

“THE OPPOSITE OF THANKSGIVING”

Introduction

I’m taking a break from our Sermon on the Mount series on this holiday weekend to speak about “The Opposite of Thanksgiving”. I want to look at a particular sin in the long list of sins that Paul are said would be signs of the last days.

2 Timothy 3:1-4

This know also, that in the last days perilous (terrible, difficult, distressing) times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, *unthankful (ungrateful)*, unholy,

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers (slanderos), incontinent (without self-control), fierce (brutal), despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady (rash), high-minded (conceited), lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

A. The Sin at the Middle of the List: “Unthankful” or “Ungrateful”

1. Of the 194 nations in the world, as far as I can discover, America is the only country on earth that has a special day set aside for the people to give thanks to God for all His blessings.

2. Unfortunately, an honest look at American culture today quickly reveals that the spirit of Thanksgiving has been largely *displaced* by the opposite spirit; a form of un-thankfulness which I am calling the spirit of entitlement.

3. Let me say it another way; the opposite of the spirit of Thanksgiving is a certain *kind* of un-thankfulness: a spirit of “entitlement”.

“In today’s society there is an ‘entitlement mentality’; the sense of having a right to something not earned. This right exists regardless of one having to do anything; the belief in something for nothing.”

Oliver J.R. Cooper

a. What is entitlement?

“entitlement”

The belief that one is deserving of or entitled to certain privileges

Merriam Webster Dictionary

4. We are a blessed nation. The poorest people in America would be considered rich in most countries of the world.

a. The average household income in the world is less than \$3000 a year. So the average family, worldwide, lives on \$250 a month! The average household income in the United States is \$43,000 a year. That’s over 14 times the average!

b. Of the 60 million richest people in the world, half of them live in the United States!

5. You would think we would be on our knees every day thanking God for His amazing blessings on America. **But instead, we have millionaire professional athletes on their knees refusing to stand for the national anthem! (Because they are “entitled” to free speech).**

6. We are witnessing a war between gratitude and entitlement for the very soul of our nation.

“Gratitude” VS. “Entitlement”.

a. We can never be grateful for our blessings if, deep down in our hearts, we feel entitled to them.

b. Entitlement kills gratitude; it is the opposite of thanksgiving.

B. Gratitude Versus Entitlement

1. The spirit of entitlement *displaces* the spirit of Thanksgiving in America. They are opposites.

**“Gratitude and entitlement cannot coexist in the same brain.”
John Townsend, Christian psychologist and author**

a. There is a correlation between the 2 things...

**“An attitude of entitlement is inversely related to one of gratitude.”
Pete Wilson (former Governor of CA)**

b. This simply means that the more entitled we feel, the less grateful we are.

c. These 2 things determine the kind of heart we have.

“Feeling entitled is the opposite of feeling grateful. Gratitude opens the heart, entitlement closes it.”

Paul Gibbons, in “Reboot Your Life: A 12-day Program for Ending Stress, Realizing Your Goals and Being More Productive

2. Have you ever seen so much division in our country? So much hatred? So many groups of people who have closed their hearts toward other groups of people?

a. It’s because the more we move into entitlement, the more we close our hearts to others.

3. America’s forefathers were grateful men; but today much of what we hear is a debate over our “rights”!

a. Civil rights, women’s rights, gay rights, the right of free speech and on and on.

“When we replace a sense of service and gratitude with a sense of entitlement and expectation, we quickly see the demise of our relationships, society, and economy.”

Steve Mariboli

4. Have you ever seen so many lawsuits?

- America is known as the most *litigious* nation on earth, with lawsuits on everything from hot spilled coffee to neighbor’s rights

“Litigious”

Unreasonably prone to go to law to settle disputes

Dictionary.com

- We spend more money on lawsuits than any other industrialized country
- We have more lawyers per capita than any other nation on earth.

a. Pastor and Author John Ortberg knows why...

“The bigger our sense of entitlement, the smaller our sense of gratitude. Our entitlement mindset has led to a proliferation of lawsuits; when we don’t get something we want, we sue somebody. For example, the San Francisco Giants were once sued for passing out Father’s Day gifts to men only.”

5. God Himself established civil government to adjudicate justice; but our courts are crammed with frivolous lawsuits over imagined entitlements; it’s an epidemic that’s getting worse.

6. And how is all this affecting our young people?

C. Could This Be The Most Entitled Generation in Human History?

1. Even the world is now recognizing how the spirit of entitlement is damaging our young people. Millionaire advertising executive Richard Kirshenbaum...

“The rampant disease of ‘entitlement’ is a contagious, insidious state of mind that has infected a whole generation of young people.

Richard Kirshenbaum, Advertising Executive

2. American college professors are noticing the change. Dr. Robert Emmons of the University of California writes...

“Gratitude is especially rare among middle-class high school and college students who’ve grown up in a world that revolves around them; one that allows them to build a platform via social media without displaying value; a world that repeatedly communicates they are “awesome” and deserve trophies just for playing.”

Dr. Robert Emmons, University of California Davis

3. We want to speak positive things to our children! But if we keep telling them how great they, without at the same time teaching them that the world owes them nothing, we can end up hurting more than helping.

“Youth today are growing up with a false sense of entitlement and are oppositional to responsibility and ownership over their values, decisions, goals and relationships. Left unchecked, they will become short sighted, self-centered and unable to make the connection between effort and reward.”

Jeff Murdock in Meridian magazine

“Entitlement is a malignant form of Self-Love, because it often harms the people around us, which indirectly harms us in the long term. Entitlement is established in the belief that we are the center of the universe, and if the universe doesn’t meet *our* needs and desires, all hell will break loose.”

Alethia Luna

4. If we teach our kids entitlement, we are setting them up for a lifetime of failed relationships.

“A sense of entitlement is a cancerous thought process that is void of gratitude and can be deadly to our relationships.”

Dr. Steve Mariboli

a. I have seen well-meaning parents bail their adult children out of financial difficulty, *over and over again*, with tens of thousands of dollars in gifts, and end up with the kids resenting them if they ever say “enough is enough”.

b. I can tell how kids are doing to whether they say “Thank you” or not!

“Research indicates that today’s students must give up a ‘victim mentality’ and overcome a sense of entitlement and deservedness. Think for a moment. When someone feels entitled to something, there’s little need for gratitude: *I don’t need to thank someone; I deserved the gift. In fact, these people are lucky to have me around. I’m amazing.*”

Dr. Tim Elmore

D. Entitlement Checkpoints

1. Do we understand the danger of spoiling our children?

“People who are given whatever they want soon develop a sense of entitlement and rapidly lose their sense of proportion.”

Professor Sarah Churchwell

a. Testimony: I actually heard minister’s children debating over which 5 star hotel was the best: Ritz Carlton or Four Seasons!

2. Do we see how the so-called “liberal” or “progressive” political agenda uses entitlement to win elections, promising more and more “free stuff”?

“Let’s be honest about this; the liberal agenda with failed stimulus plans and government entitlement programs is crippling our economy and our quality of life.”

Alveda King

a. The Bill of Rights tells us that every American is entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

- Not happiness, the *pursuit* of happiness; we are free to seek a better life; but we’re not entitled to get it at the expense of others
- And when will we stop believing dishonest politicians who seek to get elected by promising more free stuff; that we have a right to free health care!

“The entitlement mentality is bankrupting America.”

Scott Rasmussen

3. Have we realized that much of the abuse of women in our society is rooted in a perverted view of male “entitlement”? Are we learning that men who are rich, famous, or powerful feel entitled to do what they want and get away with it?

“Elite athletes (or men in powerful positions) learn entitlement. They believe they are entitled to have women serve their needs. It’s part of being a man.

It’s the cultural construction of masculinity.”

Jackson Kratz

4. Finally, and most important, do we realize that a spirit of entitlement is the exact opposite of what it means to be a Christian?

III. Grace Versus Entitlement

A. The Cornerstone of the Christian Life

1. The first characteristic of the child of God is humility, to be “poor in spirit”. (Matthew 5:1)

It means seeing that you are deeply in debt before God, and you have no ability to even begin to redeem yourself. God's free generosity to you, at infinite cost to him, was the only thing that saved you.

Tim Keller

- a. A true understanding of grace keeps us in a spirit of Thanksgiving.
- b. But entitlement shuts off grace...

“On the contrary, you believe that God owes you some things—he ought to answer your prayers and to bless you for the many good things you've done. You feel that you've earned a certain standing with God through your hard work. You also may believe that the success and the resources you have are primarily due to your own industry and energy.

Tim Keller

2. Grateful people are happy people; entitled people can never be happy!

- a. Check this out in life...

“Successful people have a sense of gratitude. Unsuccessful people have a sense of entitlement.”

Stephen Aitchison

3. So let we the Church be the most grateful of all people!

"Therefore I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord , among the nations...

2 Samuel 22:50 NASB (KJV-among the heathen)

4. It is every believer's job to grow up into this!

“You have to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was.”

Abraham Lincoln