

Be Surprisingly Thankful

Luke 17; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 11-20-2022

Gratitude to God is the backward look of faith upon past gracious gifts given and divine promises kept that fuels our worship and strengthens our trust in God's promises for the future and our obedience to God's Word in the present.

The Problem of Ingratitude

Does it bother you when people don't say 'thank you'? why or why not? Does it bother God when we don't say 'thank you'? why or why not? Gratitude is a love issue; indeed, a love for God issue. One of the biggest problems of ingratitude is not realizing how big a problem it really is. Loving God includes being truly grateful to God for His gracious gifts to us. What are the 'deep-roots' of our ingratitude problem?

1. The Tracing Problem (11-19)

Where are the good things I'm receiving coming from? Our ingratitude is the result of wrong or failed connections (gratitude is ultimately misdirected). Asking for mercy and then receiving it may expose whether we were really asking for mercy (undeserved relief) or asking for what we think we deserve. The ten lepers had faith enough to head out to the priest for a good health check before they were healed but nine of them did not have faith enough to give glory to God for their healing. The grateful Samaritan gave thanks which gave God glory for his healing which expressed his faith in God. Often, in a fallen world, few give God thanks and glory for His goodness to them and, often, it is surprising those who don't follow the crowd in this respect! The grateful Samaritan gave thanks to Jesus as an instrument of God (at the least), which is how we are to give thanks to others in our lives: as instruments of God that God uses to give us what is good. Faith is the key to our healing: to our gratitude, our hope, and our love.

Ingratitude Attitude #1: "The good things I enjoy must come from me (ie, be traced back to me somehow – source or significance)!" Ingratitude to God undermines my pursuit of my good in God. (Romans 1:18-25) We must discipline ourselves to trace every good thing we receive back to God. (James 1:17) Take time at the beginning of your prayer times and make the effort to trace many of the good things you have experienced recently or experience regularly back to God and give Him thanks. (Psalm 100:4)

2. The Merit Problem (1-10)

Why am I receiving the good things I'm getting? Our ingratitude is fueled by what we think we deserve (gratitude is undermined by pride). The Pharisees were lovers of money and in Luke 16, the Lord Jesus is warning about the love of money (see 16:14 and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus). They could be the 'stumblingblocks' that tempt others to sin in view. We are not to encourage sin but oppose it with a proper rebuke and a readiness to forgive. The question of the genuineness of repentance or the frequency of the sin should not make forgiveness impossible.

We forgive in difficult circumstances (like a deeply rooted mulberry bush), not through great faith, but through real faith in a great God. Forgiving and loving in difficult circumstances is not extraordinary living for which God and others should thank us, but it is our reasonable duty as those made in the image of God and purchased by One who loved the ungodly. ‘Unworthy’ means not creating debt or not giving anything beyond what is already owed or not doing something that earns us good things or thanks from God.

Ingratitude Attitude #2: “The good things I enjoy must say something about me (ie, I deserve to be loved by man and God!)” Ingratitude is fueled by improper dealing with guilt (no need for grace). (2 Corinthians 4:15) We will not thank God if we think it is His duty to serve/bless us and that we deserve it. (Luke 6:35) Take time during your prayer time to confess your sins both generally and specifically and rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus in fresh ways and remind yourself that because of your sin you don’t deserve better from God or people, but worse. (Lamentations 3:38-40)

3. The Translation Problem (20-37)

What does gratitude look like? Our professed gratitude doesn’t often translate into our lives (gratitude is lost in translation). The Lord Jesus answered the question of the Pharisees with what they needed to know: the kingdom had already quietly come in one sense because King Jesus was right there in their midst. But to His disciples, the Lord Jesus made clear that the ultimate coming of the kingdom of God would be after His suffering and would be as clear to all as when lightning lights up the sky. As in the days of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah, at the time of Jesus’ second coming, ungrateful men and women will enjoy the good things of life without any reference to the Giver and will find themselves receiving an unexpected but just judgment on their evil lives. People will be like Lot’s wife who longed for the things about to be destroyed in Sodom but did not long for the Giver of those good things who offered her salvation. One day there will be a separation (the Rapture) between those who love the gifts and those who love and give thanks to the Giver. A life of gratitude is losing our lives for His sake.

Ingratitude Attitude #3: “Saying ‘Thank You’ is the least I can do (ie, word only at best) and I’m always looking for the least I can do!” Ingratitude undermines my pursuit of the proper goal of love. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Ephesians 5:1-5) We say thank you with our lives. (Hebrews 12:28) Take time during your prayer time to meditate on the reality that God the Son, the Lord Jesus, laid down His life for you (to rescue you from sin and Hell) and that it is only fitting, as an act of proper gratitude, for you to lay down your life for Him (to glorify His goodness and to love like He loves). – Galatians 2:20; 1 John 3:16

Questions

- Do you trace all the good in your life back to God or yourself or others?
- Do you believe you deserve the good you receive and don’t deserve the bad?
- Is your life an expression of gratitude to God for His grace to you in light of your guilt?
- Have you been forgiven for your ingratitude to God? – 2 Corinthians 9:15