

Goodness, a fruit of the Holy Spirit

Recently we had a Muslim visit us. He taught Christianity to other Muslims. He asked us many questions about Christian community and Christianity itself. At one point he said to us, “I know goodness when I meet it”. This took us completely by surprise, knowing our faults, failings and lack of love in many situations. What he had glimpsed was God’s Good Spirit, the Spirit of our Lord and for that we were grateful.

We had another conversation recently with someone who was here to fix some broken equipment. He had met a member of St Mary’s in the course of his work. This person had treated him with kindness on several occasions. Our workman said to us with obvious appreciation, “there aren’t too many like him around these days.” Without any prompting on our part he had put two and two together and realised that there was a connection between this man’s goodness and his profession of being a Christian. He had seen the Lord’s Good Spirit.

This goodness is distinct from good deeds, although good deeds flow from it. It is a quality of goodness that permeates the whole of life. There are few things worse than the determined do-gooder. The reason is that somewhere it doesn’t ring true. That indicates that self-love is part of the motivation. For Christians the exalted role of “the helper” must go. We are all poor sinners saved by grace.

Goodness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It embraces many things – kindness, integrity, honesty, truthfulness. It was with reason that the early church called the Spirit of Jesus, the “Holy” Spirit. Strangely, if we aim to be good, somewhere it all goes wrong. Our eyes are in the wrong place. If we aim to love Jesus, spend time with him in prayer and listen to the voice of his Spirit within, cautioning us when we are out of step, then this transparent goodness will follow in our lives as certainly as day follows night.

Moreover we will be completely unaware of it ourselves. Our good deeds and kind words will be natural and spontaneous. Any good we have done will be seen by ourselves as of little consequence and soon forgotten.



Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him; he will bear much fruit.”.

“Be Fruitful”