

Be Thankful

11/27/22

Colossians 1:9-14

Sunday AM

It's not often I share a message centered around a holiday, but w/ all that's transpired over the past few yrs and the condition of so many lives, I felt we needed a reminder of the necessity of having a grateful heart.

I was thinking about this as my family went around the dinner table on Thursday sharing what we were thankful for in our lives over the past year.

**For too often** – I fear we've missed the point of the day – after all, what is Thanksgiving for you? Why is it important? Why do we all need such a day to reflect?

**Sadly** – I think the motivation for our gratitude at times is too much like Snoopy's in the Peanuts Comic Strip: *It could've been worse. I could've been born a turkey!*

Or maybe you're like the boy who said Thanksgiving is that one day a year when you drive for hours on end to spend time w/ family members you really don't know – only to be reminded... that seeing them once a year may be way too often!

**All joking aside** – I like Thanksgiving b/c it's the least commercialized of all the holidays – and b/c it focuses on something that matters. While retailers may cash in on Halloween, Christmas, Easter, and V-day, but not so much on Turkey Day – *it's a day for giving thanks*.

***And we have so much to be thankful for*** – although, I think we sometimes forget how blessed we are.

In fact, let's take a moment for a ***gratitude exercise***. A GE is a quick audit to reflect upon those little things in our lives we take for granted that we ought to value.

**DYK** – there are 100 things every day to be grateful.

- When you wake, you can thank God you slept on a bed, w/ a pillow, and a blanket to keep you warm.
- You can thank God you slept under a roof and not under the elements.
- You can thank God for running water, a refrigerator to keep your food, and a stove to cook it.
- You can thank God for your toothbrush, deodorant, soap, shampoo, shower, and indoor plumbing.
- You can thank God for your abilities/talents.

***I think you get the point***. There's much to be thankful for that others don't have and will likely never have.

Billionaire investor, Sir John Templeton, was once asked what was the secret to his wealth. He said, "Gratitude. If you're not grateful, you're not rich – no matter how much you have." The flip side is – if you're grateful, you're rich – no matter how little you have!

**Meaning** – if today, you'd like for your life to become rich – then choose to be thankful for all you have.

**DYK** – thru-out the bible, we're called to be thankful. But there is one particular text I want to bring to your attention that I often reflect on as a Jesus-follower.

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you w/ the knowledge of his will thru all the wisdom/understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the*

*knowledge of God, being strengthened w/ all power according to his glorious might so you may have great endurance and patience, and **giving joyful thanks** to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*  
Colossians 1:9-14

To me, this is one of the most important prayers in the bible. Paul is praying that the Colossians would have a life that walks worthy of the Lord and pleases Him in every way – every day.

**And in this prayer** – Paul explains that the key to such a life is marked by (6) qualities:

- Bearing Fruit in Every Good Work
- Growing in One's Experiential Knowledge of God
- Strengthened w/ all Power
- Having Endurance w/ Circumstances
- Having Patience w/ People
- **Always giving Joyful Thanks**

**Don't miss** – possessing *joyful thanks* (an attitude of gratitude) is a quality of a H.S. led life that walks worthy of the Lord and pleases Him in every way.

**If such is the case**, then we owe it to ourselves to learn and understand what it means to live w/ gratitude in our hearts. For as a follower of Jesus, our lives are to be marked w/ gratefulness to God for all things that influence and intersect w/ our lives.

I        Gratitude is a **PERSPECTIVE**

Gratitude begins w/ how we choose to look at life. Is the glass ½ empty or ½ full? Is it for me or against me?

I think (2) of the greatest threats to living gratefully is a sense of *entitlement* and a penchant for *envy*. That is – it's difficult to be grateful when we think the world owes us something and that we deserve better than someone else. Instead, we need a healthy perspective on life coupled w/ a genuine appreciation and gratefulness for our blessings.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights w/ whom there is no change like a shifting shadow.* James 1:17

**What does this mean?** It means that for all of the good we have in our lives, we must be able to thank God for it at all times. Not just the *spiritual* blessings, but for every blessing – the good, and even the bad/ugly. B/c in everything, whether He authored it for our *good* or for our *growth*, God intends it to help us to know Him.

*Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus.* Ephesians 5:20

**Meaning** – our focus can't be on what we don't have, or on who has it better than we do. Our focus must be on all the good things we do have in our lives – b/c every good thing in our life is from God.

Gratitude turns what we have into enough. *Aesop*

## II Gratitude is a **DECISION**

**Gratitude is always a choice** – even in the most challenging of circumstances. Like when you've *lost your job* – or *lost a loved one* – or *received a difficult diagnosis*. Yet it's in these challenging moments that gratitude is essential to seeing us thru to the other side.

Decide to enjoy the little things in life b/c one day you may look back to realize they were the big things that made a difference in experiencing a full life.

**WHY** – gratitude is uniquely tied to faith and trust in God, that He'll be faithful even when we're faithless.

**Meaning** – gratitude is never about a person's outward circumstances but their inward belief/conviction.

I think this is why the psalmist spoke so often of giving thanks – b/c it brings us back to God as the source of our strength and the hope of our lives.

*Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever. Psalm 118:9*

*Enter his gates w/ thanksgiving, and his courts w/ praise! Give thanks to Him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:4-5*

Let me show you one particular passage about the necessity of deciding to live w/ gratitude.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication w/ thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart/mind in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6*

Paul says, that no matter our circumstances, when we turn to God in grateful prayer – He will use such faith to shroud us w/ a peace that'll guard our hearts/minds.

**IOW** – choosing to be grateful plays a significant role in influencing our lives when life gets tough. ***When the going gets tough, the tough choose to be grateful.***

## III Gratitude is an **ACTION**

*I will give thanks to you, Lord, w/ all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. Psalm 9:1*

*I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High. Psalm 7:17*

Gratitude is so much more than an attitude – it's an action/lifestyle. It may begin w/in, but it expresses itself outwardly toward God and to others. It worships. It appreciates. It recognizes. It esteems. It honors. It shares w/ others the heartfelt joy that's received.

**SEE** – as a believer, our gratitude begins w/ living out our appreciation for what God has done for us. And what did He do – He so loved us that He surrendered His place in heaven, incarcerated Himself in flesh – to give His life on an old rugged cross to give us life.

**In return** – the reason we give is in direct response to all that the Lord has given to us and for us. The reason to speak our faith, the reason we love one another, the reason we seek first His kingdom/righteousness, the reason we tithe and serve – the reason we do anything in our lives is out of gratitude for all that the Lord has done and is doing in our lives.

Teaching us that there's no greater life motivator than gratitude founded in love.

**How grateful are you today** – and for what are you grateful? Your perspective will foster your decisions – which in turn, will always result in an action.

**I have a homework assignment** for you as part of our invitation today. I want you to go home today and take a few minutes w/ a pen and piece of paper to write down what you are thankful for in your life.

- Write down what you're grateful for w/ God
- Write down what you're grateful for w/ your spouse
- Write down what you're grateful for w/ your kids
- Write down what you're grateful for w/ your parents
- Write down what you're grateful for w/ your boss
- Write down what you're thankful for w/ your friends

**Sometime this week**, whether face-to-face, by prayer, by phone, by email/text – share your appreciation w/ each person you wrote about.