

BE THANKFUL

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Massachusetts
November 22, 1964

Scripture: Colossians 3:16-17

Introduction

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Phil. 4:4 *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ... Have no anxiety 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 passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Psalm 103:1 *“Bless the Lord, O my soul;
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.”*

II Cor. 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.”*

I. Thanksgiving is at the heart of the Christian faith.

- A. It is the positive response of the human heart to God’s action in Christ – his word of forgiveness, his gift of the Holy Spirit, his promise of eternal life, his gift of fellowship, his gift of peace.
- B. Nothing brightens life – our own nor others’ – so much as the spirit of thanksgiving..

A.J. Cronin says: “A doctor I knew in South Wales, England prescribed in certain cases of neuroses what he called his “thank-you cure”. When a patient came to him discouraged, pessimistic and full of his own woes, but without any symptoms of a serious ailment, he would give this advice:

‘For six weeks I want you to say “Thank you” whenever anyone does you a favor, and to show you mean it, emphasize the words with a smile.’

‘But no one ever does me a favor, doctor,’ the patient may complain.

“Whereupon, borrowing from Scripture, the wise old doctor would reply: ‘Seek and you will find.’”

“Six weeks later, more often than not, the patient would return with quite a new outlook, freed of his sense of grievance against life, convinced that people had suddenly become more kind and friendly.”

- C. John Henry Jowett has said: “Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, an antiseptic.” This is a most searching and true diagnosis. Gratitude can be a vaccine that can prevent the invasion of a disgruntled attitude. As antitoxins prevent the disastrous effects of certain poisons and diseases, thanksgiving destroys the poison of faultfinding and grumbling. Where trouble has smitten us, a spirit of thanksgiving is a soothing antiseptic.
- D. The spirit of thankfulness is a spiritual chair-lift. When we are low in mood, we need only to think of our blessings and express our gratitude to God, and we are lifted to heights of praise where we gain a new perspective in our circumstances.

II. Occasions to give thanks

A. I am thankful for my father and mother.

- 1. They provided food and clothing for me and did it willingly. Many parents spend their income on pleasure and luxuries.
- 2. They provided an environment of love and security in my early years.
 - a. I felt that I was wanted in my house.
 - b. I had responsibility for the discipline of the younger brothers and sisters. The future of my family was on my shoulders.
 - c. Example of Marilyn Monroe – her disaster in life is attributed to unhappy early childhood – an unwanted child who was exploited by foster parents.

B. The Pilgrim Fathers

- 1. They had had a hard winter – many were dead and many sick
- 2. But they gave thanks. It is recorded in the early days of Plymouth: “... at noon men staggered by reason of faintness for want of food, yet ere night, by the Good Providence of God, we have enjoyed such plenty as though the windows of heaven had been opened to us.”

Elder Brewster, we are told, when often he sat down to a repast of clams, with a cup of cold water, looked up to heaven and returned thanks, “for the abundance of the sea and for the treasures hid in the sand.”

Through difficulties the Pilgrims worked, prayed, and did their highest sense of right. And they had their Day of Thanksgiving with the Indians against the background of the cemetery.

C. Thanks for what others have done.

Says Gerard Kennedy, bishop of the Methodist Church:

“My job makes it necessary for me to travel East on trains several times a year.

Sometimes the railroad goes along beside the Oregon Trail, where the pioneers traveled westward a generation or two ago. There are places in western Nebraska where I have

walked in the ruts of the old wagon wheels. As I sit in a comfortable air-conditioned roomette and travel down the rails at seventy-five miles an hour, my imagination can see the prairie schooners rocking on their way painfully and slowly a few miles each day.

And it comes to me that if they had not made the trip the hard way, I could not be making it the easy way. I am the recipient of gifts created out of their courage, their sacrifice, their vision.”

Young people especially, let us not forget what others have done for us and are constantly doing.

II. Thanksgiving and sharing go together.

- A Presidential Thanksgiving Day proclamations have often concerned our national advantages and prosperity. Sometimes, however, genuine responsibility has been deemed essential to the spirit of gratitude.

Coolidge, for instance, wrote: “We have been a most favored people. We ought to be a most generous people. We have been a most blessed people. We ought to be a most thankful people.”

Truman: “May our Thanksgiving be tempered by humility, by sympathy for those who lack abundance, and by compassion for those in want.”

Abundant harvests and sufficient resources are a trust. Sharing them with the needy and helpless, the hungry and homeless of ours and other lands is a privilege as well as a duty.

- B. Our missionary program is an offering of thanksgiving:

Helen Keller: “There is no lovelier way to thank God for your sight than by giving a helping hand to someone in the dark.”

Conclusion:

Let us always give thanks. Let it be from the heart. Let it be for the correct reasons. Let it be accompanied by sharing, lest it be an empty phrase. Thankfulness cannot be dedicated to any one day; it must embrace the calendar year and every day in the year. It is only by measuring our year-round thankfulness that we get a true measure of our sincere appreciation.