, some of us think that is ridiculous. How could a young boy fight off a bear and a lion? And we go, this story must be made up or just a legend or a myth.

And guess what, David too, finds it just as incredible as you do. He is not claiming to have been able to do that on his own. It is unbelievable enough that at the moment it happened David was aware of God's hand in it and convinced of God's goodness that is free and boundless.

David is now in trouble but this is the same David who faced off with a Giant. A Giant who was a trained warrior that made other trained warriors tremble in their boots. No one from Israel's army dared to step up to face Goliath. And we are thinking that no one would do that. Go to battle with no armour, no training. And a giant? To this day, the story is so unbelievable people are still trying to explain it.

Well, guess what? David too finds it so unbelievable that he even decided to face this giant. Actually, He says that He is facing him only in the name of God. He is counting on God who has been good before to be good again. He is hoping to see the nation of Israel being made to rise again in Gods goodness. And God does it again.

This is the same David that a few days before his capture had gone to the temple and asked for food. Now listen, this is very important. The priest had no other food

other than Holy Bread. This was bread that was set fresh every day before the altar of God. And not everyone ate that bread. Up until this point, only the priests were allowed to eat it and not casually there was the how and the where they could eat this bread. It could only be eaten in the presence of God.

So David, nothing close to a priest, not even a King yet. So really nothing, in reality, goes to the temple and is given this special bread. My assumption is that he was made to eat it in the Holy place because that is the only place you could eat that bread.

Now, this is where I am driving. In this culture, much like many African cultures, sharing a meal was a great sign of friendship. A Strong bond. So to eat at God's table and eat God's Holy Bread was understood as a strong sign that you are God's friend.

And friends show each other great kindness and goodness at all times. This happens right in the middle of David's tough years when he had to be on the run. God affirms his goodness towards him.

And it is easy sometimes to be swallowed up in the decay of things. When times are rough and when marriages are rocky and the economy hits hard and health takes a nosedive and relationships fail and sometimes even death knocks.

But the invitation from God is to be aware of His goodness. Look back and remember the incredible ways He has been good to you. How his faithfulness has always shown up. And hold on with confidence.

Then be present in the hard times you are in because even in those times God shows us a glimpse of goodness to keep our confidence in Him.

God's goodness is all around us. And it radiates with Promise that all things will rise again. God's goodness is all around us. In the sustenance of life and the springing forth of new life even where none was expected. In the embrace of family, in the beauty of nature, in the hope that keeps our hearts beating.

In the smile of strangers and the words of friends when encouragement is badly needed. It's when people anonymously come to our aid like some of you have done to countless children and families both here and beyond.

It is the goodness of God scattered like crumbs of bread throughout our day, through our life, throughout the world.

And each time we are faced with this goodness, it comes with hope, that all things will rise again. And here is the promise. In the meantime, things will get better but with Jesus coming back, everything will be set right. In him, all things will rise again. Tears will be wiped away and joy will fully be restored and fear will be put in its place and death will completely lose its sting.

I invite you to open your eyes to God's Free and boundless Goodness. I invite you to let the Holy Spirit awaken your heart and your Soul to the beckoning of a good God.

So David went on to pretend that he was mad. And the King who captured him said he would get no glory in killing a mad person and no joy in keeping him either so he released David. Again, because of God's goodness, David escaped with his life. And he wrote a psalm of praise. I want us to read out this poem together. And I want you to speak it trusting that God is coming through for you or praising Him for coming through for you.

Let's read this aloud together

Psalm 34

***I bless God every chance I get;  
my lungs expand with his praise.***

***I live and breathe God;  
if things aren't going well, hear this and be happy:***

***Join me in spreading the news;  
together let's get the word out.***

***God met me more than halfway,  
he freed me from my anxious fears.***

***Look at him; give him your warmest smile.  
Never hide your feelings from him.***



***When I was desperate, I called out,  
and God got me out of a tight spot.***

***God's angel sets up a circle  
of protection around us while we pray.***

***Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see—  
how good God is.  
Blessed are you who run to him.***

Let's stand as we finish.

I invite you to run to God and be awakened to His Goodness

*Let's Pray*