



Made for Goodness

Session 8

November 20, 2023

Opening Prayer:

Wonderous and Infinite Creator:

You are the essence of love and the center of our being. We thank you for inspiring us to gather as seekers of your truth. We ask that you grant us open eyes, ears, and hearts, so that we can see your greatness in our lives, hear your word, and move our hearts. In your goodness, you created us as reflections of yourself, good and pleasing. Be present to us as we continue to be amazed by your greatness. We praise you in all we do and give glory to you through your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Chapter 8:

- I. Chapter VIII – Why Does God Let us Sin?
 - a. Story 1:
 - i. The University of Fort Hare was a well-respected, Western-style institution for tertiary education for black Africans. It was the hallmark of academic excellence. The Nationalist Government transformed it into a “bush college,” and governed by the tenet of Bantu Education: Africans deserve only an inferior education; they are to be educated for servitude. The once-stellar faculty was replaced by inferior instructors.
 - ii. The students held a sit-in outside of the administration building to protest what the university had become. They refused to move until their demands were met. The administration would not negotiate with a mob, and wanted a spokesperson. The students knew that any delegation would be punished, so they refused.
 - iii. In 1968, three hundred students were told they had been suspended and must disperse. That afternoon the police arrived with their vicious dogs. They charged at the students. The students held their ground. They were calm, and so impressive, and sang the hymn “God Bless Africa.” Then they were taken away and expelled from the university.
 - iv. Once again it seemed as evil had triumphed. Desmond Tutu was in the chapel pouring out his emotions to God. How could God let that happen?
 - v. **Reflection: What is ‘sin?’ What are the effects of sin?**

- vi. Tutu says the emotional combination of anger and anguish is a common experience. It is the emotional territory inhabited by the parent of a child who was bullied at school. It is the internal landscape of a homeowner after a break-in. It is that place of every person who stands powerless in the face of an outrage or injustice.
- vii. **Reflection: How do you respond to sin? Either as a sinner, or someone affected by sin?**
- viii. The Psalms remind us that our rage does have a place in our prayer life as it does in our emotional life. They contain the ugliest of sentiments, and lovely lyrics at the same time. The psalms allow us to pray our most murderous feelings and not act them out. They attest to the fullness of human experience.
- ix. But the psalms describe a god who is less than God. A god of human making. God is our lackey, ready to demolish our enemies, save our friends, and confirm our biases. It is a god who gives sinners their ‘just desserts.’
- x. We understand that goodness cannot tolerate the existence of sin or sinners. Evil is repulsive to good.
- xi. Yet, God is on the side of the sinner. God is on our side. He is not looking to punish us, but to redeem us from the prison of our own errors. God is not the chief prosecutor, but rather the lead defense attorney.
- xii. **Reflection: God is on the side of the sinner. What do you make of that? How does it make you feel?**
- xiii. It is hard to accept the fact that God does not love us because we are good, but God loves us because God loves us. God takes the initiative in loving us first. God said, “You are going to be mine.”
- xiv. We operate from a “I want to be good so God will not be mad at me, or so God can approve of me.” Rather, God is yearning to embrace us. No catch. It’s too good to be true.
- xv. Like the story of the lost sheep, God will risk abandoning 99 obedient sheep and hunt for the lost one.
- xvi. **Reflection: Do you believe this? If so, what difference does it make if I sin? God will love me anyway.**
- xvii. Sin opens a chasm between the sinner and God, an anathema to God.
- xviii. God does not only see our sin, but also sees the good that has been covered up, blurred by our misdeeds. Yet, God also knows that there is

something in us that does not succumb to sin. Dame Julian calls it “divine will.” So God sets out to close the gap that sin opened between us.

xix. There is always the possibility that the 99 sheep will be lost, or turn away. There is always the possibility that the son will be killed to ransom the sinner. God is willing to sacrifice the good to win the bad. God’s love of the sinner is a costly, risky, love.

xx. **Reflection: Would God actually sacrifice the good to win the bad?**

xxi. Theologian Origen maintained that eventually, heaven will win us all. The odds are in God’s favor, and has time on His side. He asserted that even at the end of time, Satan would abandon hell to worship God in heaven.

xxii. It can be unsettling to think that our worst enemies will avoid hell, and are among the beloved children of God. We are all made in goodness, and are all made to inhabit heaven.

xxiii. But we will not be driven into heaven by the fear of hell, but rather we will be drawn into heaven by the love of God. Evil will become so unattractive, that we will yield to the beauty of heaven.

xxiv. God’s sacrifice is costly in time and it is worthwhile in eternity. It is risky in time, but the outcome is assured in eternity.

xxv. **Reflection: Will everyone ultimately be in heaven? – Everyone?**

b. Story 2:

- i. Azim Khamisa buried his only son in accordance with his Muslim faith. He climbed into the muddy pit holding Tariq’s shrouded body. He cradled his burden, grieving his boy’s lost life. A fourteen-year-old teenage boy, Tony Hicks, was awaiting trial. Tony shot and killed Tariq. His mother was fifteen when Tony was born, and he did not have a father. He watched the coroners carry his murdered cousin’s nine-year-old body away. At ten, he moved in with his grandfather. His grandfather’s love was not enough. By the time he turned fourteen, he cast his lot with a gang of boys. Drink, drugs, and guns.
- ii. Twenty-one-year-old Tariq refused to surrender a pizza he was delivering to Tony’s without paying for it. Tony, drunk and drugged, shot and killed him.
- iii. Azim forgave Tony. Azim established a foundation to honor his son, and travels the country with Tony’s grandfather, to tell their story and speak about forgiveness. They teach the young people about the power of nonviolence.

- iv. Azim is working diligently to secure an early release of the person who killed his only child. Azim is working as much as any father would to secure freedom for his only son – as if Tony was his son.
- v. Azim gives us a glimpse of God’s own conviction. In spite of the evil we do, there is a goodness in us that is unstained by sin. So the Good Shepherd will set off in search of the lost sheep.

vi. Reflection: Could you do as Azim did?

II. Closing Prayer:

Why are you running, running, running? Why are you hiding away? You may think that what you have done is beyond my power to forgive. You may think what you have said makes me shrug and turn away. You may think that you are lost. But you are not lost to me. How could you ever be? Where are you that I cannot go? Where have you been that I have not been? What did you see that I have not seen? What did you do? No, it cannot be undone, the pain cannot be unmade, the life cannot be un-lived, the time will not run backward, you cannot un-choose your choice. But the pain can be healed, your choices can be redeemed, your life can be blessed, and love can bring you home.

Note: The contents of this guide contain summations or direct quotes from *Made for Goodness* by Bishop Desmond and Mpho Andrea Tutu.