

November 19, 2023 – The Church that Changed the World: Grateful

SECTION ONE

- **John Kralik – Thank You Notes Story**
 - o “After a particularly bad 2007, lawyer John Kralik decided to start 2008 with a serious New Year’s resolution: to be thankful for the good things and people in his life.
 - As he shares in his book, *365 Thank you: The Year A Simple Act of Daily Gratitude Changed My Life* (SLIDE – pic of book)
 - 2007 had been an incredibly bad year for him.
 - His law firm was losing money and losing their office space.
 - His separation process from his second wife had stalled.
 - He had very little money
 - He had lost connection with his grown sons from his first marriage.
 - o On New Year’s Day 2008, while walking a mountain trail above Pasadena, he became lost. While lost on the trail, he says he heard a voice say -
 - “Until you learn to be grateful for the things you have, you will not receive the things you want.”
 - o Reminded that his grandfather used to write him thank you notes, he resolved to spend the next year writing one thank you note for each day – to family, friends, and co-workers.
 - o As he set this goal for himself, he remembers asking, “Why not just say thanks?”
 - o In the book, he relays that the first note he wanted to write was to his son.
 - o When it came to send the note, he realized he didn’t even have his son’s address.
 - When he reached out to his son to get the address, his estranged son invited him to lunch and over lunch, his son repaid him for a loan of several thousands of dollars.
 - So, he wrote him another thank you note.
 - A short, sweet, written by hand note of thanks.
 - o In the early days of 2008, he wrote thank yous for all his Christmas presents.
 - o When he ran out of gifts to say thanks for, he wrote his co-workers.
 - o When he ran out of co-workers, he was stuck . . .
 - o On his way home from work one day, he stopped by his local Starbucks where the barista greeted him by name.
 - So, he wrote him a thank you note.
 - o As he continued to write notes, each day he realized -
 - He could seriously offer an upbeat answer to the question, “How are you doing?”
 - The more he focused on finding targets for gratitude, the more his perspective shifted.
- **Tension Creating Question**
 - o As I listened to this story, I couldn’t help but wonder about a few things.
 - What if his grandfather would have never written him a note of gratitude that would have given him a memory of this practice of gratitude?
 - What would his life be like if he had dismissed the voice that he heard spurring him onto action around gratitude?
 - How many others would have missed out if he would have never written that first note?
 - BIG QUESTION – What was it like to be living in a world where he had very little hope and very little going for him, but have the courage to intentionally practice his way into what was next?
 - If we apply this question to us –
 - How do we live present and live in anticipation of a better future?
 - What do we do in the in-between?
 - o Present with both pain and joy, sadness and happiness, fear and courage while anticipating a better future.
 - That surely, I won’t be in this place forever.

- As a believer, anticipating the arrival of Jesus to do what he said he would do which return and take us home to live in his presence for eternity.
- **What does Scripture say about how to live present while awaiting a better future?**
 - Turn with me to I Thessalonians 5 where discover how we are to carry ourselves as believers as we live fully present while anticipating a better future.
 - **I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (SLIDE – NIV)**
 - ***Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***
 - I Thessalonians – Letter Highlights
 - Most likely earliest letter we have from Paul.
 - We know from Acts 17, Paul and Silas went to the city of Thessalonica (NEEKA)
 - After one month of being in that community many Jews and Greeks gave their life to Jesus and formed the first community of believers in this city.
 - This group of Christians came into trouble quickly as they were accused of defying Caesar by claiming there was another king - Jesus.
 - This led to persecution and ultimately Paul and Silas had to leave.
 - This letter is Paul reconnecting with this community because of the report from Timothy that they were flourishing.
 - 2 Movements Surrounded by 3 Prayers
 - Movement 1
 - Starts with a prayer of Thanksgiving (1:2)
 - Chapters 1-3
 - Celebration of their Faithfulness
 - Prayer of Blessing – (3:11-13)
 - Movement 2
 - Chapters 4,5
 - Challenge to Grow
 - Prayer (5:23,24)
 - In Chapter 4, Paul speaks to the church's concern that some of their body had died, maybe even killed as martyrs. He is reminding them how they are to live and gives them a beautiful picture of Jesus returning.
 - Chapter 5 is where we find our main text that will guide us today as we seek to live fully present and live in anticipation of a better future?
 - Chapter 5
 - He reminds them to live a righteous life.
 - He reminds the believers to warn those who are being idle and disruptive to stop.
 - He encourages them to encourage the discouraged.
 - He calls them to pay special attention and help those whose faith is weak.
 - He wants the believers to be patient with everyone and not attempt to get even with those who have offended them.
 - He reminds them to live in the present!
 - And, in our anchor verse for today, he reminds believers to do three things as they live in the present while anticipating the return of Jesus.
 - **Rejoice Always**
 - This is not a false or toxic positivity posture.
 - This is a posture of celebration keeping in mind what God through his son Jesus did on the cross and that we have the Holy Spirit as a guide for how to live our lives in partnership with God and his mission.
 - The opposite –
 - To live defeated

- To live downcast
 - To live dejected
- **II Corinthians 4:16-18**
 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
 - **Pray Continually**
 - This is a chance for us to be continually tethered to God in conversation.
 - The opposite –
 - To pray rarely
 - To occasionally pray
 - To dabble with prayer
 - Cell phone analogy with kids.
 - **Philippians 4:4-7**
 - Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 - **Give Thanks in All Circumstances**
 - This reminds us to practice being aware and grateful for how every situation is shaping or forming us and that we, believers who have heard the gospel and are obeying, have a hope bigger than our earthly circumstances.
 - The opposite –
 - To be ungrateful
 - To be unappreciative
 - To be dissatisfied
 - **Romans 8:28**
 - ²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose.
- **Service Today**
 - We are going to embrace the invitation from Paul to –
 - **Rejoice Always** –
 - give you a chance as a body to share with us about what you can rejoice about through an open mic
 - **To Pray Continually** –
 - hear from one of your sisters about how prayer is happening at Fellowship.
 - **Give thanks in all circumstances** –
 - We are going to participate in the breaking of the bread and the cup, taking The Lord's Supper together grateful for how Jesus' death and resurrection gives us hope today as we wait expectantly for his return.
 - For now, I want us to worship and sing praise to God whom all of this is possible.

SECTION TWO – REJOICE ALWAYS

- As we rejoice in what God is doing, let's turn to -
- **Ephesians 1:3 (SLIDE – NIV)**
 - o *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*
- Open Mic Question
 - o As you consider what God is doing in your life, what is one thing you can rejoice about? (SLIDE)

SECTION THREE (Interview Jill Parish) – PRAY CONTINUALLY

- THANK YOU for participating in rejoicing in what God has done in your life.
- **Ephesians 6:18 (SLIDE – NIV)**
 - o *And pray I the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*
- Interview
 - o Why are you so passionate about prayer?
 - o How is prayer forming you?
 - o What are ways that Fellowship is leaning into prayer that you are proud of?
- Transition to Lord's Supper Reflection Song
 - o Reorient to I Thessalonians 5
 - As we move to give thanks, let's reflect on the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Jill Prayer into reflection song

SECTION FOUR (Lord's Supper) – GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

- **THE LORD'S SUPPER**
 - o **Matthew 26:26**
 - **The body of Christ**
 - o **Matthew 26:27,28**
 - **The blood of Christ**
 - **Prayer**
- So, as we wait for the Lord's return, we
 - o Rejoice always!
 - o Pray Continually!
 - o Give Thanks in All Circumstances!
- Why would Paul remind the believers to practice these things?
 - o Gospel Moment
 - o Some might be thinking - This is great for the future, but how on earth does this help me with my current reality?
 - **Let's reframe the question:**
 - **What's possible if we embrace these practices and postures?**
 - o REJOICE ALWAYS
 - Envision what is possible if you embrace the practice of finding a way to rejoice always?
 - It is possible that this would allow us to realize that God has provided enough, and you have the means to give more or sell something and donate the proceeds?
 - o PRAY CONTINUOUSLY

- Could you imagine what could happen if our life was so tethered to God that we could honestly say that we prayed continually?
 - What would be possible if we did this as a community?
 - GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES
 - Envision what's possible if a whole community become a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled community that notices the good in the world rather than always critiquing the bad and takes action to encourage everyone around them?
 - A world where appreciating and gratefulness – Thank you was the norm.
 - Envision what's at stake if we don't? Who might miss out if we don't? What harm is possible by our inaction?
- I've said it before, and I'll keep saying it.
 - Kingdom momentum comes from a collision of courageous moments.
 - It's one handwritten note at a time
 - It's one yes to the Holy Spirit at a time
 - Sometimes it's one yes to sell a property or a piece of land and give it to the church
 - It might be saying yes to a job or saying no to a job
- By rejoicing always, praying continually, and giving thanks in all circumstances we take an offensive posture
 - Offensive because it moves us forward and alert!
 - Offensive because a world full of skepticism, fear, distrust doesn't know what to do with believers who look forward with joy and hope and a posture of gratitude to the day when Jesus returns – even during suffering!
- This is how we stay present and anticipate a future with Jesus!
- Paul's closing in Thessalonians 5
 - As Paul closes his letter to the community in Thessalonica, he offers them this prayer. Fellowship, may you receive this prayer as well.
 - **I Thessalonians 5: 23, 24 (SLIDE – NIV)**
 - *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.*

THE CHURCH

THAT CHANGED

THE WORLD

PART 2: PRAYERS & PLEADINGS OVER

365

Thank Yous

The Year a Simple Act of
Daily Gratitude Changed My Life



JOHN KRALIK

'Profoundly honest and uplifting.'
—Jeffrey Zaslow, coauthor of *The Last Lecture*

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I THESSALONIANS 5:16-18 (NIV)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

EPHESIANS 1:3 (NIV)

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fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an
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