

For our sake God made the sinless into sin, so that in Him we might become the goodness of God.

That's a very striking statement – almost too good to be true. How can we ever claim to be, or aspire to be, the goodness of God? Other translations take the edge off this claim to goodness or 'Godness' by using the word 'righteousness', instead, and - remembering that it is 'in Christ' that this comes about - This rendering seems to me easier to handle: God put us to rights, God rules us in the sense of 'rectus', that is, causing us to move once more in a straight line; to be upright; to put us at rights with ourselves. We come to goodness, then, through the rule of God. Lent is a reassertion of God's rule, a re-awakening to the fact that we are not in charge after all, and never have been. This is a hugely comforting reassurance in a time when the results of human misrule are becoming increasingly apparent. The scenario we face is, indeed, truly frightening: climate change; the breakdown of societies and international order; the remorseless and ultimately absurd nature of a capitalist mentality, and no one in power, seemingly, able to get a grip on what needs to be done. That we are dust, destined to become dust again, has perhaps never been more apparent – at least to this baby-boomer. So we turn to God in our need, in our true state, not to be rescued, necessarily, from the consequences of our actions, but to re-cover our original goodness, Godness, whatever happens next.

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