

Being Thankful

INTRODUCTION:

1. There is a movie musical by Irving Berlin that plays on TV around this time of year that features a very short song with lyrics that go like this.
 - A. Lyrics:
 - i. “When I’m worried and I can’t sleep I count my blessings instead of sheep. And I fall asleep counting my blessings
When my bankroll is getting small, I think of when I had none at all. And I fall asleep counting my blessings
 - ii. I think about a nursery and I picture curly heads. And one by one I count them as they slumber in their beds
If you’re worried and you can’t sleep, Just count your blessings instead of sheep. And you’ll fall asleep counting your blessings.” (BTW, Amy Grant’s version is quite nice!)
 - B. I like this song because it reminds me of my/our abundant blessings—one’s we can’t always put a price tag on—and how the Lord has given us so many reasons to **be thankful**, which is what I want to talk about today.
2. Though that movie is **White Christmas**, it is in November that we have set aside a specific day to be thankful, a national holiday we call Thanksgiving.
 - A. I look forward to that day because it normally involves gatherings with family, friends, or brethren, a large meal, and lots of fun.
 - B. Though those things are great, I must admit that I am often left wondering if the extent of my focus on thankfulness that day is that expressed in the prayer before we eat, which is a shame.
3. For, thankfulness is to be the way of life for the Christian, not something done one day a year.
 - A. It is God’s will that those in Christ be thankful.
 - i. 1 Thess. 5:16-18 – “Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in **everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.**”
 - ii. Col. 3:17 – “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** through Him to God the Father.”
 - iii. Col. 4:2 – “**Devote** yourselves to **prayer**, keeping alert in it with an **attitude of thanksgiving**”
 - B. On the flipside of this, however, is the fact that failure to **give thanks to God** is a characteristic of those in **darkness** (Rom. 1:20-21 – “For since the creation of the world His **invisible attributes**, His **eternal power and divine nature**, have been **clearly seen**, being understood **through what has been made**, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ **For** even though **they knew God**, they **did not honor Him as God** or **give thanks**, but they became futile in their speculations, and their **foolish heart was darkened.**”). And, of course, very bad consequences follow from this ungrateful attitude (1:22-32).
 - C. So, being thankful is important to God. And I could leave it at that—that it is our duty to be thankful—but God does not leave it at that. There is much to be thankful for as children of God.
4. So, I want to talk to you today about being thankful and how we have much to thank God for.
 - A. Of course, this includes things that immediately come to mind, the basic blessings of life.
 - B. But it includes so much more—things that affect our mental and spiritual state.

BODY:

- **I. Lets talk about our physical blessing.**
 - A. We need to take care to let God know that we are thankful for all the blessings that make our life possible, that make it good, that come to us daily, that are considered just part of our lives.
 1. Because these blessings are just part of our lives, especially in the U.S.A., being mindful of them and giving thanks for them regularly is not so easily done.
 2. Basic blessings are **often taken for granted** until they are gone, like food when we are hungry, our health, a car that runs, a house that is cool or warm.

- B. So, for us it is even more important that we be aware of these blessings because they are provided by God to point us to him and his care (Acts 14:16-17 – “In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷ and yet He did not leave Himself without **witness**, in that He **did good** and **gave you rains** from heaven and **fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.**”).
- C. So, as we enjoy the good things of the season, and of our life in general, we need to let them turn our hearts and minds toward God who has given them to us in such abundance.
 1. For, God is the source of all that is good in our lives (Jas. 1:17 – “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”).
 2. He provides these good things to those who are willing to simply express their faith in Him by **asking** (Mt. 7:9-11 – “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**”).
- D. So, when you are worried and you can’t sleep, count your blessings instead of sheep...and you will see how greatly God’s hand has affected your life for good!

• • **II. We need to be thankful for Jesus.**

- A. I do not know about you, but as one living out my life in this sin-broken world, I sometimes lose my focus and...
 1. Feel down and discouraged, overwhelmed by life and its trials.
 2. Feel worthless, meaningless, helpless, and maybe sometimes even hopeless.
 3. Feel a certain desperation as I observe my body letting me down, as I hear it yelling to me that I am mortal, that I have never truly been long for this world, that I am but a vapor.
 4. Feel totally inadequate for the roles I must fill in life, especially in my service to God, feeling the weight of my responsibilities to be a burden beyond my ability to bear, while knowing all too well that I do not always bear them with the grace shown to me in Christ.
 5. During these times it is easy to wonder how God—the eternal, perfectly righteous, holy, all-powerful God—could possibly relate to me, love, or care about me and the broken mess my life sometimes is or seems to be.
- B. We should be **thankful** that **God sent Jesus** because...
 - 1. In Christ we know God **relates** to us.
 - a. For God, the creator, **became one of us, taking on human flesh and living among us** (John 1:1-3,14 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God.** ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things came into being through Him**, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...¹⁴ And the **Word became flesh**, and **dwelt among us**, and we saw His glory, **glory as of the only begotten from the Father**, full of grace and truth.”).
 - i. The eternal God who created time and space cared enough about us that he entered time and space.
 - ii. He did so as a human, dwelling among us that we might know God’s love for us, His grace and truth.
 - b. For God through Christ in human form **experienced temptation** and the **weaknesses** of life in the flesh that he might sympathize with us and give us hope.
 - i. Heb. 2:14-18 – “Therefore, **since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same**, that through **death** He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and **might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.** ¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be **made like His brethren in all things**, so that He might become a **merciful** and **faithful** high priest in things pertaining to God, **to make**

- propitiation for the sins of the people.** ¹⁸ For since **He Himself was tempted** in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the **aid of those who are tempted.**”
- ii. Heb. 4:14-16 – “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us **hold fast our confession.** ¹⁵ For we do not have a **high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,** but **One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ Therefore let us **draw near with confidence** to the throne of grace, so that **we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**”
 - 1) Jesus knows what we face, our difficulties faced in dealing with our weaknesses, fighting temptation, etc., because he faced it all to the fullest in human form.
 - 2) For, having never given in to sin, Satan used His whole arsenal on him.
 - 3) And rather than looking down on us because we fail, He is ready and desirous to help us deal with failure and to strengthen us for future victories!
 - 2. In Christ we know God **loves** us beyond all expectation and imagination.
 - a. For, God **sent Jesus to die** for helpless, ungodly, sinners deserving of His wrath (Romans 5:6-9 – “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ **died for the ungodly.** ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God **demonstrates His own love toward us,** in that **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we **shall be saved from the wrath** of God **through Him.**”).
 - b. We see God’s love in Jesus willingly choosing to work God’s plan at such a great price (Philippians 2:5-8 – “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He **existed in the form of God,** did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but **emptied Himself,** taking the form of a **bond-servant,** and being made in the **likeness of men.** ⁸ Being found in **appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**”).
 - c. Consider God’s love for us expressed in Christ!
 - i. God’s justice means we are deserving of wrath for our sins!
 - ii. Yet, God knew we are helpless, having no means of addressing our sins. So He addressed it himself—at such a great price.
 - iii. Folks, if you are like me and sometimes wonder what you could possibly be worth to God, **look to Jesus** and you will see how much God truly **loves you and be thankful!**
 - 3. In Christ we know God gives us **hope**
 - a. Paul spoke of this special hope, doing so on the bases of what God has done for us in Christ (Rom. 5:1-5 – “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God **through our Lord Jesus Christ,** ² **through whom** also we have obtained our introduction **by faith into this grace in which we stand;** and **we exult in hope of the glory of God.** ³ And not only this, but we also **exult in our tribulations,** knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, **hope;** ⁵ and **hope does not disappoint,** because the **love of God** has been **poured out within our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”).
 - b. So, by the peace we have with God in Christ we are given great assurance in hope that even the trials and tribulation cannot dim, but instead bring us closer to God.
 - 4. In Christ we know that God gives us **abundant life** now and forever.
 - a. Christ left everything we seek to gain in heaven to bring abundant life to us **now** (John 10:7-11 – “So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**”).
 - b. Christ brings the fullness of life for eternity.

- i. 1 Thess. 4:16-18 – “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so **we shall always be with the Lord**. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”
- ii. 1 Jn. 3:2-3 – “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, **we will be like Him**, because we will see Him just as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”
- iii. We have every reason to keep going, to remain faithful to God in Christ, being thankful for the many blessings God has bestowed upon us.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. As recipients of God’s great grace in Christ, I encourage you to give thanks to the Lord.
- 2. For, like the Psalmist said (Psalm 92:1-2 – “It is **good to give thanks to the Lord** and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; ² To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night.”).
- 3. If you have come to know God’s great care, love, mercy, and grace offered to you in Christ, will you show your thanks and come to Him today in F-R-C-B?