

Theme: We are called to form a grateful soul by consciously taking time to notice and give thanks to God for His many blessings and trusting Him to work for our good in all circumstances.

## I. Intro - Momma, Me, and Pottery

- A. My momma makes amazing pottery!
- B. I love going to pottery stores with her and hearing how pottery is made, fired, glazed, etc.
- C. She tried teaching me once - and I had no patience!
- D. I gave up quickly and never learned how!
- E. Like a potter, we must form our soul for gratitude

## II. A Theology of Gratitude

- A. God's will - a joyful, praying life of gratitude  
Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup> pray continually; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
  - 1. Staccato commands throughout this section!
  - 2. Three in this sentence: be joyful; pray; give thanks
  - 3. This describes the type of life we should be building
    - a. A life that is full of joy
    - b. A life full of prayer
    - c. A life of gratitude expressed in our prayer and joy
- B. A theology of gratitude
  - 1. It is God's will that we should be grateful  
give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18
    - a. We are commanded to give thanks (imperative verb)

- b. This command covers all circumstances - we always have much to be grateful for!
- c. This is God's will for us - and especially for those who are in Christ Jesus!

## 2. Ingratitude is a foundational sin

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:21

- a. Paul is showing the sin of humanity
- b. They have seen that there is a God from creation (vv19-20), but they do not give Him glory (for Who He is) and do not give Him thanks (for all He has done).
- c. This leads to empty thinking and darkened hearts.
- d. This then leads to ever deeper slavery to sin (vv22-32)
- e. When we do not take time to regularly acknowledge God and give thanks to Him, our thoughts and desires turn from Him and we are led into ever deeper sin.

## III. Forming A Grateful Soul

- A. Take time to notice God's hand of blessing all around  
Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — Psalm 103:2
  - 1. The Psalmist tells us we need to remember all God has done for us - and then begins to list some of them!
  - 2. The command to 'remember' is common in the Old Testament - God's people must consciously remember God's blessings and commands!

3. Remembering is central in our worship each week as we come to the Lord's Table to remember His life, death, and resurrection that saves us - and to give thanks!

4. Taking time to notice and remember is the first step in shaping a grateful soul

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God,  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;  
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

- a. God's glory blazes all around us if we have eyes to see - but most miss and just go on with their mundane tasks.
- b. But if we see, we take off our shoes as Moses did and we worship and give thanks.

5. A brief list of 'Earth being crammed with heaven'

And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. Acts 17:25

- a. Your very life is the gift of God!
  1. We do not have to exist - we do by God's pleasure
  2. As far as we can see and explore the universe is barren of life - except our planet!
  3. Everything on earth is fine-tuned for our existence - this is the gift of God!
- b. Your breath is the gift of God! (Sam Kean - *Caesar's Last Breath*)
  1. The average person - 21,600 breaths each day!
  2. The average person - over 600 million breaths in life
  3. Every breath has 12.5 sextillion molecules - more than every grain of sand on every seashore!

4. You have 25 trillion red blood cells packed with hemoglobin constantly delivering oxygen to your body.

5. 'All the world's roads and all the world's canals and all the world's airports in the history of all humankind haven't handled nearly as much traffic as our lungs do every second.' - Same Kean, *Caesar's Last Breath*

6. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Psalm 150:6

c. Creation (Psalm 104)

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Psalm 19:1

1. The cosmos is crammed with the glory of God and shouts it to all who will listen
2. It is massive beyond our comprehension and apparently growing moment by moment!
3. The Milky Way is estimated to have 100 billion stars and a diameter of 100,000 light years.
4. It is estimated there are between 200 billion and 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe.
5. Psalm 104 is a hymn to creation on earth and how it reveals the wisdom and glory of God
6. Consider how beautiful each of the seasons is - snow in winter, blossoms in spring, trees and beaches in the summer, the beauty of leaves and crisp mornings in the fall - all the gift of God!
7. Slow down, notice creation - and give thanks to God!

d. The gift of food and drink

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate — bringing forth food from the earth: <sup>15</sup> wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. Psalm 104:14-15

1. God provides food, wine, oil that gives us joy
2. What a gift we have in food - the smells, tastes, and textures that are so pleasant.

3. This is all superfluous - God could have given us a tasteless pill to give us nutrition.
4. To cultivate a grateful heart, don't just inhale food - take time to prepare, eat, and enjoy the food.

e. The gift of family, friends, and community

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: <sup>10</sup> If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! <sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Eccles. 4:9-12

1. We were created for community - and made by in community!
2. This includes friends, family, and fellow warriors!
3. "Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends by a good fire?" - CS Lewis
4. Make space for relationships - and give thanks!

f. What other things would you add to the list - music, a good book, a campfire, a beautiful drive, camping, etc? Think and give thanks!

B. Specifically give verbal thanks to God for His blessings

**Give thanks** in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

1. Don't just feel grateful - give thanks!
2. Paul envisions us taking time to specifically speak words of thanksgiving to God.
3. We should do this before each meal (or after perhaps!) and throughout each day!
4. What's going without saying should be said - verbalize your gratitude to God in prayer and song!

C. Trust and thank God even in tough times

Give thanks **in all circumstances**, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

1. We thank God in all circumstances (or in everything) - even in tough times!
2. This does not say FOR all circumstances, but rather IN all circumstances
3. A grateful soul learns to trust God, even when things are going poorly.
4. A grateful soul knows that God is Sovereignly working in all things for His glory and our ultimate good.
5. Don't just give thanks when things are going well or you feel like it - meditate and give thanks at all times and in all circumstances.

## IV. Applying the Word

A. Am I forming a grateful soul?

1. This is about more than just randomly giving thanks - it is about developing a soul that notices God and His work and has a normal disposition of gratitude.
2. We see the world not as it is, but as we are (anonymous)
3. Many of us do not see God's hand all around us - not because it is not there but because of the way our soul is shaped.
4. Those who have formed their soul for gratitude will see God and His work all around them, while those who have not will miss it.

## Forming A Grateful Soul

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

November 19, 2023

Communion

Psalm 134:3

Teaching keywords: Gratitude and thanksgiving; character; God's Will and guidance

May the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion. Go forth, filled with every blessing, giving thanks to God and being a blessing to others! Psalm 134:3

Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup> pray continually; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

5. Those who have formed their soul for gratitude will see bushes afire with God and will take off their shoes to give thanks and worship - while others only see a bush and go on their way.
6. This is why it is important that we begin to consciously and consistently slow down to notice all the things for which we should give thanks.
7. Possible practices to form a grateful soul this week:
  - a. Take a couple of moments to thank God for something before getting out of bed
  - b. Set an alarm for one or two times in the day to briefly pause and give thanks to God for something
  - c. Begin every prayer with thanksgiving for each person or item you are praying for
  - d. Thank God for your food at every meal
  - e. Tell God things for which you were grateful over the day as you fall asleep
  - f. Have each person share two things they are thankful for at your Thanksgiving meal

### B. Our Thanksgiving Meal (the Eucharist)

1. One of the names for the Table - the Eucharist
2. This Table is a place where we remember the greatest we have to give thanks - the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus!
3. This weekly practice helps us form a grateful soul if we come in faith and engage with the Spirit.
4. Come, remember, give thanks - and let the Spirit form your soul for gratitude!