

Sunday, November 27th sermon: "The Thankfulness of Jesus - In Everything Give Thanks!"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

1 Thessalonians 5:18; Mark 14:22-25

Paul commands us to give thanks in everything!

But we ask ourselves, even in the bad things?

The answer is, yes, in EVERYTHING give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you!

This verse follows right after Paul's previous commandment to pray without ceasing.

We may very well be giving thanks for the things that we have fervently prayed to God to deliver us from! Those two positions are in nowise contrary to each other.

In Corrie Ten Boom's book, she describes her younger sister Betsy exhorting her to give thanks to God for the fleas that infested their barracks in the Nazi concentration camp. Corrie grudgingly conceded that God's Word did command them to give thanks for the fleas. Later, they found out that the prison guards wouldn't enter the barracks because of the fleas, which meant that they could pray and carry on Bible studies and teach the Gospel to their miserable fellow captives. God had a good purpose in giving them fleas, to protect against the cruel godless prison guards, and to promote His Word among the prisoners.

No doubt it is God's will that we give thanks in everything, and yet we should also give thanks because whatever God has brought our way,

even the bad things, are according to His Will for us, and ultimately are for our good.

We ought to be thankful because whatever befalls us is the will of God!

Consider the things that Jesus was thankful for.

He often gave thanks for the food. When He fed the five thousand in the wilderness with five loaves and two fishes, He gave thanks to His Father.

Think of it: the very One Who created all things, nevertheless gave thanks for the food!

Too often, we are not thankful for the things we think we "do for ourselves." We take the credit for our labor, our planning, our successes, and rarely think to give thanks to God for them.

But Christ is our example: He gave thanks for the things He did! He understood that in His humanity, all things were of His Father. He often protested that He did nothing "of Himself," but only what His Father commanded Him.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus opened the Scriptures to His two downcast disciples, to show them why He had to suffer and die and rise again. And then that evening, He prayed for their food as He broke bread with them.

He thereby reminded them that the Scriptures He had just opened to them foretold the meaning of the symbols of His Last Supper.

Every time we break bread, every time we eat, we too ought to give thanks to God, not only for the food, but also because we are reminded that Jesus is the Bread of Life, and that our true food is His Body and His Blood, that He physically laid down in death to save us.

Jesus gave thanks to God because His Gospel was not revealed to the wise and prudent, but rather unto babes! He acknowledged that this was because it seemed good in God's sight to proceed in that manner!

Gospel understanding is not based on our wisdom and knowledge and prudence, but rather upon the revelation of the Gospel to the helpless and the simple.

Jesus said in another place, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God!

God has to take away our hard hearts, and all our sophistication, and self-reliance, and self-righteousness, and change us inwardly before we can see and believe the Gospel.

Then Jesus exclaims that we who do see the Gospel are blessed by God, because many of the kings and prophets of old had longed to see it, but could not.

This is not a congratulations to us, but rather a revelation of God's goodness to us. God has blessed us in this way, so that we might see and hear of Christ's salvation. Jesus would have us take notice of it, and be thankful for it, as He was!

At the grave of Lazarus, His dead friend, Jesus gave thanks to the Father for hearing His prayer to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus had already promised that those who believe on Him would see the glory of God!

The glory of God that was revealed to His people that day, is the power of Jesus to raise dead men from the grave!

Jesus prayed aloud before the people, so that they might believe that the Father had sent Him.

And sure enough, many who heard and saw Christ raise Lazarus from the dead did believe on Him!

Christ gave thanks for His last Passover meal. This was His usual custom, but it also highlighted a distinction, that He later gave additional thanks for the bread and wine of the Lord's Table.

Christ told His disciples what those two things symbolized – His literal flesh and blood which He would shortly give as a sacrifice as God's Lamb, to take away their sins.

So His giving separate thanks for them shows that He was giving thanks for what they represented – His death, His bloodshed to save us!

Think of it: only Jesus understood what they truly meant, so only Jesus could give thanks to His Father for the death He would suffer only hours later.

The same Lord Jesus Who wept and prayed in Gethsemane mere hours later over that bitter cup He must drink, had already thanked His Father for the death that He must die to redeem us!

Finally, the Lord Jesus exults in and praises God for His resurrection and vindication, and how God accepted His afflictions for the saving of His people!

In Psalm 22, after Jesus described His humiliation and shame and loss at the hands of wicked men by the will of God, and how God forsook Him as He died, Jesus then turns to praising and rejoicing in God for "the way it all turned out!"

Christ would declare God's righteousness to His people! He would insist that God's people praise Him, because God had heard His Son when He died. God had not denigrated or counted as worthless what Jesus did when He was crucified for us!

No, God embraced the sacrifice of Jesus, accepting it as precious for the saving of His poor sinful people, and then vindicated Him gloriously at His resurrection!

Jesus even rejoices that this Gospel of redeeming grace by the death He suffered would be preached to people who hadn't even been born yet, that God had done all this!

We ought to give thanks like Jesus did -- for common things, as well as for all the trying things, that in the end will show God's power, mercy, and deliverance, and for Christ dying to save us!

We ought to start giving thanks right now for the resurrection that Christ has promised to each one of us who trust in Him!

If Jesus could give thanks for the bread and the wine that symbolized His dying, His blood shedding to forgive our sins, then how can we ever miss an opportunity to do likewise!

We ought to be giving thanks for all these things constantly, as did Jesus, and as Paul commanded us!