

An Attitude of Gratitude

We live in a wonderful, free country where we are well fed. We have a roof over our heads and money in our pockets. It's true, we might not be as well off as some people but compared to most of the world we are extremely rich. We are not only blessed materially, we are blessed with friends, family, hope and a future. But in the midst of our lives, it is so easy to take things for granted isn't it?

In spite of the life we have been given and because we have grown so accustomed to our standard of living we can easily take it for granted and be slow to acknowledge just how blessed we truly are. It's easy for all of us to do this so occasionally so we need to be reminded of just what it is we have been taking for granted, and what we have to be thankful for.

The American holiday of Thanksgiving is a special time of the year when we are able to focus our attention on the things which really count. It is a time when we can look back on the blessings God has given us, and a time when we look forward to the blessings we will enjoy in eternity. Not only this, but we can begin to look forward to celebrating the greatest gift of all, the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The day of Thanksgiving has been set aside to remind of us of the importance of having an attitude of thanksgiving, an attitude of gratitude.

This day has been set aside but why is it so important for us to stop and give thanks? The reason is simple. It is because we live in a day of ingratitude.

Aristotle recognized this when he said, "What soon grows old? Gratitude."

The Bible describes the last days in this way in **2 Timothy 3:2-4**: "**For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**"

One of the characteristics mentioned in this description of bad character is that of being "ungrateful."

This characterizes our day doesn't it? We are surrounded by many who are ungrateful. We are surrounded by many who are constantly complaining about others.

Why is this so? Why are there so many complainers? I heard of a recent medical survey which states that chronic complainers live longer than people who are always sweet and happy. This report claims that their cantankerous spirit gives them a purpose for living. Each morning they get up with a fresh challenge to see how many things they can find to grumble about, and they derive great satisfaction from making others miserable.

Do you suppose that this is true? I doubt it.

None of us like to be around complainers. Therefore, none of us should want to be a complainer. One thing that I do not want to be is a disagreeable person and I am sure you do not want to be disagreeable person either. So, how do we keep from being disagreeable? By intentionally cultivating a thankful heart. By cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

In reality that shouldn't be hard to do especially for those who live in this blessed country of America. Since we have been given the privilege of being born here we certainly ought to be thankful. And of all of those who live in America who ought to be thankful, those who know Jesus Christ ought to be especially thankful.

The early Pilgrims had this in mind when they celebrated that first Thanksgiving Dinner. They had many difficult days in settling this new land so on the first Thanksgiving, Governor Bradford of Massachusetts made this first proclamation three years after the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth. The old English is strange but I think it is worth us reading and pondering.

"Inasmuch as the Great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forest to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as He has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience. Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of nine and twelve in the daytime, on Thursday, November 29th, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Six Hundred and Twenty-Three, and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings."

**William Bradford
Ye Governor of Ye Colony**

The early Pilgrims recognized the harvest they experienced came from God. They were thankful, and they did not hide the fact they were thankful to Almighty God.

The basis for true thanksgiving is a close relationship with the living God. As we get to know God better, we will find that our gratitude grows. He alone can give us an attitude of gratitude.

But look around you. All around you will see people who are bitter. It is said that "some people are bitter, not because they do not have anything, but because they do not have everything." Is it any wonder that we are ungrateful when we live in age where we are bombarded by commercials which remind us of what we don't have?

In an age where we are led to believe that if we do not have certain *things*, *certain stuff*, *then* we will not experience happiness. We see and hear this message from an early age and we unconsciously begin to believe it and then we become unhappy and ungrateful.

In a society that is being driven by the message of what we don't have it is easy for us to become ungrateful for what we do have.

In Kingdom Kids we just finished up the 10th commandment, do not be envious of others. God knew that envy was going to be a problem for most so He included it in the 10 commandments.

Thursday we have a day of Thanksgiving, a day that was originally set aside so that we would stop our striving, rest and focus on the blessed life we have been given and Who has given it to us.

It also can be a good time when we may be reminded of why it is good to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Intentionally having a thankful heart will transform us in our thinking and in our attitudes.

As we cultivate an attitude of gratitude we will begin to think in a different, more positive way. The world teaches us to concentrate on the negatives, to correct and to point out errors but if we choose to look for it we can find the positive as well.

Listen to an example of this kind of thinking found in **Philippians 4:8**:
"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

As we cultivate an attitude of gratitude then our focus and our attention will be on the things which are good, true, right and pure and then our minds will be renewed; they will be transformed. We will begin to see there is always a positive side even to negative things that occur in our lives.

For instance, we can be thankful for smoke alarms because they tell us when the turkey's done. Or we can be thankful for husbands who try to do small repair jobs around the house. They usually make the jobs big enough to call in professionals who will do them right. There is always a positive side and when we choose to see what occurs in a positive light, then our minds will be transformed.

Not only will we experience transformed thinking, but we will experience transformed attitudes of our heart.

Read this verse with me.

Colossians 3:15-17 we read, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

In these verses we find that giving thanks is mentioned. It is mentioned because it is essential to an attitude which reflects the presence of Christ and His Word in us.. Having a thankful heart should be as natural to the Christian as swimming is to a fish. A fish swims because it is alive and we are thankful because we are alive.

There are many times when we could choose to look on the negative but there are many more reasons for us to be thankful. Look at this next verse.

2 Corinthians 9:15, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! The greatest gift that anyone has ever given to humankind is the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The greatest reason to be thankful is that God did send His Son and you have entered into an everlasting relationship with Him!

God sent His Son Jesus, because He loved us. He sent Him to do the greatest work for us that anyone has ever done. That work was dying on the Cross for our sins so that we could be set free. Jesus paid the penalty for all your sins. He died so that you would not have to pay the penalty. He took your place on the Cross. He died for you and He did it all because He loves you.

This is what is called the Gospel. Gospel means good news. And it is good news indeed! Those of us who have experienced first hand this good news in our lives also know the gratitude we feel toward God.

How can we ever thank Him enough? Human words fail to adequately express the overwhelming gratitude which wells up in our hearts.

We can be thankful by having an attitude of gratitude.

Having an attitude of gratitude and giving thanksgiving is really the only thing we have to offer our God because in reality, everything we have, everything on earth is His anyway. Our thanksgiving is our only true gift to a God who owns everything. Our thanksgiving is an offering of praise to our God and it gladdens His heart.

It is my hope and prayer that each of us will give thought to all the blessings we have received and that because of it we will cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

I wanted to turn things around a bit this morning so we could leave here by giving God praise and may it will help us carry this into Thursday, into Christmas and throughout the coming year.

Let's give God some praise.