

Good Life

A Good Life

Evan Lature

Acts 1: 1-10

I loved staring at the afternoon blue sky in Bandung, Indonesia. I would climb up my roof and lay down there just to clear my head or just to be alone with the Lord. One time as I laid down, I saw a kite floating around in the sky with no string attached. It was up high above me. I followed its motion with my eyes. For some time, it was being tossed back and forth to the right and left. I found a company in that stranded kite. Sometime the kite got blocked by a dark cloud, but I could see it though barely. When the dark clouds were gone, I found myself filled with relief, "There it is. It's not gone. It's still there." I figured that the kite was getting higher in the sky as I saw it getting smaller from my sight. I followed it and was glad that it was still there though now it looked like a speck. Another dark cloud came, I knew I would still be able to see it when they were gone. But I was wrong, I didn't find the kite when the dark cloud moved. It's gone, disappeared in front of my eyes. All of a sudden, I had this strange feeling etched in the depth of my soul. A bereavement that I couldn't articulate well at that time. I knew for sure that I felt sad when the kite was gone. It shrunk my heart like a flat balloon. That's the same feeling I had later every time I said goodbye to people that I cherished in my life.

"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8)

Life after the resurrection. Jesus's disciples were thrilled with an unexpected comeback of their teacher, leader, friend, and Lord who had been through agony, suffering, betrayal, humiliation, and death a few days early. Their beloved one has risen. He has indeed risen! For forty days He was staying with them, teaching them, and sharing His life with them. Everyone could feel that something big was about to come. On one occasion when they were eating, the feeling that they had been sharing together couldn't be more right as Jesus told them to wait for the gift the Heavenly Father was about to give as they were staying in Jerusalem (1:4-5). One of them spoke up, pouring out the uncontainable feeling they had been keeping all this time, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?" (1:6, The Message)

This particular part of the story really struck me. Now, have you ever been in a situation when things kept sending a constant certain vibe and you could feel in your bones that something good was about to come and you just knew it? It's very exciting. Part of it because it was so much loaded with unlocked possibilities including your own narratives that you wanted to see to come true. *"Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?"*

The Narratives of Good Life

Everyone has their own **narratives of good life** that they want to see to come true. Whether we're aware of it or not, we manage our lives around that narrative. We go to school, study hard to earn good grades and graduate in order to pursue what we dream. Getting a job that we want, getting married with the person we desire, getting settled in comfortable living while making money and enjoying life with our beloved ones.

What is a good life? Here's what one author suggested in one article

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-is-a-good-life_b_6485478

- *A good life is when your outlook is that you have more good days than bad, when life is generally a blessing not a burden.*
- *A good life is one in which we feel loved.*
- *A good life has you feeling success.*
- *A good life allows you to laugh and feel joy.*
- *A good life holds beauty.*
- *A good life has you putting into every week some things you love to do.*

These definitions reflect what most people think about having a good life in this world. To some extent, the narrative of the good life of the apostles might have reflected those definitions: a restoration of Israel. Nevertheless, Jesus was challenging their narrative of good life to that beyond time, human power, and places. *"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (1:7-8)

It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

We humans have a compulsive nature to take control. We don't like uncertainties and confusions. We want to know what will happen today and tomorrow in order to protect ourselves from unpleasant

things. Fear, anxiety, depression, and panic are the easiest way to go when things don't work. The more things are "up in the air," the stronger the urge to be in charge.

When life doesn't work the way we want to, will we find ourselves resting in God's heart? Or will we find ourselves complaining, distracting ourselves with some other plans and taking back control by making our own salvation? Can we wait upon Him without knowing the times nor dates?

God works in eternity. His time is not ours. Nevertheless, we are called to understand the moment – the here and now- from an eternal perspective. *"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of **the eternal life to which you were called when you made good confession in the presence of many witnesses**" (1 Tim 6:12), as Paul counseled his beloved spiritual son Timothy. Right before his time of agony in Calvary, Jesus poured out his heart to the Father and prayed, *"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: **that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**"* (John 17:1-3)*

Understanding the moment in eternal perspective is to understand the here and now within our intimate knowledge and relationship with God. That's the good life! What we deal right now on earth should be seen in His authority that He's in control. Our part is being faithful to what He has called us to do, even without necessary knowing what the future holds but clinging to His heart instead. To work out our salvation faithfully and fervently while holding things loosely before God is one of its implications.

Being Christian is not about making lives easier and comfortable. It's always about following Christ, no matter what. Embracing uncertainties as an opportunity to know God deeper and choosing to trust Him no matter what, are important parts of the journey. *It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.*

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you

On another occasion Jesus said to His disciples, *"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and **be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also live."* (John 14:15-19).

Jesus had been telling His disciples that following Him would lead them to His own way: a self-emptying way that will cause loneliness, oppositions, and suffering. *“Remember what I told you” ‘A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours as well’ (John 15:20)* Only the power from above can carry them on. He asked the Father to accompany them as they would continue the Kingdom’s narrative of good life. He would be with them forever, reminding them always that they will not be alone. With Him, they will be guided and empowered to turn the world upside down.

Later in the book of Acts, at Pentecost, the company that Jesus asked from the Father swept the disciples in form of tongues of fire and came to rest on each of them. They started to speak in other languages, declaring the wonders of God as the Spirit enabled them. The Bible passage notes that about 3,000 people came to Christ that day. That launched a new chapter of the Kingdom’s narrative movement, invading the broken and fallen world with Christ’s light and truth.

The Holy Spirit still works today, accomplishing God’s works through believers. Christ’s light and truth to some degree are at stake in the lives of His followers. As Christians, we are called to tap into the Holy Spirit within us. Only when we’re attentive to the Holy Spirit, can we become Christ’s effective witnesses.

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth

We are living in an unprecedentedly world today. Some call it globalization and some call it a global village. However, the globalized world we have today doesn’t automatically lead us toward a much better life. We see people clash each other over different values, cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles. Though the uniting world promises solidarity, equality, and positivity, the reality is not as rosy as the slogan. Bad things and evil deeds are way much faster transmitted than love, respect, and positivity. Greed, lusts, disorders, and human brokenness are inevitably global problems. In the midst all of this, we’re tempted to ask “What is a good life? What does it look like in every form of relationship in the world?” This issue tells us something about the fallen nature of the world.

There was a good provocative movie in 1999 called *Magnolia*. The movie was weaving altogether a bunch of stories questioning “in such a broken world, what is a good life?” A daughter who hates her dad, a father who is laying down in his coma haunted by his past, a son driven by a bitter heart turning him to be a wacko motivator, an unloved wife who eventually turns down her plans to kill her sick husband, a broken-hearted marketing officer who works on his teeth, an ambitious dad who is milking his brilliant boy, and a lonely good cop who falls in love with a drug-addict woman.

The director of the movie Paul Thomas Anderson seems to be celebrating the fallenness by slowly dragging the despair and depressing tones of the movie until it's unbearable putrefied. No light of hope. It's all dark all the way down without light at the end of it. With great cinematographic, solid performances, and riveting music scores, the movie was successfully conveying the state of brokenness of this world. My soul was restless during the movie. I understood movies are human's crafts that to some degree use dramatization to convey their messages. But I couldn't deny the underlying truths in the movie regarding the fallen nature of the world.

I've been in ministry for almost 11 years now. I've been dealing with brokenness, not only other's brokenness but mine too. Still, I believe there's more to the somber reality Anderson pictured in *Magnolia*. There is hope for the brokenness and the helplessness. The hope that redeems the fallen world where pain, bitterness, and wounds are healed. The hope that stems from God for who He is, who heals the brokenhearted and binds up people's wounds (Psalm 147:3); who in His love and mercy redeems, lifts up, and carried His people (Isaiah 63:9). The goodness and the beauty of a redeemed life that can only happen in Christ alone. In a redeemed life, bitterness is the past; brokenness is mended; wounds are healed; and beauty and justice are restored.

As God's beloved who have been redeemed, God calls us to be agents of change for those who are hopeless and broken. How? Through our lives. We are the living testimony of God's love, truth, and justice. With the power of the Holy Spirit, that's how we become witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Conclusion

In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, *"Father, I want those you have given me **to be with me where I am, and to see my glory**, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and **they know that you have sent me**. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that **the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them**"* (John 17-24-26)

Remember the story of me staring at the disappearing kite in the beginning? I remember that day as a beautiful moment when God spoke to my soul about life, particularly mine. What is a good life? In life I've been seeing people come and go and how I've been seeking to relate to others deeply and love them freely as I pour my life into theirs. When I remember Jesus' prayers, I know a good life is to be with Jesus and to see His glory in the midst of the world He's sent me to. I'll never be alone while doing the tasks He trusts me with. I have His love.

Evan Latlure

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Group Discussion: What used to be your narrative of a good life and what is your narrative of a good life now? Are they still the same or have they changed?

Give Me Jesus

By Fernando Ortega, arr. By Evan Lature

In the morning when I rise 3x

Give me Jesus

And when I am alone 3x

Give me Jesus

I don't want everything

I know I only want one thing in life

I'm only longing for His presence, give me Jesus

And when I come to die 3x

Give me Jesus