

THEME: Three Simple Rules

"Do All the Good You Can"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

June 29-30, 2013 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

Scripture: John 13:34-35 and Ephesians 2:8-10

34 "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

VIDEO Three Simple Rules Week 2 Sermon Starter

SLIDE Three Simple Rules – Do All the Good You Can

I invite you to take out of your bulletin your Meditation Moments and your Message Notes. There is the Scripture listed that we are going to be using today as well and some blank lines for you to write something down. My hope is that you will hear something today that you want to remember and so please take notes as you feel any nudges from God during our time together in worship. Continued on that side and the back side you will find our Meditation Moments which give you a chance to read some Scripture each day this week and do some deeper reflection on what we are going to talk about today.

Today we continue in a sermon series called Three Simple Rules based on three rules that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, put forth as ways of living in the world for the early Methodists. The reason that John Wesley outlined the three rules is because one of the greatest challenges of being a faithful follower of Jesus in the world is living into the ideals of the two great Commandments that Jesus outlined for us. You remember what they were because we talk about them frequently here in this church.

SLIDE *"Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself."*

Wesley boiled things down into three bullet points based on these two great commandments. Do you remember what the first one was?

SLIDE Do No Harm

Very good! Wesley had another phrase that he asked the early Methodists to learn. Let's say this phrase together...

SLIDE *"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 time you can; to all the people you can; as long as ever you can."*

These words have been inspiring Methodists from the time John Wesley wrote them back in the 1700s. These words were placed on the walls of all of the Methodist colleges and schools that were built during the 1800s to encourage students to do good. These words are meant to remind us that goodness can take place wherever we are. We should always be looking around and asking ourselves, "What is mine to do at this place and in this time and for these people in this moment?"

As we begin looking at this idea of doing good and living out the three simple rules I thought it would be good for us to have a vision of what John Wesley hoped for in terms of how the people called Methodists would live out their faith. Every year in a series of sermons I try to share with you some of the ways that we are distinct as United Methodists. This doesn't make us better than anyone else it just gives us an idea of how we are to live out our faith, especially as it pertains to this church's purpose statement which is to be Jesus Christ to the world.

SLIDE Be Jesus Christ to the World

If you take a look at the video screens you will see a visual that depicts the vision John Wesley had which gives us a model for the Christian life.

SLIDE John Wesley's Grace Diagram (Picture)

You will see that grace is the foundational cornerstone. Grace is the beginning of the Christian life. Grace is the unmerited, powerful love of God. We don't do anything to earn it. It is given to us as a free gift. We are born into this place where God loves us. It is why I tell you that you were made by God to be loved by God.

Prevenient grace is what you see emanating out of that box at the bottom left and it is the grace that goes before us. It is God's way of loving us or “wooing” us towards the heart of God. Wesley would say that God is loving us even if we don't believe that God exists. This prevenient grace surrounds us from the moment we are born and we can't escape it as God is constantly trying to reveal who he is to the children that he created to love. Wesley would point us to Paul's letter to the Ephesians in chapter 2:8-10.

SLIDE ***8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.***

Because we are so loved by God, and when we become aware of that love, there is an awakening that happens. This passage is so helpful because it reminds us that we don't do anything to earn God's love but we do good things as a response to experiencing God's love. We are God's masterpiece and we are created to do good things that God dreams for us long ago. We are loved into this place through grace and then we are transformed as we awaken and recognize that grace. This awakening is justifying grace.

SLIDE **Justifying Grace = Awakening = “A-ha!”**

Once we have recognized that we were made by God to be loved by God we experience this moment of awakening where we go, "Aha! God does love me and now I get." It is this moment of recognition that we were made by God to be loved by God. John Wesley would point early believers to Romans 3:21-24 in describing justifying grace.

SLIDE ***21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. 23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.***

We recognize that our broken places don't have the final say and don't define who we are. We say "yes" to God through Jesus Christ and we begin this process of transformation. This awakening can happen at any point in our lives if we are open to God's voice calling us to experience his love. When this awakening happens we are compelled to go out and make a difference in the world. Faith and good works go hand-in-hand as a follower of Jesus. It's not that one comes before the other but that we are created to do good works and indeed it is in those very broken places that God often uses us the most.

The really cool part of the Christian life is that we don't just experience this moment once but we can experience it over and over again in two different ways. Wesley talked about the "means of grace," which are the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

SLIDE "Means of Grace" = Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion

I get the privilege of participating in these two things with your children and with many of you as adults. We do a River baptism service at the end of each summer. We will be doing ours this year on Sunday, September 8th out in Bayfield on the Pine River. Several years ago I baptized a young man who had been struggling for years with addictions. Before I put them under the water he looked at me and said, "Will this work pastor Jeff?"

After he put them under the water and he came out he grabbed me and hugged me and whispered in my ear, "I feel free for the first time." In that moment that young man experienced grace in a very tangible way as the water enveloped his body and he was like God himself was wrapping his arms around this young man, struggled in life and all.

One of the reasons we baptize children is because we want them to know about the grace of God from a very early age. When you baptize your children you make a commitment to raise them and help them know right from wrong and that God loves them. The truth is that we need to learn these things and we learn from our parents. We don't just take our children in a car at age 16 and tell them to drive, do we? No, we give them some instruction and take them to classes and make them do things or insurance isn't quite so high and hopefully don't get hurt when they drive.

This is the same reason that we baptize our children and bring them to Sunday school. It is why we have cherished Kate Uebersax so much here as our

Director of Children and Family Ministries. Without direction we do stuff like this. Check out the video screen.

VIDEO **Charlie bites his brother**

SLIDE **“Means of Grace” = Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion**

We baptize our children as a symbol of God's love for us and a commitment that we make to help our children experience that grace, even when they bite people. The truth is that some of us never grow out of biting other people and grace is God's way of prodding us and poking us and encouraging us that we are loved and we should return that love to others.

Many of you have told me about coming forward for Holy Communion and feeling something as you took the bread and the cup and tasted the grace of God. Many times you can't even explain why but there is this feeling that you have in this moment and it becomes holy and sacramental and that is grace.

SLIDE **Grace as Acts of Mercy**

John Wesley also talked about grace and how you experienced that when you participated in “acts of mercy.” This is why we worship every year in June on a weekend by going out and serving others. It is literally in living out those acts of mercy that we experience the grace of God. I know this is true because of all the letters I received the last two weeks from people that you served and whose hearts were touched by painting walls and repairing kitchen and cleaning up garbage and fixing up schools.

The really cool part is that you can experience this mercy and his grace even without being aware of what is happening. I call this “guerrilla grace,” where grace sneaks up on us.

A part time member of our church was with us in worship the Sunday we showed you pictures of the dedication ceremony of the borehole well our church funded for the Hope for Orphans Rescue and Education Center Orphanage in Kenya about an hour and a half south of Nairobi. This person asked if we knew of any other places that could benefit from clean water. Spring Valley Slum is a ministry that we have worked with where 20,000 people live in one square mile. Pastor Stanley and his wife Alice serve as missionaries in the Spring Valley Slum, providing education, food, spiritual guidance and shelter for children and families. The people in this area however had no affordable access to clean water.

A funding proposal was written and presented by this church member from Durango to a friend in Houston who is not connected with any church. She decided to fund the Spring Valley project in full and now she has committed to help even more people who could greatly benefit from having clean water.

SLIDE Thomas and Pastor at Water Hole

Here is a picture of a visit to the pond at Obaga in January, 2013. Those present are Pastor Pamela Omondi, Chairperson of Water Board of Directors (in black jacket), Jacktone Akelo, Director of Living Waters International – Kenya (middle – white shirt & cap), Thomas Agutu, Property Owner and Businessman (Blue & white striped shirt & white cap who came to Durango in April), Paul Sheppard, FUMC Durango Member (Far back with tan hat) and other community members.

The Obaga project is a little more complicated than HOREC or Spring Valley. Plan A is that Living Waters will drill a borehole in hopes of finding a source of clean water. If successful, a kiosk for distribution will be built. If unsuccessful, then the donor will pay for Plan B which will be to build a pumping station to bring water from Lake Victoria to the village; the water will go through a filtering system and then distribution through a kiosk. Plan B will include about 5 miles of pipe and other necessary equipment. Everyone is asking for prayers to guide the well drillers to the right place to drill and find clean water underground.

Why is this project important? Right now the villagers walk up to 5 miles a day to get water from a pond which is also shared by village cows. Obaga Pond is the main source of water for 7000 people living in seven villages in the southern part of the Asembo District, Kenya

SLIDE Cows at Water Hole (Picture)

Those who cannot walk, hire a person who has a bicycle to ride and get water for them which costs approximately 13 cents a trip.

SLIDE Bicycle Water Carrier (Picture)

They let the water settle overnight and the next morning they scoop off the top.

SLIDE Children at Water Hole (Picture)

They then boil it and cool it before being able to drink or cook with it. After heavy rains the water is so muddy, it is difficult to get a very clear water to drink.

Another source of water for the people is purchasing water from a village store. Much of that water has been taken from Lake Victoria, put in bottles to be sold, but still contains many impurities which cause sickness. Some families, as well as the local school “harvests” rain water; but that provides only enough water for a short period of time for so many children. Villagers in this area of Kenya celebrate the 5th birthday of children.....because many children die during the first 5 years of their lives due to the water-born diseases they contract from the pond water.

SLIDE Child at Water Hole (Picture)

Jeff, please encourage our church members to pray for this next clean water project. Ask that those Kenyans in leadership/decision making roles listen to God's guidance as they try to bring clean water to the Obaga community.

This is how we understand and experience grace. Let's look again at our diagram regarding Grace.

SLIDE John Wesley's Grace Diagram (Picture)

You will notice that the next line in the diagram is sanctification. Sanctifying grace is the grace that surrounds us as we grow in faith, recognizing that life is filled with ups and downs. We are sanctified and made holy when we pray for patience and God gives us the opportunity to be patient by bringing frustrating people into our lives. This is why we have to be careful what we pray for, because you just might get what you are asking for!

Sanctification is what happens when you get passed on Florida Road and instead of honking your horn or yelling at them like I did this last week, you stop and pray for that driver because you know they must be anxious if they have to drive that bad Durango. Maybe they are racing to see a loved one or maybe they are simply filled with anxiety about being late, but either way we are called to pray and not just respond and react.

Sanctification is what happens when people write on your Facebook wall something that you don't like and instead of just typing out a quick response you stop and pray for the hurts that must be a part of that person's life to write what

they wrote. Sanctification is what happens in marriage when we say things we wish we hadn't said or do things we wish we hadn't done and we learn new words that express grace and forgiveness instead of anger and bitterness.

SLIDE Rock Tumbler

The image I often use is that of a rock tumbler. You see one up there on the video screen which contains that little gizmo and then some rocks and then to packages on the left which are grit. You have to put the grit in with the water and the rocks and put them in the tumbler for several days and then out come these beautiful rocks which have been polished. Sanctification happens in the same way as the grit of life rubs up against our lives and polishes us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, if we will allow ourselves to be placed in the hands of the rock tumbler which is God.

SLIDE Sanctification

Sanctification is that place where Charlie will learn not to bite. Sanctification is what Jesus talks about in John's gospel (13:34-15) as he begins to share words with his disciples before he is going to be crucified in Jerusalem.

SLIDE *34 "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*

Sanctification happens our whole life, each and every day for each one of us. John Wesley would say that each of us are being sanctified and as we live out this new commandment to love each other we become the presence of Jesus Christ in the world as we become the followers of Jesus, and that becomes a gift to the world which helps bring about the Kingdom of God.

Wesley would say that we are all on our way to perfection, being made holy and like Christ. This is what is recognized at the top part of this diagram that I share with you earlier.

SLIDE John Wesley's Grace Diagram (picture)

Wesley would say that none of us become perfected but we are all on our way to perfection when we allow God to use us. Perfection begins to happen in the world through the young mother I met a few weeks ago who is willing to give her bone marrow to another young mother several states away was only 26 years old and fighting for life. She made this decision in a quiet way with her husband.

She hasn't shared with anyone and made me promise that I would not give out her name, she just asked that I would pray that the procedure would be successful. The reality is that while she was trying to bless another woman she herself became blessed in giving that bone marrow.

Christian perfection is what happens when someone places a loaf of warm bread on the doorstep of young couple who have lost their first child. The bread shows up day after day and the couple has no idea who is bringing the bread, but it warms their home and their hearts in a moment of extreme bitterness and cold.

Christian perfection happens when mechanics and hairdressers and lawyers and doctors give their work pro bono to others who are in need. Christian perfection is about bringing the Kingdom of God into the here and now by living out the presence of Jesus Christ in the world. When we are willing to give grace upon grace to each other we are on our way to perfection. When we give beyond what we thought we could we are approaching Christian perfection.

Many of you are my mentors in this process because I see you blessing others and it touches me deeply. I see many of you sacrificing and giving up vacation time and your financial resources to bring about the Kingdom of God and it is the coolest part of my job when I get to walk alongside and see you on your way to perfection.

As we seek to do all the good we can as a response to God's grace there are several questions we should be asking ourselves along the way. Let me throw them out there for you today.

SLIDE What's your motive?

One of the greatest struggles that I have is that I get so busy doing ministry and serving others that I forget why I am doing it. It's as if every day the work itself becomes the goal. Sometimes I find myself doing the work of a pastor because I want to be noticed. I'm wearing this badge of honor on my chest as if to say, "Hey, look at me, Superman!"

My family gave me this Superman T-shirt for Father's Day and I was wearing at the Home Depot last week. I was in the section looking for replacement rollers for my screen door when a father and his young son walked by and they were trying to find the actual replacement screen for screen door and not the parts for the door itself. I overheard them talking about how they couldn't find screen material and because I had just purchased some a few weeks ago I knew exactly

where it was. So I turned around and told them where to go to find this material and the young boy looked up at me and said, "Thanks Superman!"

I felt like Superman in that moment! The truth is that there are many of us who want to be noticed as a superhero if we are honest. Is this why we do good things?

Sometimes my super competitive side comes in and I find myself doing good things to climb the ladder of success and to see myself as important and worthwhile. Sometimes I work hard to please my district pastor or even the Bishop or all of you. Am I trying to make a good impression? Am I trying to get someone to tell me, "Thank you"? Is it about ego or is it about power or control? Are these why I am doing good deeds?

Part of our task is to look at our motive for doing good works. What I find is that when I am asking all of those questions and doing good for the wrong reasons is because I have become disconnected from God, the source of that grace which compels me to serve and to follow. When I come to God in prayer it becomes much easier to remember that it's about God and not about me. Doing good should be about our response to God and God's love for us, nothing more nothing less. When we do it in that way we find ourselves blessing others and we live out the truth that we are blessed to be a blessing.

One of the things that helped me in these moments where I begin having the wrong motives is to remember all the times that people have poured grace into my life when I didn't deserve it. I had experienced grace upon grace from God through other people and through the Scriptures and through his Holy Spirit and when I remember this I am inspired and filled to go out and be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world. We can find new energy to go out and do this good work when we stay connected to the source.

I think of all of the people who were doing amazing work in ministry in the inner city in Denver for those who are struggling that I met while doing my Masters of Social Work and how many of them were burned out within a year or two. This is what happens when we don't stay connected to a source. We have to reconnect to God and know that we serve because God first served us and we love because God first loved us.

SLIDE Stay in Love with God

By the way, the focus of next week's sermon will be the third rule which is what helps us live out the other two and that is to ***stay in love with God.***

The really cool part is that this all becomes a cycle. When we do good all that we can it becomes a light to others, especially in dark places, and they are often inspired and see the love of God living through you. They then get inspired to go and serve others and in that way the love of God in the light of Christ begins to be spread throughout the entire world. Sometimes we don't have the strength to serve and we have to allow others to serve us and then we find ourselves renewed and we are able to do good for others again.

John Wesley actually got pretty hung up as a Christian at one point and he went through several dark moments in his life. His heart was not engaged with his faith or with his life and he wondered if there even was a God. He was preaching and teaching and doing what he thought was the right thing, but he still didn't feel it in his heart and he got discouraged.

At the age of 34 years old, on May 24, 1738 John Wesley had his heartwarming experience where he felt his heart, "strangely warmed." He recognized that it was not enough just to think about God and think about faith and read the Scriptures but he needed to feel it in his heart. Wesley began to talk about faith as something where, "head and heart should go hand-in-hand." Maybe you can remember a place for a time where your heart felt warmed and you realized there was something more in life than just what you see and feel and touch with your hands.

Once John Wesley had that experience of his heart being strangely warmed his faith was reignited and it was after this point that Wesley began to organize people into groups that became known as Methodists. It was after this point that he began to preach on the streets and out in the alleyways and open fields about the love of God and the call to repent and turn and follow this God who made us to love us. We are sitting here today in this church because John Wesley's heart was finally engaged as it was strangely warmed.

Life is a process and the process of sanctification and becoming more like Christ is one that happens throughout our lifetime. John Wesley lived to be 89 years old which was pretty unusual for people in the 1700s. Do you know what he was doing in the last week of his life? The day before he died he was serving food in a soup line and visiting debtors in prison, praying for them and their families.

Wesley understood that you never retire from doing the work of God as long as you stay connected to God, the source of grace.

This grace that comes from God as a free gift is what enables us to love God and return and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. When we experience that grace is one we can experience the miracle of transformation. My prayer as your pastor is that you will discover that grace that would fill your life and lead you onto perfection.

Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

Perhaps you are struggling today and you feel lost. Maybe you feel like you are in the place of wandering. You might be in the midst of a dark time in your life and you are not sure exactly where you are headed. For all of us there is a place that is created for us to do good as often as we can. There is a place where Christ truly meets us slave invite you now to take a deep breath, and pray this prayer as if it was your own.

Gracious God, I come to you knowing that I am in need of your love and grace... Forgive me for the days when I am not thank you or not walked closely with you... Awaken within me a connection to you so why might feel your love and grace poured into my life, that my faith would be strengthened and I would have the courage to do the good work that you have called me to do... Help me to reach out and be the presence of your son Jesus Christ in the world... Help me to be part of your plan of salvation for this world. We pray all of this in the name of Christ who leads us to holiness, Amen.

“Do All the Good You Can”

Theme: Three Simple Rules

Scripture: John 13:34-35; Ephesians 2:8-10

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

Meditation Moments for MONDAY, July 1 – Read Psalm 37:1-11 – At first, “do all the good you can” may sound like the way to a life of soaring popularity and grateful, devoted friends. This psalmist was deeply committed to living into this rule. But the psalm reflected challenges as well as joy. It said this way of life calls for patient trust in God, and a resolve not to fret when things don't seem to work the way they should.

- The writer of Psalm 37 was a wise teacher (“I was young and now I am old”—v. 25) sharing a hard won outlook on life. Do you ever feel as if it's the ones who do harm rather than good who prosper, gaining rewards you wish you could have? In what ways has your aim to do good required patience, and a willingness not to fret?
- Does it take “trust in the Lord” for you to do all the good you can? How can patience and trust in God make the difference between an annoying “do-gooder” and a person whose presence genuinely blesses others? In what ways can being, “still before the Lord” (v. 7) be a needed prelude to truly good actions?

TUESDAY, July 2 – Read Galatians 6:7-10 – “People reap what they sow”—that's sobering! Paul was talking about relationships and about how we treat one another. He wanted his converts to sow good deeds as they blessed and helped one another. This important principle dealt with choices we control, not with natural disasters or other tragic events nobody “sowed.”

- Verse 9 reminds us that doing good takes focused effort. “The first verb puts emphasis on losing interest (for example, “spiritless”) and the second on becoming discouraged or relaxing one's efforts” (UBS Translator's Handbook on Galatians). Have you ever become tired doing good? If so, what helped renew your energy to bless others?
- The New Jerusalem Bible translates verse 10 with the phrase, “As long as we have the opportunity, let us do good.” Do you ever feel that your circumstances are keeping you from doing anybody any good or that you have no opportunity to do good for others? How can the Holy Spirit's presence help you find creative ways of doing good for others at any point in your life?

WEDNESDAY, July 3 – Read Ephesians 2:4-10 – We don't do good to “get on God's good side.” (That's true of all three “simple rules.”) Through creation and salvation, God has already lovingly provided all we need for life now and forever. When we do good we are simply living into the purpose for which God made us. (John Wesley dealt with this issue in his sermon “The Scripture Way of Salvation.” If you'd like to read it, go to <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/43/>.)

- What is your life's purpose? If you say "I don't know," that doesn't mean you don't have one. Even if you've never given it conscious thought, you make choices each day based on some inner vision of who you are and what you're here for. Spend some quiet time today reexamining your life's purpose in the light of what this passage says.
- God "made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions." Have you ever been "doing all the right things" but missing the good God made you for? In what areas do you want God to help you more fully live out your "Christ life" today?

THURSDAY, July 4 – Read Luke 6:27-35 – Bishop Reuben Job asks in his book on the *Three Simple Rules*, "Where are the boundaries...what if my gift of goodness, small or large, is rejected? Suppose I were to seek compromise in conflict and my efforts were ridiculed? What if my efforts were seen as weakness and my concerns were overlooked?" Jesus said, "Do good to your enemies. That's what God does."

- List all the ways you can think of that God "is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." Jesus said God's example gives us a pattern to follow. What "enemies" or "ungrateful and wicked" people can you impact? Using your list, think of ways you might do good to them this week. Who might think of you as an "enemy"? Do good to them, too!
- Bishop Job's book also notes that "taking appropriate care of self and living selflessly are not opposites....To love God with all of life and to love your neighbor as yourself is not to denigrate, deny or devalue self." What are some ways you have found of doing healthy self-care? How do these energize and empower you to do good for others?

FRIDAY, July 5 – Read Galatians 5:18-25 – Like John Wesley, the apostle Paul did not stop with "Do no harm," but went on to focus on all the good fruit our lives can bear. We read the first part of this passage last week, listing the harmful "acts of the sinful nature." But we don't avoid harm just to leave our lives swept and empty (see Luke 11:24-26). The Holy Spirit bears superb fruit in open, yielded hearts.

- Think through the qualities listed as "the fruit of the Spirit." What possibilities for doing good would each fruit create or magnify in your life? Which one or two of the "fruits" do you want to ask the Holy Spirit to bear in your life in the months ahead?
- "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" Paul asked in Galatians 3:2. We can almost see the glint in the apostle's eye as he noted dryly of the fruit of the Spirit that "Against such things there is no law." Have you ever tried to earn God's favor by "observing the law"? Have you found the spiritual freedom of living "by the Spirit," and living in grace?

SATURDAY, July 6 – Read 1 Peter 3:8-17 – This passage makes little sense if we're busy "climbing the ladder" and seeking power. When it was written, most Romans mocked Christians as weak. After all, Christians believed that a crucified man was God; Romans worshipped the mighty emperor! But Peter's letter makes the God-given strength to do good (rather than to grab status or comfort) the basic standard of a life worth living.

- Bishop Job writes in *Three Simple Rules* that, "Self-care begins with the acknowledgment and reminder that each one of us is the object of God's love. Each one of us is embraced in the unlimited, saving and transforming love of God." How confident are you that as Psalm 34 (quoted in verse 12) said "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer"? In what parts of your life do you need that trust to keep you going from day to day?

Family Activity: Engage your family in "doing good" at home. Write each family member's name on a slip of paper and place it in a container. Ask each person to draw a name. (Make sure no one gets his or her own

name.) Encourage everyone to “do good” this week for the person whose name they chose. Good deeds could include helping with the other’s chores, coloring a picture or playing a game, giving hugs, and/or sharing supportive words. If a child is too young to participate on his or her own, assign a partner. At the end of the week, share a simple “do good” celebration. Then select different names and repeat each week. Thank God for the chance to “do good” in your own family as well as throughout the world.