

Thankfulness

I was reading a story the other day (you may have seen it) it was about a janitor or cleaner- a lady this was, who worked in a large company, she had worked there for over 20 years.

The company was taken over by new owners. And one of the first things they did was send out letters to all the employees saying how valuable they were and thanking them for their service.

This particular lady was so touched and emotional by this letter she asked to be excused by her employers and asked if she could go home. They thought she was sick and allowed her to do so.

It turned out that very day she had written another letter to her old employer telling them she was leaving. In all the time she had worked there nobody had ever **thanked her** for what she did.

Needless to say, she changed her mind and is happy working there now under the new management who appreciate her.

It made me think how important gratitude is and saying thank you to people and what happens inside of us if we don't feel appreciated.

Don't know about you? But I get really annoyed as a driver when you do an act of kindness, perhaps let somebody out at a junction and you don't get a thank you.

I think it hits a raw nerve within us all when a simple act of courtesy isn't acknowledged. We were created in God's image so how do you think God feels when we don't thank Him for all the wonderful things he's created and given to us? And we don't come back to Him and say thank you.

It reminds me of the story told about Jesus from **Luke 17:11-19**

“On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

*’ When he saw them he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, **giving him thanks**. Now he was a Samaritan.*

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

10 were healed and only one came back. It made me think did the other 9 stay healed or did they lose that healing because of their ungratefulness?

I think as we read the scriptures we can see how important thankfulness and gratitude and having the right attitude is to God.

In fact references to showing gratitude and thanks appear more than 103 times in the Bible!

Just as example here's 3 verses I came across recently;

*“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17)*

*“**Give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

*“For everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with **thanksgiving**” (1 Timothy 4:4)*

So this morning I want to talk about thankfulness. I know I have touched on this subject before but I have no hesitation in coming back to it time and time again because I think it is of critical importance for the Christian.

In many ways it should be part of the **ABC of Christianity**. The first thing we do every morning and the last thing we do at night and continually do in between.

In fact **not giving thanks** is the root of many of our problems, because the opposite of giving thanks is ungratefulness, which in turn is an open door and slippery slope to unforgiveness and unbelief.

Romans 1 says this; *“for even though they knew God they did not honour him or **GIVE THANKS** but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish hearts were darkened”*

It is because of **not giving thanks** - an ungratefulness and not acknowledging God as God that the Lord has given them over to unbelief.

It is the sad state of our world that people no longer see God as the sustaining source of their lives, their very existence or the giver behind the things that they have, sadly it puts them on a course that leads to idolatry.

2 Timothy describes what people will be like in the last days and one characteristic is ungratefulness.

*‘People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, **ungrateful, unholy**’*

That tells us that God takes gratefulness and ungratefulness very seriously in Scripture. So to begin with here are 3 reasons why it's so important to be thankful;-

Firstly it gives us a right perspective.

We have a natural tendency to become introspective and inward focused. Thankfulness lifts us out of our anxiety and worries and short-sightedness and enables us to see the bigger picture.

It's easy at times to make a 'mountain out of a molehill'; to lose sight of what's really important.

Colossians 3:2 says *"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth"*

2 Corinthians 4:18 says *"as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal"*

As believers we need to have a kingdom perspective, look toward Christ and salvation in Him. Our hope lies not in the things of this world, but in Christ...so to begin with thankfulness refocuses our lens and gives a true spiritual perspective of our lives & circumstances.

Secondly giving thanks is Gods will for us

1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

Time and time again the scriptures say "Give thanks" It is a command, it's like when the Bible teaches us not to worry or be anxious we tend to think we can take it or leave it can sound like a 'nice suggestion' or some great aspiration that impossible to achieve.

But the Bible puts 'giving thanks' it in the same category as "honouring your father and mother" or 'avoiding sexual immorality' they are all commands, instructions for living and we are being unfaithful if we don't act upon them.

Thirdly we become 'fair game' for the devil if we don't give thanks

John Piper says this:

"Evidently we are fair game for the devil when we don't abound with thanksgiving. Unless the song of thanksgiving is being sung in our hearts the enemy outside will deceive his way into the city of our soul, and the enemy sympathisers within us will make his job easy.

So for the sake of your own safety, strive to fill your heart with thanksgiving! Guard yourselves with gratitude!" (John Piper, 1985 sermon on Colossians 2)

Heb 12:15 'See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many'

I think I told you the story of a lady I knew, that I worked with, she had severe arthritis. She told me she had lost her husband early on in their marriage and she had to bring up her 2 children herself. **She had become bitter towards God.** I am sure it had an effect on her arthritis.

It does us no good to build up resentments or hold un-forgiveness in our hearts.

Did you know giving thanks acts an antidote to evil? it puts the devil in a spin –The apostle Paul when he had been beaten up and put in prison, in chains, **they gave thanks and praise** and the chains fell off the & the prison doors opened. Our chains our strongholds can fall off by giving thanks and praise.

Just as the occult is an open door to evil - **giving thanks** is an open door to Gods blessing.

This morning I just want to focus on one verse;-

1 Thessalonians 5:18

'Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus'

It says give thanks in all circumstances Have you noticed that little word **in** there, take note of it it's so small you could miss it! But it has huge importance and a great depth of meaning.

Give thanks in all circumstances.

What it means is: to give thanks right **in** the midst of these circumstances, now I don't mean the other side or when things are beginning to get better, when green shoots are appearing, you are beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel.

No what the **in** means here is: when they are at their darkest point, there is a sense here this **in** is right in the centre, the inner room the very hub or core of our problems or circumstances. Basically what it means is: when your circumstances are at their very worst. At that point: GIVE THANKS! Wow that's hard!

We tend to think if I can only shake off these difficulties, resolve a difficult family problem, find this healing, get a better job, get my life back on track, and then and then only I will be happy. The other side of them I will give thanks. But that is not true in Gods Kingdom

The truth is God never promises to take us out of our circumstances - but He promises to keep us safe - **in the midst of them.** Listen to the Apostle Paul struggle: - **2 Corinthians 12:9** ^{But} he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

There is that **word in** again – **in His** weakness (not out of it) the truth is: Gods power is made perfect **in our weakness**

And why do we do this? – We do it because **you're in Christ Jesus** You see we are not giving thanks for the specific circumstance whatever that may be: an illness, lack of money, no job, difficult family circumstances, that would be unreasonable!

But we can give thanks in all circumstances because **you are in Christ Jesus** – **this is the ultimate reason we give thanks. And because we are IN Christ Jesus we are safe knowing that He is keeping us and working all things for good (Rom 8:28)**

it makes all the difference being **IN** Christ Jesus - it's life changing - we are secure, no longer on the outside, without hope and without God in our world - we are on the inside the inside of His love, His acceptance, His Sacrifice on the cross has made this all possible.

Scripture says (Eph 2:19) “so then you are **no longer** strangers and **aliens, but you are fellow** citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” **your IN Christ Jesus**

What I said the other week - we are either in or out. That there are only 2 conditions you can be in - you're either **in Christ or you're not** (either saved or unsaved)

Don't know about others who **are not in Christ Jesus** - those that don't believe, there **outside** of the promises of God – I grieve when I think what their missing! And because they are not **on the inside** their circumstances makes no sense!

It's all about the here and now, life goes by without meaning and purpose – it has no eternal value. I feel grieved for them – **Friend more than anything makes sure you are IN CHRIST JESUS this morning.**

And those of us that are, these things, and these circumstances are working out for our good even if we don't understand what's going on! - and we know they are only for a season, all things change - things come to an end and we know ultimately we will be with Him one day – there will no more suffering no more tears.

So in conclusion let us try to build into our daily walk with God an attitude of Thankfulness and gratitude, let's recognise its Gods will for us that we do so and by doing so we will not give the devil an open door.

But most important lets we give thanks for GODS FAITHFULNESS to us.

Psalms 136:1 “O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

When I look back over my life I thank God for His faithfulness to me He has kept me through so many situations and circumstances

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”. (**Philippians 1:6**)

Knowing that nothing will separate us from His love - for those who are in Christ Jesus

What about you can are you thankful for just what's on your dinner plate, your car, your job, your family? - Or **also your salvation? I hope it is both.**

What is the bottom line in your thankfulness?

Of all that God has blessed you with are you most thankful because you are **IN Christ Jesus?** Or can you really say that?

Romans 10:9 *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”.*

You can come in out of the cold this morning (or should I say heat!) And come **into** His marvellous love and acceptance.

Can I ask you this morning if you want to do that then can you speak to Edwin or myself after the service. We would love to pray with you.

Amen.

Tony Troy

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