

Be Thankful

Toys R Us reopening

- Thanksgiving is later this year due to when the 4th Thursday in November lands (28th)
- 6 fewer shopping days between Thanksgiving and Christmas
- Many retailers started the season holiday shopping even sooner than normal in hopes to make of for the loss of days and potential income
- One store is attempting to reconnect with their shoppers: Toys R Us
- Toy store that you could get just about any toy
- Went bankrupt in the US and closed all their stores in 2018
- Almost like a funeral when the store closed nationwide. Makes you wonder why they had to close with so much interest
- During this season while the stores have been close, the ownership of Toys R Us have been rethinking their model of business and how to be competitive given the way a lot of the market has gone to the internet and how to provide for people a product that people will invest in.
- Now they are beginning a season of experimenting with a new business model and hopefully rebirth
 - The stores are smaller
 - Fewer toys, but featuring brands that can market themselves
 - The stores are set up as more than just a place to buy toys, but to have an entertaining experience; descriptions seem similar to Legoland in Columbus.
 - Instead of trying to sell every toy, they have narrowed their retail to the toys that are the most sought after. Smaller and more focused strategy.
- **Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV) says, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."**
 - It appears that Toys R Us has taken advantage of a difficult season by rethinking who they are, not giving up on their purpose, and being open to a new way of doing things.
 - As a result, this could be a season of rebirth!

Sermon Series: A Season for Everything

- Based off Ecclesiastes 3
- Holiday Seasons (Thanksgiving and Christmas)
- Time for: Excitement, Family, Celebration
- Also a time for: Depression, Anxiety, and Loneliness
- While we consider all of these emotions and opportunities- these holidays remind us to be Thankful for a Savior!
- During this week of Thanksgiving, I hope that all of us will take some time to reflect on our lives and the purpose that God has given each of us.
- One of the main purposes that God has given to us, is to worship.
- Worship is literally what Thanksgiving is all about

Thanksgiving is more than a holiday but it is an attitude of Worship

- Worship is a response to God's presence and activity in our lives
- So, Worship begins with an awareness of God's presence in our lives
- How aware are you of God's presence in this season of your life?
 - When we are aware of God's presence it provides the opportunity for God to renew our lives.
 - When we have a thankful heart, we are responding to the goodness of God in our life
 - The awareness of God's presence and the openness of our spirit produces a response of worship to the God of all Creation!

Reflecting on Response to Thanksgiving

- **Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV), "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun."**
- Nothing new to say; what has been said is all that needs to be said
- Time to do it!
- If you have been paying attention, this sermon will seem like a review of what we have already discussed. My challenge to all of us is to do it!

The Book of Ecclesiastes begins

- **Ecclesiastes 1:1-3**
 - Confusing
 - Depressing
 - What is the point of life? Is life just empty or void of meaning?
 - The answer- **Ecclesiastes 3:14**; God is Sovereign through every season!
 - A Harvard Study: "Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a higher power."¹
 - Gratitude or Thanksgiving pulls us up out of ourselves to something much bigger; we can acknowledge God
 - Thanksgiving is more than a holiday, but it is an attitude of worship

Because God is sovereign at all times, each season provides us with the opportunity for God to fulfill his will in our lives.

¹ *"In Praise of Gratitude"* Harvard Mental Health Letter, Harvard Health Publishing, www.health.harvard.edu. Published November 2011, accessed November 23, 2019.

- Like Toys R Us, it may be that we need to step back and re-evaluate to experience a season of renewal
- We may not understand all that is happening, but if we will remember God's presence is with us, God's will can be fulfilled in our lives
 - 1 Corinthians 15:57–58 (ESV), "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Solomon's words are not born out of depression, but upon the reflection that no matter what we do, we can't control time.

- Seasons change whether we want them to or not
- Time keeps moving forward
- Conclusion: We can't stop time, but we can make the most of today.

We can begin to make the most of today when we realize that God's plan is much bigger than we can conceive.

- Ecclesiastes 3:11
- Each season comes and goes, but with God there is a greater purpose for our life.
 - This is the reason that in all that we do, we do it for the glory of God whether we understand the season of our life or not.
 - In God's timing, we find what really matters!
 - Example of looking out over the horizon of the ocean, not able to see what is on the other side, but aware that Europe is somewhere out there. Only after looking at a map can we see the bigger picture.

Don't get lost in the season you are in, focus on what really matters and let God have control!

Examples of Thanksgiving Worship (Transition between Thanksgiving and Christmas)

- Luke 2:22-32
 - Waiting
 - Promise
 - Faithful
 - Redemption
- Luke 2:36-38
 - Advanced in years
 - Waiting
 - Devoted to the temple: worship, fasting and prayer
 - Gave thanks
 - Proclaiming redemption

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Harvard Study

- “In one study, they (two psychologists Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, Davis, and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami) asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics. One group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them, and the third wrote about events that had affected them (with no emphasis on them being positive or negative). After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation.”²
- Should we be surprised?
- Not only can this be proven through research, but it is very biblical!
- We were created to worship
 - In worship we discover something much bigger than ourselves
 - We become aware of the presence of God
 - In worship we discover our purpose; Thanksgiving!

Prayer: God I give you this season

- **Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV), “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**
 - Prayer and Supplication *with Thanksgiving!*
 - Peace of God surpasses all understanding- Solomon in Ecclesiastes
- “Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of always reaching for something new in the hopes it will make them happier, or thinking they can't feel satisfied until every physical and material need is met. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.”³

Conclusion

- Don't get lost in the season you are in, focus on what really matters and let God have control!
 - Be aware of the presence of God in your life
 - Give Thanks
 - Recognize that every season is an opportunity for God to fulfill his will in your life
 - Pray: God, I give you this season

² In *Praise of Gratitude*, www.health.harvard.edu

³ In *Praise of Gratitude*, www.health.harvard.edu