

11/20/05 – “THANKSGIVING”

When we're ungrateful, we're not seeing God's point of view - We believe in justice - On our own justice would mean judgment and eternal separation
What did we do to obtain eternal life? What merit of our own qualified us to receive eternal life? – Jesus did everything, we did nothing but believe
“Saved by grace through faith and not of works lest we boast” – Ephesians 2:8 - Grace... **the unmerited favor of God... His gift to us**
Should we allow ourselves to be judgmental of others when we have absolutely nothing to stand on except the grace of God?
Jesus said, “Narrow is the road that leads to life, but broad is the way to destruction.” – The Lord gives us choice... “The Valley of Decision”
The broad path of self-interest leads to despair and emptiness – Paradoxically, the narrow road leads to life and life more abundantly
It is easy to accuse and blame shift when things don't go our way – Blame shifting is as old as the Garden of Eden
“The woman that Thou didn't give me, oh Lord, caused me to sin.” – Blaming God and being thankful to God are polar opposites
Gratitude will move us from negativity and a critical spirit to thankfulness and humility for His present love and eternal faithfulness

GRATITUDE – A PASSIVE GRACE

Gratitude is the parent of all other virtues – It is the fountain out of which comes love and all other graces

In the book Gulliver's Travels, ingratitude a capital offense – “In jail for murder?” - **No, ingratitude** – Can incarcerate our spirit
The Greek word for Thanksgiving is eucharistia...root word of Eucharist – Communion is actually giving thanks and receiving of thanks
The fruits of the Spirit are nurtured in gratitude...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – Gal. 5:22-23
Being grateful is not a denial of trials and pain – Yet, it's in the trials and tribulations of life that gratefulness blesses God
The Lord did not promise a problem-free life–“*In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world.*”–Jn 16:33
Gratitude is our hearts memory – Gratitude is passive grace... it is a posture of heart that resonates love back to God in all of life

THANKSGIVING IS ACTIVE EXPRESSION

We are to enter His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts which is expressive and orally communicated

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name.” – Psalm 100:4

If we only think grateful thoughts and never act on them, we fall short... **Gratitude is released and communicated through thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving is vocal, positive and active – A rendering of expressed thanks to God... thanksgiving is one of our primary gifts back to God

Gratitude and thanksgiving look back from the present while prayer focuses on things asked and hoped for in God

Thanksgiving is a response for things already received, and prayer entreats for things desired, asked for and hoped for in God

True thanksgiving is sacrificial and calls us to action... I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving - Psalm 116

We are called to magnify and exalt the Lord in thanksgiving...shall magnify (enlarge our hearts towards) Him with thanksgiving – Psalm 95:2

We are *“to be alert with an attitude of thanksgiving.”* – Col. 4:2 *“All thanksgiving and honor and power and might unto God.”* – Rev. 7

Gratitude and thanksgiving are incompatible with murmuring and complaining... God hears our grumbling as well as thanksgiving

The disciples grumbled, the Israelites grumbled in their tents – When grumbling exceeds thanksgiving, we're on the wrong path

Why do we grumble? People or circumstances don't please us or meet our expectations – We miss “the log in our own eye.”

Thanksgiving and praise moves us from self-centeredness to God centeredness which is the key to obedient life

Maintain a heart of gratitude before the Lord – Have a good memory of His redeeming love...“And forget none of His benefits.” Ps. 103

May our hearts be full of gratitude this Thanksgiving Day, and may our expressions of thankfulness exalt the Lord and bless

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High; to declare Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness by night.” – Psalm 92:1-2 – What a wonderful Lord and Savior... Thank you, thank you, thank you, Lord!