MEDIA TEAM • SERMON RUN SHEET

Follow the spoken manuscript below. Bold blue cue lines are media instructions, not spoken text. All Scripture cues are lower thirds unless marked FULL SCREEN. Use the wording of the sermon; no translation is specified in the source manuscript.

Making Room for God's Goodness and Kindness

We're busy with a series on God's Goodness and Kindness, Last week, Eduan reminded us that the greatest gift of God's goodness and kindness isn't simply what He gives us — **it's that He gives us Himself.** And he encouraged us to keep in step with the Spirit and remain close to God. Today, I want to build on that as we look back on this year and consider how we can recognise God's goodness and kindness, even through seasons of change and uncertainty.

The sermon title is: Making Room for God's Goodness and Kindness.

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — Psalm 23:6 | "Surely your goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

And my key scripture is Psalm 23:6 **"Surely your goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."**

▶️ MEDIA: CLEAR lower third after the opening Scripture reading.

I love that David says **surely**. Not hopefully. Not maybe, if everything goes according to plan. Surely. And he says **all the days.** Not only the days when everything makes sense.

I find that it's often easier to recognize God's goodness looking back. But what about when we're still in the middle of uncertainty, waiting for things to make sense? Can we still see it then? And looking back at this year, I think that's something I've had to learn for myself.

I head up our Oakhill Create team – the worship band and production teams – And at our first team night in January, I spoke about making room for change. And at pretty much every team night after that, I famously found myself saying, "Remember in the beginning of the year when I said we need to make room for change? Well …" queue nervous laughter…

I genuinely thought I was preparing the team. I had no idea how personally those words would apply to me. But we'll come back to that later. **I first want to tell you about a cat. And a garden.**

My daughter has a beautiful fluffy cat named Ally, but we call her Fancy, because she likes to pretend she's very regal.

▶️ MEDIA: FULL SCREEN — Fancy slide 1: fluffy cat

Last winter Fancy was the fluffiest she'd ever been. But when I picked her up one day, I discovered that underneath all that beautiful fur were painful mats pulling at her skin. I tried brushing them out, but eventually I had to cut them out. And I really didn't want to. The fluff was glorious!

But I had a choice - I could leave her looking beautiful and in pain or cut away the mats and leave her looking a little less Fancy — but healthier.

▶️ MEDIA: FULL SCREEN — Fancy slide 2: cat on leather sofa after trimming

Ja, shame. She looked less impressive, but she wasn't in pain anymore.

▶️ MEDIA: CLEAR photo after cat illustration, before garden / John 15 teaching.

Something similar happened in our garden. Our lawn was looking wonderfully green, but I spotted a few weeds and asked our gardener to remove them. In my head, I imagined coming home to the same green lawn, just minus the weeds. Instead, I came home to dust. It looked terrible! I hadn't realized how much of that lovely green was actually weeds.

The garden looked full. But full and healthy aren't always the same thing.

These might not be perfect pictures of how God works. But they made me wonder how often we work so hard to maintain what looks good that we forget to ask what's really growing. **And that made me think about John 15, where Jesus describes His Father as the gardener.**

Before I read it, let's look at the context. Jesus is speaking to His disciples shortly before His crucifixion. They've built their lives around following Him, and now He's preparing them for the fact that He's going away. Everything they've known is about to change. Just earlier, In John 14, He assures them they won't be left alone; the Father will send the Holy Spirit to be with them. And then in **John 15:1-4** He gives them this picture:

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — John 15:1–4. Long reading: divide across consecutive readable lower thirds, with verse references on each.

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the gardener. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that continues to bear fruit, He prunes, so that it will bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have given you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself without remaining in the vine, neither can you bear fruit, unless you remain in Me."

▶️ MEDIA: CLEAR John 15:1–4 after reading; return to camera.

I love the timing of this teaching. Everything around the disciples is about to change, but Jesus reminds them that their dependence on Him must remain the same. And He uses this picture of a vine and a gardener to show them how important that connection is.

But there's something else in this picture that really stands out to me. Notice that the Father doesn't only deal with branches that bear no fruit. He also prunes branches that are already fruitful. And I think that's interesting, because when something is good and working well, we naturally want to hold on to it. Maybe even build on it and make it bigger.

But the gardener sees something we don't always see. He knows what the branch **needs** to become even more fruitful. And sometimes that means cutting something back, even when it's already growing well. The goal of pruning isn't simply to make the vine smaller. It's to make room for more fruit.

Like my Fancy cat and my garden. Just because something looks full and impressive doesn't necessarily mean it's healthy or fruitful.

I think we can do the same in our own lives. We fill our diaries, take on responsibilities and keep ourselves busy, often with really good things. And there's nothing wrong with being busy. Doing less doesn't automatically mean we're closer to God. But perhaps we need to stop measuring fruitfulness by how full our lives are, and start asking whether our lives are producing the kind of fruit God desires.

And here's the wonderful thing. Jesus doesn't leave us wondering how we're supposed to produce that kind of fruit.

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — John 15:4–5 | "Remain in me, as I also remain in you … apart from me you can do nothing."

He tells us in verses 4 and 5: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you … apart from me you can do nothing." That's the heart of it. Fruitfulness doesn't come from how much we manage to do for God. It comes from remaining connected to Jesus.

Looking back at Oakhill this year, I think we've experienced a little of that.

When we spoke about making room for change, I imagined preparing for all the new things ahead. But sometimes it meant doing less — fewer events, fewer projects, and not rushing to fill every available space. And that gave us room to listen to God, build relationships, develop leaders and seek His direction.

And isn't that what our focus this year, Divine Connection, has been about? Drawing closer to God and learning to follow His leading.

Because as a church, we don't want to become so busy doing things for God that we forget to remain connected to Him. And looking back, I can see God's goodness in how He's given us room to draw closer to Him.

But it's one thing to make room for change when we have a choice. What about when life changes in ways we never expected, or would never have chosen for ourselves? I think there's something we can learn from Joseph's story about trusting God in those seasons too.

Now, Joseph is still young when God gives him dreams about his future. And almost immediately, his life begins looking nothing like those dreams. His brothers betray him, sell him into slavery, and he ends up in Egypt, serving in Potiphar's house.

Now imagine that for a moment. Joseph has these dreams of what his future might look like, but instead of moving closer to them, his circumstances seem to take him further and further away. He didn't choose this change. He didn't choose to leave his family. He didn't choose the life he suddenly found himself living.

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — Genesis 39:2 | “The LORD was with Joseph.”

And yet, Genesis 39:2 tells us something remarkable: “The LORD was with Joseph.”

And Scripture goes on to tell us that even as a slave, Joseph prospered. Things began to go well for him in Potiphar's house. But then he's falsely accused and thrown into prison.

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — Genesis 39:21 | “The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness…”

And in verse 21, we read again: “The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness…”

The LORD was with Joseph in Potiphar's house. And now, in prison, Scripture tells us again: the LORD was with him. His circumstances had changed dramatically. But God's presence hadn't.

And I think that's so important, because we often look for evidence of God's goodness in what's happening around us. When things are going well, when doors are opening, when life is working out, it's easy to say, "God is good." But what about when the doors close? When things go wrong? When life looks nothing like what you thought it would?

Was God any less good to Joseph in prison than what He was in Potiphar's house? No.

And I think that's something we need to understand about God's goodness and kindness. God's goodness isn't only seen when our circumstances improve. Even when we can't see what He's doing, we can trust that He is present and faithfully at work.

That word translated as kindness in Genesis 39:21 is the Hebrew word hesed.

▶️ MEDIA: SIDE SCREEN — HESED dictionary slide (FIRST APPEARANCE): Bring up as the word "hesed" is introduced.

When I think of kindness, I often think of someone doing something nice for me. Someone making me a cup of tea, helping me out, or simply treating me well. But hesed goes much deeper than that.

It speaks of God's steadfast love, His faithfulness and His commitment to His people. It's not just a kind gesture or a nice thing God does for us. It's part of who He is.

▶️ MEDIA: CLEAR Hesed slide after explanation

God wasn't just doing something nice for Joseph. He was showing Joseph His faithful, steadfast love — right there in prison.

Now, Joseph's story doesn't suddenly get easier. While he's in prison, he interprets dreams for two officials. He asks one of them to remember him when he's released.

But the man forgets. And another two years pass. We know how Joseph's story ends. But remember - Joseph didn't. He had to live through the waiting, the injustice and the uncertainty without knowing what was coming next.

Eventually, God enables Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and he's placed in a position where he helps Egypt prepare for famine. Years later, his brothers come to Egypt looking for food.

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — Genesis 50:20 | "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

And when Joseph looks back over everything that's happened, he says to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

▶️ MEDIA: CLEAR lower third after the quotation.

Joseph doesn't say that what his brothers did was good. It wasn't. Their betrayal was evil. But their actions didn't prevent God from accomplishing His good purpose. Through Joseph, many lives were saved, including the family through whom God's covenant promises would continue.

And here's what I think is really important for us to notice. Joseph couldn't see the purpose of his circumstances while he was living through them. But he could experience God's presence in the middle of them.

And I think that connects so well to what Jesus says in John 15. The disciples were about to face enormous change, and Jesus reminded them to remain in Him. Joseph's life was full of unexpected change, and through it all, Scripture keeps reminding us that the Lord was with him.

Now, that doesn't mean every painful experience is God pruning us. And it certainly doesn't mean everyone's prison will eventually become a palace. Scripture doesn't promise that. But it does show us something about the character of God. His goodness and kindness are not reserved for the moments when everything finally works out.

He is present in the waiting. In the uncertainty. In the parts of our story that don't make sense yet. And sometimes we only recognise what God has been doing when we look back. Sometimes we still have questions. **But His presence isn't dependent on our ability to understand what He's doing.** And that's something I've had to learn in my own life too.

Many years ago, I believed God had shown me something about what He was calling me towards. I carried that for a long time. But life happened. Circumstances changed. Things didn't unfold the way I thought they would.

Somewhere along the way, I began believing I'd disqualified myself. Maybe through decisions, mistakes, circumstances. Maybe I'd missed my moment. Eventually, I stopped expecting that part of my future to happen.

And when I stopped believing there was still something for that space, I felt I needed to fill it myself. So, I built another picture of my future. And it wasn't bad. There were really good things in it — things I loved, things God was using, things I expected to be part of my life for years.

Then at the beginning of this year, I told the Create team to make room for change. I thought I was preparing them. I didn't realise God was speaking to me too.

As the year unfolded, my role and responsibilities changed. Doors began opening into areas that felt strangely familiar — things I believed God had placed on my heart years ago.

And I wondered whether I'd been too quick to decide that part of my story was finished. But here's where making room became very real for me. I had to make room in a space I'd already filled.

With my plans. My expectations. My picture of the future.

And those things weren't bad. Some were really, really good. But I realized I couldn't hold on so tightly to my version of the future that I wasn't willing to follow where God was leading me.

Sometimes making room means releasing something good. Not because it was wasted, but because God is leading us differently.

I'm not saying every dream we have is a promise that must come true exactly as we imagine. But I am learning something about His grace and faithfulness. It's easy to recognize God's goodness now, when I can see doors opening.

But was He any less good in all those years when I couldn't see it? Any less faithful? Any less present? Of course not.

God's goodness wasn't waiting for Joseph when he stood before Pharaoh. He was with him in prison. And God's goodness wasn't waiting for me when things started making sense again. He was with me in the years when they didn't make sense too.

And I know I'm not the only one who's had to make room this year. Maybe something ended. A plan changed. You experienced a painful loss. Or perhaps life has simply become so full that you hardly have a moment to stop and listen.

Sometimes we rush to fill empty spaces because leaving them empty feels uncomfortable. But what if making room isn't always about creating space for something new? What if it's about recognising the God who is already with us?

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — Psalm 23:6 | full verse as at opening (SECOND APPEARANCE).

Let's go back to Psalm 23:6 "Surely your goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Sometimes we read that as though David is saying life will always be good. But earlier in the psalm, he speaks about walking through the darkest valley. About enemies. About needing God's protection. And still he says: All the days. Not just when everything works out. Not just when life makes sense.

And there's something beautiful about the word follow. In Hebrew, it means to pursue, or to chase after. It's often used to describe someone being pursued by an enemy. But David uses it to describe God's goodness and kindness. And I love that picture.

God's goodness and kindness aren't waiting for you at the end of the road. They're following you down the road. Chasing you. Even in the uncertainty. You don't have to reach the end of a difficult season before you can experience His goodness.

▶️ MEDIA: SIDE SCREEN — HESED dictionary slide (SECOND APPEARANCE): Bring up when "lovingkindness is hesed" is said.

And that word lovingkindness is hesed — the same word we saw in Joseph's story. And I think that's so significant. Because in Genesis, we see God showing Joseph hesed while he's sitting in prison, with no idea how his story is going to turn out. And now, in Psalm 23, David tells us that this same faithful, steadfast love will follow us all the days of our lives. Not just the good days. Not just when everything works out. It's the same kindness. The same faithful love. The same God.

▶️ MEDIA: Keep Hesed slide through the comparison with Joseph; clear before returning to John 15.

God's goodness and kindness aren't simply the good things He gives us. They're an expression of who He is. His faithful love. His care. His presence.

And that brings me back to Jesus' words in John 15: “Remain in me.”

Sometimes our lives become so full of responsibilities, plans and expectations — and maybe a little bit of fluff — that we forget to pay attention to the God who is already with us.

Looking back at Oakhill this year, I can see His kindness in the people He's brought together, the ways He's provided and how He's sustained us through change. But I also know that not every story in this room has reached a happy conclusion.

Some of us are still waiting. Some are walking through things we wouldn't have chosen. And I'm not saying everything that happened was good. Some things really aren't. But God is good. And His goodness isn't dependent on our circumstances being good.

▶️ MEDIA: LOWER THIRD — Psalm 23:6 | “And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

And I love how Psalm 23 ends: “And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” Because the greatest gift isn't simply that God gives us good things. It's that we get to be with Him.

At the beginning of the year, I thought I was saying: “Make room for change.” But looking back, perhaps the deeper invitation was: “Make room for God.” Not just for what He might do next. But for the relationship He invites us into.

A Moment to Reflect

And as we come towards the end of this year, I'd love for us to take a few moments to reflect. Not just on everything that's happened, but on where we've seen God's goodness and kindness through it all.

We're going to play a song, and I want to invite you to use this time to make a little room for God. To slow down, put everything else aside for a moment, and spend some time with Him. There will be three questions on the screen to help guide your reflection. You don't have to work through all three. Perhaps there's just one that stands out to you.

Use this time to talk to God about what's on your heart, and take a moment to listen to Him too.

▶️ MEDIA: SIDE SCREEN — Reflection_Questions

Allow the song to finish.

I hope that in these few moments, you've had an opportunity to recognise something of God's goodness and kindness in your own life. And perhaps there are still things you're trying to make sense of. Things you're waiting for, or things you're finding difficult to let go of. And that's okay. We don't have to have all the answers or know exactly what lies ahead. Because we don't make room for God because we know what's coming next. We make room because we know the One who is leading us. And He is good.

Closing Prayer

[Move into final worship song.]

QUICK CUE CHECKLIST

- Psalm 23:6 — opening lower third
- Fancy photo 1 — outdoors, full screen
- Fancy photo 2 — sofa, full screen
- John 14 — context reference lower third
- John 15:1–4 — reading lower thirds
- John 15:4–5 — quotation lower third
- Genesis 39:2 — lower third
- Genesis 39:21 — lower third
- HESED dictionary — FIRST full-screen appearance
- Genesis 50:20 — lower third
- Psalm 23:6 — return lower third
- HESED dictionary — SECOND full-screen appearance
- John 15:4 — “Remain in me” lower third
- Psalm 23:6 — final phrase lower third
- Reflection questions — full screen through response song
- Clear screen for final worship song

Production note: Where a Scripture passage is only described rather than read verbatim (for example John 14), show the reference only. Scripture text on lower thirds is taken from the supplied sermon; check against the church’s preferred Bible translation before live use.