

# Am I Good Enough?

Message for Sunday, December 3, 2017  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:27-29;  
Revelation 5:1-14

**Children's Message:** Matthew 1:21, New International Version: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

When we do something bad, the Bible calls that "sin." Let's say I steal something from my brother. That's bad; that's a sin. I've hurt my brother; I've rejected God; and I've even hurt myself, because I know I'm wrong. Sin really messes up our lives.

Ask the children to draw/write on a paper in ink. Give them an eraser, and ask them to try rubbing out their marks. It is impossible to do this completely. Then I use "liquid eraser" to cover over the mark, and make the paper white again.

Our sins are like ink: we cannot correct them ourselves.

The Bible says that Jesus is our "Saviour." Jesus came to forgive our sins, and to show us God's way of how to live.

**Message** "Are you good enough?"

## 1) What if Jesus used grades instead of grace?

In a few weeks, thousands of young people will be writing exams. The results of those exams can have major implications for the future. This is especially true for people in their last year of high school, if they are hoping to be accepted to university or college.

For some places, like prestigious medical schools or law schools, there are so many people competing for so few places, that only one out of a hundred or even one out of a thousand are accepted. Those schools are able to pick and choose only the very best students out of the thousands that apply every year. Some people apply year after year to get in, and never make it. That must be discouraging.

What if Jesus had chosen that model to build his church? Suppose Jesus had given his invitation this

way: "Come to me, you who are clean and smart, rich and respectable"! He would have made the church a comfortable club where "nice" people could gather with others like themselves.

But Jesus did not choose that model. Instead, he reached out to everyone—*especially* to the ones who would never be welcome in a "respectable" place.

**Luke 15:1-2, New Living Translation:**

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such despicable people—even eating with them!

The church of Jesus Christ is a place where *all* people are welcomed. Yes, that even means you and me!

## 2) Good enough to receive communion?

What got me thinking about this was knowing that today we would be having communion. There's something mysterious about this, something holy and awesome. There are many traditions and many stories about how churches have handled communion over the centuries since Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

All traditions start with good reasons, and the principle behind one tradition is found in the Bible:

**1 Corinthians 11:27-29, New Living Translation:**

So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honouring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgement upon yourself.

Some church leaders were appalled when they saw people who—in their opinion—were not true Christians were receiving communion. They thought these people were not worthy, and should not be allowed to receive communion. So the elders of the church would visit people the week before the communion service, and give them cards or metal tokens which told them they were welcome to gather at the Lord's Table the following Sunday. If you didn't get an invitation, you could attend the

worship service, but you could not take part in the communion.

And so we get back around to the church being a “nice” place for “respectable” people.

Well, we don’t give out tokens or tickets to communion any more. But a frown or a whisper can be just as powerful at making someone feel small and unworthy. We look at how a person dresses for church, how a person talks, how regularly they attend church, and we rate them on our scale of worthiness. All this is so superficial, I don’t know whether to laugh or cry over it. After all, what really matters is how we measure up to God’s standard.

### 3) No one is good enough... well, almost

The book of Revelation tells about God’s ultimate triumph against evil in our world. But it almost didn’t happen!

The sequence of final events begins in chapter 5 of Revelation. There is a scroll that contains the account of what will happen, of how God will put everything right. The prophecies of the Old Testament, which tell of a time when righteousness and justice will prevail—those prophecies will all come true, and all the evildoers will be done away with. But the scroll is sealed shut, and nothing can happen until it is opened. A search party is sent out to find someone to break the seals and open the scroll. They searched everywhere—all over heaven, all over the earth, the living and the dead—and returned with bad news:

**Revelation 5:3-4, New Living Translation:**  
**But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it. Then I wept because no one could be found who was worthy to open the scroll and read it.**

John, the writer of Revelation who is having this vision is sad because there is no hope left for the people. At that time in history, the Roman army terrorized the people, killing thousands as their method of “keeping the peace.” The Roman emperor put Jewish kings in place to rule over the territories, but they were just puppets on a string. They were not concerned about their people. Their focus was on getting rich, while their people suffered under grinding poverty. Just when there

appeared to be hope that all the evil of this world would be done away with, it wasn’t going to happen after all. John was devastated.

**Revelation 5:5, New Living Translation:**

**But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, “Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David’s throne, has conquered. He is worthy to open the scroll and break its seven seals.”**

He’s talking, of course, about Jesus.

Think about this for a while. *They couldn’t find anyone who was worthy.*

Think of the apostles, the founders of the Church: Peter, James, Stephen, Paul. At least two of these, if not all four, were killed because of their commitment to Jesus. But they’re not good enough to open the scroll.

Think of someone whom you respect and admire as a model for the Christian life. Perhaps your parents or grandparents, a Sunday School teacher or a minister. This may offend you or startle you—but none of these is worthy.

None of the saints in heaven was good enough. Certainly none of us here in this room. Not me. Not you.

There is only one who is worthy: Jesus Christ.

Jesus is holy, perfect, and loving. We may be good people, but we’re nowhere near good enough. You may look down on others, but turn around to see who’s behind you. When you look at Jesus, you have to look *way* up. That’s why it’s so amazing that Jesus came *down* to our level, to live with us, and die for us.

### 4) The love of Jesus makes all the difference

Let me tell you about a man who discovered what this meant in his life. From the time he was a baby, his parents brought him to church. They were devout believers, and so was he. “Devout” is hardly the word; he was a fanatic about his religion! He went to a fundamentalist church, and he was stricter than anyone else about following all the rules. And if he ever caught anyone stepping out of line, he didn’t just give them a lecture. He threw them out

of the church! He was on all the church committees, and worked harder than most of the others put together. His church was a respectable place, and he was the most respected of all.

Then he had an experience where he met God in person. He saw in a second that all his work, all his rules, all his importance, all his *goodness* were worth nothing in comparison to the awesome holiness of God. But in that same flash, he also saw that God loved him and accepted him just as he was, a sinner. From that moment on, Paul was a changed person. [Read about his experience in Philippians 3:3-9].

His whole life was transformed. Instead of trying to prove how good he was, he began to tell people how wonderful Jesus is.

That's why we come to receive communion. We come here, not because we are good enough—because we're not, not one of us. We come because Jesus loves us, and because we love Jesus, and we want him to be in our lives.