

**GOD IS GOOD**  
**January 7, 2018 Morning Service**  
**Titus 3:1-8**

Hey. Two things I want you to help me with this morning. Say these words. God is good. Just say that with me. One more time. God is good. That's what I want to talk about for a few minutes this morning. Then there's one other word I want to give you and it is the word for the year at Olive and you're going to hear a whole lot of this word this year. It is the word engage. It is the year to engage. The year of engagement it's going to be.

Now when I put that in front of our leadership team they said, "Well, pastor, we're liable to have a bunch of people getting married if we have that as our...." I said, "Well that'll be alright. That's not bad." You remember where you were if you're married when somebody asked you to marry them. Yeah, you remember that. How you did it. I'm amazed how this millennial generation gets creative when they get ready to ask somebody. I just – "Will you?" "Yes." Boy, they do a lot of creative stuff today. But engaged is engaged is engaged. It's connected.

The word engaged is used four times in the New Testament. One of them is in our text today and we're going to look at it and talk about the goodness of God in our life. So I want everybody to take your Bible. Go to the book of Titus chapter 3 and we're going to read the first eight verses and you'll find that word engage if you're in the New American Standard as I preach out of. It will be found down in verse 8 and then you'll also find it again in verse 14. Two of the four times it's used in the New Testament is found in this third chapter of Titus.

So in Titus, we're in chapter 3. Paul is writing to this young preacher and in the first two chapters he really is dealing with ministers and the gospel ministry but in chapter 3 he moved into the gospel at how God changes our lives. He talks about the good things of God. It's the goodness of God I want you to think about with me this morning. God is good. Oftentimes we say all the time after that. God is good. That's what we're going to be looking at this morning. So Titus chapter 3. We begin reading in verse number 1. You follow along as I read because this now is the word of our great God. Paul says to Timothy:

*Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in*

*righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to [and here's our word, to] engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.*<sup>1</sup>

Then just look down to verse 14 if you've got your Bible open. It won't come up on the screen but verse 14 says: *Our people must also learn to engage* [there it is again] *in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.* Church, if we stop engaging, in meeting pressing needs, we'll become a fruitless tree but as long as you engage and press to meet those hurting people's needs, God'll give fruit. Just as you saw fruit today, just as new people continue to come, and we'll see that happening in the days ahead of us. God is good.

There are three good things I want you to see in this text this morning with me. Number one. I want us to look at the good news. The good news. Now he gives us bad news to start with. In verse 2 he tells us not to malign anyone but be peaceable, gentle, showing consideration for all men because, verse 3 says, we once were fools, disobedient, deceived. You can say Amen wherever you want to, alright? That's us, isn't it? We were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved, various lusts, pleasures, spending our life in malice, in hateful, hating one another. There's a sinful side. We've all sinned. Everybody in this room. That's from the pastor up. All of us but thank God for verse 4.

While we were all of that but when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared He saved us. Not on the basis of what we've done in righteousness but according to His mercy by the washing. That word washing is the word laver. If you go to the Old Testament and you read about the tabernacle there's a laver and that laver is where they would come and they would wash before going into the time of worship. Well that's this word right here. By the washing of regeneration, He's cleansed us and He's renewed us not only outwardly but inwardly by the Holy Spirit whom He pours out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. We're justified by His grace and then we're made heirs to the hope of eternal life.

Let me just ask you a question. You've gathered here in Warrington this morning. Have you ever had the grace of God applied to your life where your sins have been washed away by the marvelous grace of the Lord Jesus? Friend, there's no doubt

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about it. We all have to say that we find ourselves in verse 3 as foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved, malice, hateful, mean. God changes our life.

Now right out beside this text I have two initials. I'm an only child but if I ever had a brother his name was Eddie Echarri. I was born the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, December 14, 1953 in Detroit, Michigan. Three days later in the Bronx, New York, my friend Eddie Echarri was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1953. Eddie used to laugh and say, "Pastor, God knew when we were born three days apart He was going to put us together." My goodness, did our lives take a different path.

I left Detroit, moved to Alabama, became a Christian when I was a ten-year-old boy. I was called to preach when I was 17. I went on to college and seminary and pastored churches in Texas and wound up 27 years ago coming to Pensacola, Florida to pastor Olive Baptist.

Eddie was born to a Cuban father and a Puerto Rican mother there in the Bronx. He was a Catholic altar boy. Smart. It used to when I was going to write a letter maybe to the governor or something of that nature I'd call Eddie and say, "Help me with this." Because he had studied pre-law a little bit. He was really good with words. He wasn't very good driving but he was really good with words. He drove really fast. I don't know how many tickets he got in Flomaton, Alabama. He called it Flomation. He said, "Every time I go through Flomation they pull me over."

Eddie began to run numbers with the Gotti family. I don't even know what that is. I know it has something to do with gambling. He wound up with a heroin habit, was arrested, and jumped out of the third story window of a building, broke a leg. They put him in jail. He wound up spending time in Sing and Rikers Island in New York but because he jumped out of that window his lawyer got him early release time because of brutality. I asked him. I said, "Why'd you jump out of that window?" He said, "I ran out of bullets before they did." He said, "My gun was empty. I went out before they shot me dead."

When he got out of prison he had family in Pensacola and that family came to Olive Baptist Church. He started coming and sitting up in the balcony and listening to me preach over in old Passmore Hall. One Sunday I gave the invitation and here he came walking down the aisle. He'd gotten overweight and he came waddling down the aisle. He took me by the hand. He said, "I want to give this Jesus a try you've been talking about." He'd tried everything else. I'm telling you, when he trusted Christ, God instantaneously changed his life.

With the heroin, he quit cold turkey. He quit alcohol. He got rid of all that stuff except cigarettes. Nicotine liked to kill him. It took him a year and a half. I'd look at him. I'd say, "Big boy, why don't you quit smoking that stuff?" He said, "Pastor, it's just,

I don't know. It's just Jesus hasn't given me release. I just can't get moral victory there." The day came. It took him almost two years. That came to be a reality in his life.

This text was Eddie's text. If you go out in the northern part of our city, I can take you right now in that little Methodist cemetery where we buried him where it's got this verse on his tombstone. It's what they put on there. Titus chapter 3, verses 4 through 7. He saved us. Hallelujah.

I'm telling you, what God did for my buddy, Eddie Echarri, he'd do for you today. If you call on the name of the Lord, He'll save you. Anybody in this town, if you'll call on His name, He'll save you. He'll change you. He'll wash you with the regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Then verse 7. He said, "Being justified by His grace, we're made heirs according to the hope of eternal..." We become heirs. Jesus died and He leaves us an inheritance. Let me tell you right now. You're looking at a preacher that's worth a whole lot more dead than he is alive. My kids might cry one tear but they'd be glad when they get the bill that I was gone. I'm the only child. I know exactly what it's worth. I know if she pays it every month or she doesn't. Because if I think I'm worth more dead, I'm telling you, my momma's worth a whole lot more dead than she is alive.

Jesus, at His death, leaves you an inheritance of forgiveness and eternal life but you've got to be one of His children to get it. You must be born again and you can be and that in this text is the good news. God is what? Good. Say it one more time. God is what? God is good.

God news. He gives us secondly, not only do we find good news in this text. We find good deeds, good deeds in this text. Look at it down in verse number 8. *This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage [engage – there's our word] in good deeds. These things are good and profitable.* In verse 14. Learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

Now listen to me, church. After you receive the good news of Christ you've got to learn to engage in doing good works. Good works doesn't save you but good works – it's what God's called us to do. He's called us to do good things. You say, "Pastor, where would I start?"

I pulled up in the parking lot today and two people met me. I rolled down the window. We have a whole generation that doesn't know what that means. The window used to have a crank on it. You remember? Not anymore. Thank God it doesn't. You just hit that little button and down it comes. I knew what they meant. "Pastor, where

would you like to park today? We'll help you." They were doing good deeds. They were serving people, greeting you.

Listen, I walked all over this building a little while ago. I got here a little bit early. I'm telling you, there is a gaggle of young'uns back here. I mean there's kids back here everywhere. They weren't crying until I walked up to the door and they told me, "Please leave, preacher." Man, there were joyful sounds. Somebody's back there working. That's good deeds. I read this week, one lady I think it was put on Facebook, she said, "It is as cold outside as the stare of a preschool worker in a Baptist church when the preacher has preached for 55 minutes overtime." That's cold, beloved. I'm telling you, that's cold right there.

They sent me on sabbatical a few years ago and I came back a week early and I decided I'm going to work in the preschool. So I went down and worked in the preschool one Sunday. They stuck me in a chair and put a baby in both arms. I was rocking them. I was having a good time. Of course, they were taking care of everything. I kept looking up at that clock. It got to 12:15. It got 12:20 and one of the ladies caught me looking. She walked by and she said, "Yeah, it gets long in here when you guys don't quit on time, doesn't it?" That helped me keep my eye on that clock a little bit.

That's good deeds. Somebody does that. Somebody knocks on these doors and goes up and down these streets and makes – that's a good deed. Somebody goes to the hospital. That's a good deed. Somebody takes food to a family that's hurting. That's good deeds. That's what God's called us to do. Amen. Yes indeed. He gives us good news. That's salvation. But then He's called us in turn to be involved.

Let me ask you. What good deed did you do this week? What good deed did you do? Did you see anybody hurting and do a good deed? God's called you. If you're His child, He's called you to do it, to be involved in good deeds. You may want to volunteer, work one of these tables back here. I don't know where God's got you but He's called you. Friend, a work like you're doing here, a work at the Olive Road campus, it doesn't go without people doing good deeds. Not just on Sunday here but I'm talking about Monday and Thursday and Friday afternoon. Doing good deeds. That's where we have to engage. It's time to engage. We must engage so that we will not be found a fruitless people.

Good news. Good deeds. There's one more thing and I think this is the real reason I've come to preach to you today. I think this may be the most important part of this text that I uncovered several weeks ago. It's down in verses 12 and 13. I didn't give them this to put on the screen. I hope you've got your Bible. Good friends. Good friends. Good friends.

Now look at this. Paul's writing to Titus. Titus is his friend. He said, verse 12: *When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.* So two of his friends are mentioned. Artemas, we don't know anything about Artemas. The only thing we know is his name is mentioned right here but Paul says he's going to send him so you know that Paul was his co-laborer. Tychicus, we know something about him. We know that he carried one of the Pastoral Epistles and we believe that he carried the one to Colossae. We've got proof of that and we think he was the one carrying the mail to Ephesus. We don't have direct biblical rationale to see it but we know that Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus. Whether he sent him with that book we're not sure but he was his friend and co-laborer together.

Now listen to me. You need God to save you. You need to do good works but I want you to understand. You know the reason you ought to be in a church like this? You need good friends. Yes indeed. You need acquaintances. You need people to stick with you and you to stick with them. People that we never even heard of like Artemas. God knows who they are. Tychicus, a man carrying the New Testament. My soul.

Verse 13. He says: *Diligently help Zenas the lawyer.* I thought the lawyer was supposed to help me. Well he does but even lawyers have needs. As a matter of fact, some of them have got more needs than they know they've got. I can say that because my son's half a lawyer. You say, "What are you talking about?" Well he's half finished with law school. There's six semesters. He's finished three. He's half a lawyer. I hope when he gets out he's more than half a lawyer, alright? Zenas. We don't know really who he was but we know what he was. Now we don't know what kind of law he practiced. There were two kinds of law Zenas could have practiced. He could have practiced Old Testament biblical law. He could have been like a scribe that understood the scriptures or he may have been a man who was an expert in Roman law.

Paul needed those people around him. When he got in trouble, he needed Roman lawyers. Zenas may have been one of those and he says: *Diligently help Zenas the lawyer.* That was his friend. Zenas no doubt has been a friend to Paul and Paul is being a friend now to Zenas telling people to help him.

Then number four. His fourth friend is Apollos. We know more about Apollos than any of these four that we're talking about. He says about Apollos: *and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them.* Help Apollos. Titus, help him now so he doesn't have anything lacking. You find Apollos in Acts 18. Apollos, the Bible says, was mighty in the scriptures. He was a man fervent in teaching. As a matter of fact, he took on the Jews in the synagogue and proclaimed the gospel unto them. Then Priscilla and Aquila came by and found him and said, "Apollos." They began to take him deeper into the word of God.

You need friends to take you deeper into the word of God. They said, "Apollos, when you were baptized, how were you baptized?" He said, "I was baptized in John's baptism." You see, there were two kinds of baptism in the early part of the church. There were those that were baptized following John the Baptist. John's baptism. My preaching hero is Dr. W. A. Criswell. He wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on the baptism of John. John's baptism. How people then had to be baptized not in John's name but in Jesus' name because some had followed John and then they came to follow Jesus. They were baptized not in John's name but in Jesus' name.

They said, "Apollos, how were you baptized?" He said, "In John's name." They took him and had him baptized in Jesus' name and then he began to war even the more and the stronger you go in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter and Paul ran into him and said, "Apollos, when you believed did you receive the Holy Spirit?" He said, "I didn't even know there was a Holy Spirit" and he began to teach him the way of the power of the Spirit of God and he laid hands on him and he was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost of God.

He had a friend that taught him theologically. You see, friends will help you in various ways. Friends that stick closer than a brother. You say, "Pastor, I need that. I need a friend." Well if you want a friend the Bible says you ought to be one. That's how you become a friend is that you be a friend.

Many of you are people that have come – one young couple said to me this morning, the mothership. Others of you I've never met before. I want to tell you about the three best friends I ever had in my life. They came in 1997. I've been at Olive 27 years, 26 of the happiest years of my life. There was 1997. It was a hard year. God knows I wanted to leave. I tried to leave. I wanted out of there. I said, "Lord, I'll go anywhere. Just send me. I don't care where it is." I remember writing down, I said, "Lord, I'll go to Toad Suck, Arkansas." I didn't even know that was a real place. It is a real place. I shared that story one time and somebody gave me a magnet from Toad Suck, Arkansas. I've got it on my refrigerator in my office at Olive." They have the Toad Suck Festival. I don't even want to go to that.

I just wanted to leave. It was just a mess. I had done some crazy things and some people wanted me to leave but I couldn't go. I got a letter from a lady in our church that told me she was going to burn our house down. It was hard. I know who she is and I'll preach to her again next Sunday. She's there every week. She's faithful. We've closed that gap but they were just angry at me and I was angry at them. It wasn't easy and God was teaching all of us some stuff.

I came home one night, May 14, 1997. There were three guys parked down in front of my house, three of my closest friends in all the world. I walked down. I thought, they've come to get me. I'm done. When I got down there I saw who they were. I said,

“What are you guys doing?” They said, “Pastor, we’ve been on a little trip.” I said, “Really?” They said, “Yeah.” I said, “Where have you been?” I said, “Who’s car is that?” They said, “We rented that car at 5:00 this morning. We drove from here in Pensacola to Pisgah, Alabama.” That’s my hometown in rural northeast Alabama. It’s 350 miles from here. You can drive to Chattanooga, Tennessee, just 50 miles south of Chattanooga. Right up on the northeastern corner of Alabama.

They said, “Pastor, you used to tell us that artesian water would bubble up out of the ground. We went to get you a drink of water from home. They said, “Have you read II Samuel 23?” I said, “Well help me.” They said, “Where David.” “Oh yeah he was in the cave and said, ‘I wish I had a drink of water from my well in Bethlehem.’” They said, “Yeah.” Three guys broke through the Philistine line and went down and got him a drink of water and brought it back. They said, “Well we drove up there this day and we sat with your momma and daddy and we got a quart fruit jar full of water.” They reached over in the back of the car and they brought it out and gave it to me. They said, “We just brought you a drink of water from your well in your Bethlehem.”

My Lord, I’d never been so encouraged in all my life. They just bolstered me. They said, “Pastor, we brought you something else.” They reached over and they brought two big rocks. If you’re ever at my house, if you come by I’ll show you these rocks. I’ve got them planted right outside my home office. When I was 17 I used to go out there and lie down on a big rock. It was as big as that area where the piano is, where Jaime is. I’d go out there and lie down on that rock.

Pisgah means a high, rocky ridge. It’s like where Moses looked over in the Promised Land. Pisgah looks over into the Tennessee valley and the Tennessee River runs out of Tennessee and comes down into north Alabama. They put those blocks and gates and dams on that river and made the Tennessee Valley Authority where electricity finally came to rural north Alabama years ago.

I could see that mighty river running. I’d lie out there and read the Bible. They took a hammer and went to that rock and broke off two pieces of that rock and brought it back to me and said, “Pastor, God called you on this rock. He’ll sustain you on this rock if you’ll let God be the chief cornerstone of your life.” My Lord. So every now and then I go out there and I just put one foot on one rock and one on another. I said, “Lord, You’ve got me in this mess. Now I’m going to stand on You.”

They brought me one more thing. They brought me some fresh flowers. I have a picture of them on my credenza at home. They said, “Pastor, if you’ll let Jesus be the Lily of your Valley, the Rose of your Sharon, the fresh flower of your soul, He’ll see you through every storm.” Gosh. We wept and cried.

Then these three men – one of them is dead and gone to heaven now – one of them I preach to every Sunday. The other I preach to from time to time because of his change of venue. Big Dennis came and took his hand and put it on my mouth. He said, “Could you be quiet for a minute?” He said, “I know it’s hard for you but just be quiet for a minute.” I said, “I will.” He said, “Pastor, we want you to know, the three of us, we are willing.” Listen to me. That’s what they said. “We are willing to die for you.” I said, “Uh...” He shut my mouth. “It’s not because you’re worth something special. It’s just because you’re God’s anointed in our church, you’re our pastor, our shepherd. God sent you. When He wants to get you to leave, He’ll get you out of here. It’s no man’s business to do that but we want you to know if they’re going to get you, they’re going to come through us.”

They wrote down their names. This was before cell phones. They said, “Here’s our names and numbers and if you get in trouble anywhere you call one. We’ll call the other two and we’ll come get you and we’ll lay down our life.”

Let me tell you, you ought to be a part of a church just to get to find friends in church like that. You say, “I don’t have many friends.” Friend, if you get three or four like that, you don’t need any more. Thank God that He gives you men and women to be around you but friends, Artemas, Apollos, Zenas, Tychicus. Good friends. Good friends.

Here’s what I want us to do this morning. This will be a little weird but I’m that way sometimes. So Jaime’s just going to start playing. Some of you, you’re here and this is the first time you’ve ever been here so this will be harder on you than it is on anybody but don’t worry about it. When I tell you in a minute, I want you to go and I want you just to tell somebody, “Thank you for being my friend.” We’re going to take about two stanzas. Don’t get to telling stories and all of that. Just say, “Thank you. Thank you.”

I’ve got a lovely girl that’s here today. She’s my friend and she helped me. I’m going to come back there and tell her, “Thank you for coming today,” because she helped me in more ways than she knew she did. I’m grateful she’s here today. I just want you to do that with somebody. If there’s nobody you know here that way, just stand still and pray. Then in a moment we’re going to have an invitation because I want you to know the best friend you can ever know today and His name is Jesus. If you’ll call on His name, He’ll save you. That’s good news.

You need to be involved in good deeds. You need to pray that God would make you a good friend. We’ve been talking about good church members. Some of you ought to join this church today. Amen. We’re going to just encourage one another for a moment, kind of have a little family meeting and that’ll be good.

So let's stand and as we rise, just find somebody and say to them, thank you for being my friend.