

November 3, 2019 – Elmont Baptist Church

Text: Psalm 136:1; Colossians 2:6-7

Message Series: Be Thankful

Week 1: God-Glorifying Gratitude

Introduction:

1. It's November and that means that Thanksgiving is close. Most have already moved past Thanksgiving to the bigger holiday: Black Friday. You know the day after giving thanks for all we've been blessed with, we go out to get what we don't have.
2. For me, Thanksgiving has for a long time been my favorite holiday. It's not over commercialized, it's pretty laid back, and there's no shifting the meaning to something else. It just has a purity about it. And there's food and football, but that has nothing to do with it.
3. Our culture doesn't appreciate it because we don't want to recognize the need to give thanks, especially if it is inferred that we are giving thanks to God.
4. But for most, even those who are in Christ, Thanksgiving comes and goes without us giving it the attention it deserves.
5. Yes, we should be thankful all the time, but there are certain times where our minds should instruct our hearts to really focus in on a particular discipline or celebration of the faith.
6. We will do that in December with the historic church tradition of Advent where we look back to Christ's first coming to help us anticipate His return.
7. Thanksgiving is a great time to reflect on what it means to be thankful and work hard to discern if our thankfulness is God glorifying or closer to idolatry.
8. Over the next 4 weeks we will look to the Scriptures for instruction and ask the Spirit to empower us to Be Thankful.
9. For me, honestly, I'm not as excited about Thanksgiving this year. There are many reasons, but in preparing this week, there was just the reality that I am not where I want to be in this area.

10. There are struggles that I wish I didn't have. There is suffering that I wish wasn't happening. There is stress that I wish didn't exist. And for me those things do not make a great recipe for a Thanksgiving meal.

11. But then in preparing this week, my Father was gracious and patient to instruct my mind and my heart to what it means to have God-glorifying gratitude.

Read Psalm 136:1; Colossians 2:6-7

God Glorifying Gratitude...

1. Has the Right Foundation

- a. The character and nature of God – Psalm 136:1
- b. Our union with Christ – Col. 2:6-7
 - i. So often our ability to be thankful is based on what good things are happening in our lives in that season
 - ii. We think of being thankful as a response to circumstances or situations
 - iii. My circumstance doesn't change God's goodness nor my union with Christ and so my giving of thanks, even abounding in thanksgiving, should not change based on my situation.
 - iv. The Holy Spirit, through the writers, is trying to help us understand that our being thankful is determined by what is eternally true, not by what is temporarily taking place
 - v. We are to give thanks because God is good and His love is steadfast and endures forever.
 - vi. We are to give thanks because of our union with Christ that nothing can change, undo, or cancel.
 - vii. This is how the Apostle Paul can say in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "give thanks in ALL circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

- viii. And in Ephesians 5:18-20 that one of the evidences of the filling of the Holy Spirit is "...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."
- ix. The foundation of God glorifying gratitude is who God and who you are in Christ.
- x. And this foundation has a purifying benefit on our lives as well as it...

2. Settles Our Hearts on Truth

- a. Lifts us from despair
- b. Keeps us from pride
 - i. Like in most areas of our lives, we are prone to, as one pastor said, "drive in the ditches"
 - ii. Depending upon our circumstance our hearts are likely to be down in despair or feeling high on ourselves.
 - iii. Things aren't going well, so we worry or become anxious or fearful. Pastor Todd Wagner once said, "Worry is thinking God is not going to get it right. Bitterness is thinking that God got it wrong."
 - iv. When our gratitude is determined by our circumstances rather than something with immovable substance, we will "be thankful" when things are going well, and grumble when their not.
 - v. There's a quote in your worship guide by Jon Bloom that says, "Grumbling will be the forever accent of hell, and gratitude the forever accent of heaven."
 - vi. When the foundation of your thankfulness or gratitude is the eternal worth of your Father and your union in Christ to Him, then circumstances don't shake you so much.
 - vii. Your thanksgiving looks different when the diagnosis comes, or the job is lost, or the child is rebellious, but it is still there because your soul has learned that God is still just as good and you are still just as much in Christ.

- viii. The other extreme is pride. We don't mind saying "thank you" to God for the good things we have, but there is no real desire for the Giver, just the gifts.
- ix. Gratitude can be idolatry when we give thanks for the gift but have no real desire to draw close to the Giver.
- x. To paraphrase John Piper: the foundation of our gratitude must be the excellency of the Giver over and above the worth of the gift.
- xi. If the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, then the chief end of our gratitude is to glorify God.
- xii. Seeking God's hand but not His face is a real problem. Jesus talked about it when He saw the religious people of His day and used an Old Testament passage from Isaiah 29:13 to describe them, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me..." (Matthew 15:8)
- xiii. Reminding ourselves often of the holiness, grace, love, forgiveness, mercy, and so many other things that our Father defines, and the fact that He adopted us into His family by union with Christ through His death and resurrection, all the sudden the despair lifts and the pride bows and God is glorified. Your gratitude then has eternal significance.

Closing

1. What are you thankful for? Nothing wrong with listing physical or material things, but are you honestly more thankful for those things than the God that gave them to you?
2. Are you struggling to be thankful right now? Take a minute now and then several later to ask your Father, who is "good, for His steadfast love endures forever" help you see Him better and be thankful for who He is and who you are in Christ.
3. Let's pray and then confess to the Lord the honest condition of our heart and mind today.