

# The Virtues

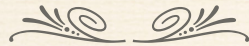


*Path to the Good Life*

The Pastor's Class Cary Presbyterian 2022



This is a main resource



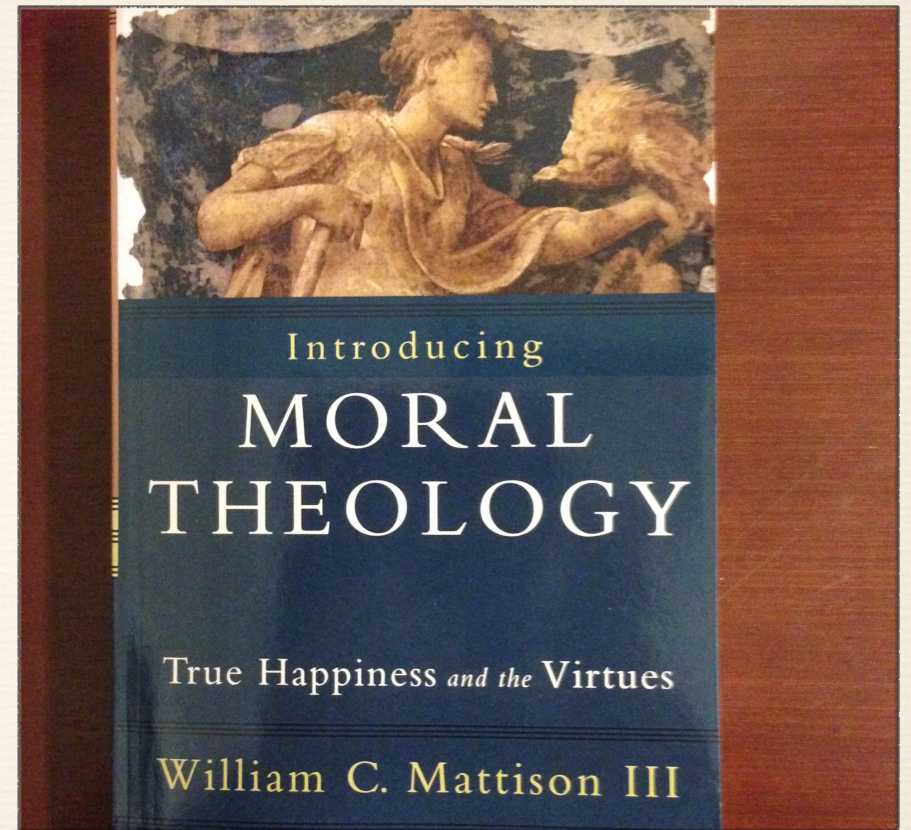
*Also*

*After Virtue by Alasdair MacIntyre*

*Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis*

*The “Discourses” of Epictitus*

*The “Meditations” of Marcus Aurellius*





# The course

Sunday 9:15 - 10:15 AM

- † Virtues & Moral Theology - An Introduction
- † *The Cardinal Virtues*: Prudence, Temperance, Justice, Fortitude
- † *The Theological Virtues*: Faith, Hope, Love
- † Virtues & Vices



# Virtues & Moral Theology - An Introduction



*“We are restless, longing to be satisfied, to have our desires fulfilled and to be content in perfect happiness”*

*St. Augustine — Confessions 1.1, trans. Maria Boulding, OSB.*

*“People long to be happy”*

*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I-II 1, English Dominican Translation.*



*“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*

*John 10:10*

*“I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.”*

*John 15:11*



# Two Fundamental Assumptions

- ❖ 1) That each of us is living our lives *in the pursuit of happiness* — or to say it a little differently — we all are pursuing what we perceive to be the “good life.”
- ❖ 2) I will argue (following the teaching of western moral philosophy and theology) that the path to the “good life” and to true happiness is the path of the Virtues. *A virtuous life is a good and happy life.*



# Terminology

**Moral / Morality** — I'll be using this in two ways: Descriptive & Normative  
Descriptive simply means - *everyone* has *some* set of rules by which they live life.  
In this sense *everyone* is “moral.” The characters in *The Godfather*,  
or *The Sopranos* are “moral” in this descriptive sense - even though their  
behavior is appalling to the rest of us.

Normative is how we normally think of the word “moral.” That is, there  
are norms of behavior that many hold in common which govern what  
behaviors and attitudes we think are helpful.



# Terminology

**Virtue** — derives from the Latin word for “excellent.” The virtues are the “excellent” things. They are the path to a well-lived life.

**Cardinal** — as in “the Cardinal Virtues” derived from the word “hinge.” The good life hinges upon the pursuit of these four virtues.



# How would *we* define “the good life?”

- ❖ Satisfying work?
- ❖ Home & Family?
- ❖ Wealthy & Prosperity?
- ❖ Safety and Security?



# Why do I live the way I do?

- ❖ To meet family or societal expectations?
- ❖ Out of fear of the consequences if I fail to meet the norms of morality?
- ❖ Out of a sense that I am in pursuit of something which requires discipline to achieve it?



# Why be good?

- ❖ Plato's Republic a discussion with Glaucon about why people should be good citizens/people.
- ❖ Glaucon says that the best way to be happy is to have everything you desire. Happiness would be the capacity to have whatever one wanted and to do whatever one wanted to do.
- ❖ The *Ring of Gyges*
- ❖ In this, morality in the normative sense is a necessary “second best.”



# Why be good?

- ❖ Plato replies to Glaucon that the virtuous life *is* the “happy life.”
- ❖ The choice to be moral is *not* against the pursuit of what is best, it is, in fact, the path to achieve what is best.



# Two Orientations to the Moral Life

- ❖ **A Morality of Obligation.** Imposed upon us out of the necessity of keeping civil order. We act morally for fear of the consequences if we do not (either by civil authorities or by the disdain of our peers).
- ❖ **A Morality of Happiness.** We choose to act in moral ways driven by an internal commitment to pursue the good life and with the conviction that the moral (or virtuous) life is the path that leads to the happiness we desire.
- ❖ *Both* of these orientations toward the moral life are found within the church. Indeed, they are usually *both* found *in each of us, individually*.



# Why bother thinking about this?

“The unexamined life is a life not worth living.”

[Socrates in Plato's *Apology* 38.a]

“...you will know the truth, and the truth will  
make you free.”

John 8:32



# The Pursuit of the Good Life

“You are what you eat!”

Nutrition poster in my childhood cafeteria.

We tend to *become* what we *pursue*.



# Actions - Intentions - and the virtuous life

There is a distinction between actions and intentions.

The virtuous life is not *just* good actions.

It is good actions which grow from good intentions.