## Gratitude

### Fullness of Life

This is the fourth and last sermon in our series on, “GRATITUDE.” Our overall goal has been to key our minds and hearts to a deeper understanding and realization of the Biblical meaning and flavor of a life that is full and abundant in Christ! A life filled to overflowing with gratitude.

***Main Point: Gratitude is an essential ingredient on the quest to fullness of life, to the abundant life promised in Christ!***

Our first sermon was on the basics of Biblical gratitude. What we are to be grateful for. Our second was on what hinders, what holds us back from a full life, a life of gratitude, (grumbling & murmuring). Our third was on drawing closer together in our journey through life as Christians. Emphasizing all that we have in common. That our gathering around the Lord’s table, communion, is that which binds us together. Is that which will melt any differences we may have with each other into insignificance.

This our fourth and final lesson on GRATITUDE is on living the full life that God through Jesus freely offers.

What has been the inspiration for this series is what I see in our society, and we must head this off so it doesn’t infect the church. We have become a divided society. We see an attitude permeating all around us of “I am right and you are wrong and you can’t convince me otherwise.” We see people drifting farther and farther away from good sound Biblical principles. Relying instead on their own fallible reasoning.

Just look at Facebook and other social media! No matter what the subject, you will find people posting stuff that is anti-everything. People are just looking for something to disagree about and argue about. If we are not careful, this can and will drag us away from what is truly important, God’s grace and our actions and response to His grace. If we fill our minds with all the useless junk on social media, we will be robbing ourselves of a full and abundant life that God has promised.

I have seen fellow Christians post stuff that does not reflect Christian principals. I know some that are always grumpy and argumentative. And I’m sure you do as well. If we are not careful we will be drawn into the black hole of a life of ingratitude over one of gratitude? And speaking of black holes, Black holes have the power, the gravity to draw in light and not allow light to be emitted! We are the light of God’s word and promises. ***Do not allow your light to be snuffed out. Seek out ways to be grateful. Pull away from an attitude of ingratitude before that becomes your way of life!***

If you catch yourself taking the bait and participating in all this negativity, think on what the Lord has done and is doing in your life. We must toss overboard anything that hinders us from living God’s abundant life that He offers through His grace and what Jesus went to the cross for!

**We should pray every day;** Fill our hearts with gratitude Lord, for all you have done, are doing now, and will do in and through our lives.

**Scripture -** Luke 17:11-19, Romans 1:20-32

There is a Jesus story in the Bible that ends with a shocking one liner which leaves the reader wondering, *what exactly does Jesus mean?*

**Read or retell Luke 17:11-19.**

In other versions this verse reads:

*And he said to him, “Rise and go your way;* ***your faith has made you well****.” (Luke 17:19 ESV)*

*“Stand up and go on your way.* ***You were healed because you believed****.” (NCV)*

*“Stand up and go****. Your faith has healed you****.” (NLT)*

Upon reading this, some have wondered: *Was the man not healed before? What about the others, weren’t they healed as well?*

Or, we may ask questions like these: *Was the healing not permanent? Did Jesus only offer temporary physical healing? Is Jesus speaking of physical healing* ***or is He speaking of something more, something much more?***

Or, we may wonder, *“Is Jesus implying that healing is not a one-step process?*

In order to understand this passage and to what Jesus is inferring, we have to jump back a few verses.

***15Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving eucharisteo, (gratitude for God’s grace). Now he was a Samaritan. 17Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”***

Jesus saying, “foreigner” was not disrespecting this individual, for God loves all. He knew the ones hearing this message were biased in their thinking and this added emphasis to this story that Jesus came to heal **all.**

Jesus is wondering out loud why only one out of the ten returned to offer *eucharisteo* (give thanks for God’s grace). He actually wonders aloud *why the others would not do the same?* The answer is found once again, in our special word. There was only one leper who fully understood God’s grace and offered it back with thanksgiving and praise. Only one accepted the free gift – *charis* – (a gift of grace), and freely offered back the same.

The Bible is filled with the word *charis, eucharista, eucharisteo*. **Grace,** **grace and more grace.** One leper returned to his Savior to express his gratitude, the other nine offered nothing to their Savior. And in return, the other nine missed out on true healing – the healing of their soul -salvation. They missed out on the grace of God. They just couldn’t see it.

1. **Thanksgiving is an extension of our belief in Jesus.**

What we see here, in this passage, is similar of other stories and teachings in the Bible**. It is the theology of God’s grace,** which is accepted through the practice of *eucharisteo*, through *belief*.

We see that the lepers fully believe they are healed. They see their healing, they feel their healing, they *believe* they are healed, and they go and show it (to the priest). But, instead of showing their belief to Jesus, for Jesus, and in Jesus, they show it to others without so much as a thank you.

But one leper gets it. He turns back, falls on his knees, confesses his *belief* in Jesus through thanksgiving and praise, and shows Jesus that he has received God’s grace. This leper, not only believed that he is healed and received the healing, but by his actions, we read that he believes in ***whom*** he has been healed.

**His thanksgiving for his healing was a confession and an affirmation of his belief in Jesus. Are we beginning to see the deeper meaning of Biblical gratitude? “Eucharista”**

**Here is a concept worthy of our consideration:**

**Atheism of the heart:**

 The nine lepers responded with their lips; the one leper responded with his heart.

We tend to shy away from this word, *atheism.* In today’s church it is an old school word that fails to resonate because the word is heavy with emotion. By definition atheism is *to not believe in God*. However, *to not believe* in something, by its nature implies you actually do believe in something – you believe in not believing. It can be a type of riddle.

Atheism of the heart is to know of God and to choose ***not*** to glorify Him as God. It is to accept His grace, his healing, his provision, his goodness in our life, but never acknowledge they come from His hand. Just like the nine who did not return to thank Jesus.

In an atheistic heart there is no sense of obligation to show a response for what God has freely given. There may be a belief in a God who freely gives, there may be an acceptance of His gifts, but there is no expressive response to His gifts.

* The boils that have overcome and crippled the nine’s bodies may be removed as a free gift, but they will not acknowledge in their hearts who did the healing and offer a response! May we never fail to thank the Lord.

**Atheism of Life**

Few passages explain an atheistic heart like this passage in Romans, written to the early Roman church by the Apostle Paul.

**Read Romans 1:20-23.**

Here we read that there is no excuse for not recognizing the work and wonders of God in the world and our life. To do so, is to choose an atheistic heart and live an atheistic life. It is to receive God’s mercies and refuse God the *thanks*: **“*for although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.”***

How did their atheistic lives mimic their atheistic hearts? They did not honor Him or give thanks. They chose not to receive and respond to God’s grace. Therefore, they exchanged God’s grace for backward lives, full of sin. May we always be on guard that our heart and lives do not neglect giving thanks to God. May we always express eucarista, gratitude.

**Read Romans 1:24-32.**

1. **An atheistic life trades an attitude of gratitude for a me, mine, and myself mindset.**

 Living a life without gratitude, is to choose not to practice our faith and become a petri dish for sin.

1. **There are many sins we choose:**

Spite

Pride

Opportunities to participate in evil

Envy

Hate

Deceit

Whispering (Grumbling)

Backbiting

Abhorrence of God’s ways and people

Slander

No love for our neighbor

1. **We know we are living a life of gratitude when the fruits of the Spirit freely flow through us instead!**

**Read Galatians 5:22-26.**

***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” This is one more key to follow as we reach for the abundant life Jesus grants!***

5:22 *And those* ***who belong to Jesus*** *have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (ESV)*

A believing heart has crucified the passions of the flesh (Romans 1:24-32) and lives out of the mercies of God.

Where does crucifying the passions and desires of the flesh begin? With a response of gratitude to God for his mercies. And from this place of gratitude, we find a strength to choose God above ourselves, a distaste for things not of God, and instead, we find a desire for His gifts in our life (the fruits of the Spirit).

**CLOSING**

Assess your life for moment:

Have any sins taken root in your life?

Do you regularly receive God’s grace?

And, in return, do you practice gratitude?

Does your life resemble an atheistic or a believing heart?

If you are feeling God’s word tug on your conscience, consider what your life may look like if you added gratitude? Imagine, if instead of spite and frustration your life was filled with patience and joy. Imagine instead of anger over that broken relationship, you replaced the pain with kindness.

If you began practicing gratitude, *what* sin would you trade? *Which* fruit of the Spirit would you see as a result?

Imagine your life, your relationships, your home, your mental health… if you chose gratitude.

Gracious gratitude is not limited by life’s circumstances. In all stages of life, it’s possible to choose gratitude. A few days ago I presided over a memorial for the passing of Deb’s sister. I relayed to those gathered heart broken over our loss that although it hurts, we can be grateful to the Lord that She was part of our lives and will forever be in our memories.

Throughout this series you have heard me refer to different keys to achieving gratitude in our lives. The Apostles were given the “Keys to the Kingdom.” The Lord has granted us keys as well. Our keys are keys given to us for a full life, a blessed life, a life of gratitude. These keys are easily found throughout scripture. God in His wisdom and love for us did not leave us to figure out life on our own, He gives us direction to live a life that is richly filled with gratitude for all that He has done for us through our Lord and savior Jesus!

If you would like to discover this Christian life, this life that is full, this life of gratitude, contact us and we will aid you in your quest.