

Thanksgiving Weekend

Today's Title: "Choosing Gratitude"

November 27, 2016 ~ Selected passages

Objective: To help believers express thanks and gratitude for everything in their life - no matter how it compares to others.

Opening Prayer

Two men in CA were excited about trying Chipotle's new chorizo burrito - and the signage on the in-store menu led them to believe the entire burrito would be only 300 calories. After they each ate their entire burrito, they "*felt excessively full*" and realized the burrito couldn't possibly be only 300 calories - so they decided to sue the restaurant claiming false advertising.

Turns out the 300 calories is for the chorizo only.

Source: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2016/11/21/customers-suing-chipotle-over-300-calorie-burrito/94211910/>

Some say we've become a nation of complainers - a nation of lawsuits.

According to the annual 2005 Litigation Trends Survey by Fulbright, "*Nearly 90% of US corporations are engaged in some type of litigation, and the average company balances a docket of 37 lawsuits. For \$1 Billion-plus companies, the average number of cases being juggled in the US soars to 140.*

A corporation with \$1.5 Billion in revenues averages more than \$8 million per year in corporate litigation costs."

Source: <http://www.fulbright.com/mediaroom/files/fj0536-us-v13.pdf>

The 2016 Litigation Trends Survey reports a continued increase in businesses facing lawsuits.

Source: <http://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/files/20160915-2016-litigation-trends-annual-survey-142485.pdf>

If we have a problem...the response of our culture is to sue!
Take them to court!

Today I want to help us see the source of our discontent - why we choose to have a complaining heart or a critical spirit.

Then, I want to show how a heart of gratitude is a choice - a choice we make when we choose the blessings of God.

Choosing to complain...

Turn to **Numbers 14:1-11**

Most people complain about their circumstances. They don't like what's happening in their life - they expected something different from the reality - so they complain and often develop a critical heart toward leaders.

Numbers 14:1-11

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

4 And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." 5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before

all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. 6 And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.” 10 Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel. 11 And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?”

There are 3 quick things I want to identify about our complaining...

Complaining reveals a lack of faith. vs. 3

The people were convinced God brought them to the Promised Land so they could die.

Vs. 3 - “Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”

They had no faith in the goodness or plan of God. What they saw with their eyes was the fullness of their spiritual understanding. The physical was dominant over the spiritual.

Their fear was overwhelming any thought of God's provision and power.

Why is complaining such a temptation?

I believe a complaining or critical heart and mind is rooted in selfishness. I believe it's rooted in an attitude which believes they deserve better - they deserve more - they deserve something different from what they're getting / expecting.

We allow our expectations to become a reality in our mind - whether they're realistic or not - and when our expectations are not realized, we are disappointed - and we complain. We want a mulligan - a 'do-over'.

In many cases, the problem is our lack of faith in God and in His ability to do what He has promised. Sometimes we make up things He's promised - and we hold Him accountable to our made-up promises!

- God will keep us healthy
- God will give us a happy life
- He will bless us with godly children & grandkids
- God will provide a comfortable life for us

Complaining reveals a false belief. vs. 2-3

They had a false belief that God was leading them to their death - and to a life of torture for their families.

“And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?””

They actually believed life was better in Egypt!

They were slaves in Egypt!

Pharaoh had every first born Hebrew son murdered!

The Hebrews were whipped, beaten, and literally worked to death!

This was not the first time their complaining revealed a false belief. They were revising history - changing a horrible thing into a good thing - because of their attitude of complaining.

Numbers 11:4-5 (*Wanted more than the manna God was providing*)

Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving.

And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.”

Truth - God’s truth - is the antidote to complaining.

Complaining reveals an ungrateful heart. vs. 4, 10a

How many churches are full of complaining

Christians who have no joy in their salvation, in the

fellowship of believers, or in the Gospel mission Christ has given the Church.

How many churches have turned on their leaders because they didn't like something?

And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

10a Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones."

The people were ungrateful for God's deliverance from Egypt - out of their slavery. They were now free, but they were ungrateful - and they rebelled against God - which meant they turned on their leaders.

Make no mistake - complaining is a choice.

Instead...

Choosing a grateful heart...

"Gratitude is the attitude which sets the altitude for living." James McDonald, pastor, Harvest Bible Chapel

Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem He was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as He entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance **13** and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

14 When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed.

15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; **16** and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.

17 Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 And He said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

3 things which help you choose a grateful heart.

A grateful heart calls out to Jesus. vs. 12-13

“And as He entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13 and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

When the situations of life are difficult and painful - when you are victimized due to no fault of your own, the urge to complain is understandable.

The condition of a leper in the 1st century world was horrible - not only physically, but mentally and socially.

- Quarantined from their family - all society
- Had to live outside the city/town - vs. 11-12
- Had to publicly identify themselves

Leprosy is not a health issue in our culture - but some people experience great difficulty and pain in life. The issue isn't leprosy, but it can be:

- Cancer
- Some level of disability
- Losing your license and your independence
- Rebellious and wayward child
- Addiction

- No job
- Divorce

When these come into your life, you have a choice to make...how will you respond? How will you react? Will you choose to complain - or choose to be grateful? (James 1:2 - "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.")

We must realize complaining about life and the situations of life don't fix the situation.

Crying out to God - asking Him to change you and for Him to give you His mercy and grace - that will change your life.

It may not change your situation - but it will change your life!

Gratitude for the miracle of Christ vs. 15-16

Where is God working in your life?

Do you only see the bad things in life...or do you see how God is using those bad things to shape you and mold you into the image of Christ?

Do you see the blessings of God and praise Him?

15 "Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan."

It's amazing only 1 thought it important enough to turn back - and thank Jesus.

What did the other 9 say when he stopped and turned to head back? *‘What are you doing? Where are you going? He said to go and show ourselves to the priest!’*

We’re not told how that conversation went - all we’re told is 1 came back to give thanks.

“Now he was a Samaritan.” Would have been a shock to the Jewish audience Jesus was talking with.

The Jews considered the Samaritans a worthless and lost group of people - and they hated the Samaritans. Destroy the prejudice in your heart by seeing people as God sees them. The implication in the text: the other 9 were Jews - the only one who gave thanks was the Samaritan.

In our sin, we divide people into categories. We determine who is worth my time - who I will accept - and who I won’t bother with.

A heart of gratitude for Jesus vs. 14, 17, 19

15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

The focus of the 1 - the Samaritan - was on Jesus.

The others were focused on other things - maybe going to the priest and getting their life back?

So many people focus on religion - they go to church - they do religious things - yet they don't have a relationship with Jesus.

Jesus is a means to an end - not the object of their focus. They are focused on spiritual / religious activity.

What a wonderful insight for choosing a grateful heart - FOCUS ON JESUS!!

“your faith has made you well” - vs. 19 - interesting given he has already been healed!

Is this a reference to his leprosy - or to his salvation?

Commentators are divided - but this man receives from Jesus something special - something the others didn't receive - because his focus was on Jesus.

If nothing else, there is a personal connection with Jesus. He got close to Jesus - the others heard and saw Jesus from a distance.

Apply it...

Choose gratitude

Defoe's “Robinson Crusoe” - first published on 25 April 1719

The fictional story of a young man who was the sole survivor of a shipwreck and found himself stranded on a deserted island with no hope of rescue.

“I now began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstance I was reduced to. I drew up the state of my affairs in writing to deliver my thoughts from daily pouring over them and afflicting my mind. As my reasoning began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could. I set the good against the evil - that I might have something to distinguish my case from one that is much worse than mine. So I stated it very impartially - like a debit or a credit - the comforts I enjoyed and the miseries I suffered.

Complaint: *I am cast on a horrible deserted island void of all hope of recovery.*

Thanks: *I am alive and not drowned as all of my ships company.*

Complaint: *I am singled out and separate from all mankind to suffer this misery.*

Thanks: *I am singled out too...from all the ship's crew to be spared from death. God who miraculously saved me from death can deliver me from this condition also.*

Complaint: *I have no clothes to cover me.*

Thanks: *I am in a hot climate - where if I had clothes I could not wear them.*

Complaint: *I am without any defense or means to resist any violence of man or beast.*

Thanks: *I am cast on an island where I see no wild beast to hurt me as I saw on the coast of Africa. What if I had been shipwrecked there?*

Complaint: *I have no soul to speak to me or relieve me.*

Thanks: *But God wonderfully sent the ship near enough to shore that I have gotten out so many necessary things which will either supply my wants or enable me to supply myself - even as long as I shall live.*

Matthew Henry (Minister / Author / Theologian 1662-1714 - 52 yrs.)

After he was robbed - he wrote in his journal...

“1) I am thankful that he never robbed me before.

2) I am thankful that although he took my wallet, he did not take my life.

3) Although he took all I had, it was not much.

4) I am glad that it was I who was robbed, not I who did the robbing.” <https://urbanfaith.com/2011/11/what-did-matt-w-henry-say-when-a-man-stole-his-wallet.html/>

Psalm 107:8-9

“Let them thank the LORD for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! 9 For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.”

Close in prayer / transition to advent