

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 6 Jun 2021

Sermon Title : Giving Thanks

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : 1 Thessalonians 5:18

INTRODUCTION

Different studies have been made and different researchers have come to observe that when someone lives his life in an attitude of gratefulness and thankfulness constantly, that person tends to benefit from less stress, greater sense of happiness, better health, deep, sound and good quality sleep, and patience and self-control. There is a link between these things and always giving thanks.

God created us to be in a posture of giving thanks

As a God believer who believes that God created all humanity and the heavens and the earth, it must be Him who has created us in such a way that we are wired, that when we focus on giving thanks by keeping a thankful heart whilst remembering to count our blessings, there is an actual physical benefit to all of us.

It is no wonder that God calls and commands us to be thankful to Him. In fact, the Bible teaches us to give thanks to the Lord at all times, in different portions of scriptures such as the following four verses in Psalms 136:1, 2, 3 and 26. These verses tell us to give thanks to the God who is good, the God of gods, the Lord of lords, to the God of heaven, because His faithful love endures forever.

- This is not a suggestion or recommendation but a call like a blast of a trumpet, calling all of God's people to come together and give thanks to Him.
- God knows that when we are a people in a place where we count our blessings, when we are a people who purpose to be thankful and adopt the posture of giving thanks, we really do reap the benefits of having a thankful heart.

How to give thanks to God

- By remembering that God is good because everything that we can give thanks for is an overflow from a God who is good.
- If we really cannot think of anything to give thanks, we can remember this: His faithful love endures forever – God loves us forever.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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How important is it to give thanks to God?

God uses Moses to liberate His people from Egypt so they could worship Him and follow His will. God sends Moses to speak to Pharaoh again and again but Pharaoh responds with a hard heart and constantly changes his mind about letting the people go. Instead, he made life even tougher for them. God then uses the 10 Plagues to show Pharaoh that no matter how strong he thought he was, he was no match for the Almighty God. Although God uses Moses to perform most of the miracles of the 10 Plagues, it was Aaron, his brother, who performed the miracles of the first 3 Plagues; waters of Egypt becomes blood (Exodus 7:19), frogs jumps out of the rivers (Exodus 8:5) and dust of land becomes gnats (Exodus 8:16) God using Aaron was a break in the usual pattern where Aaron is the spokesperson and Moses the doer.

Why this anomaly?

- The Jewish rabbis explain that it was because God was using these incidents to teach Moses and all of us the importance of being thankful.
 - Moses was born at a time when Pharaoh ordered for all male babies to be killed and baby Moses managed to escape death when his mother placed him on the waters of the Nile which then brought him into the arms of Pharaoh's daughter who then raised him up. Hence, Moses has the waters of the land to thank for his life as it brought him to safety. The rabbis explain that Moses was not the one to perform the first two miracles which was centred on the waters of the land which caused it to become blood and frogs to jump out of the rivers because he ought to be thankful for the waters which saved his life.
 - When Moses grew up, he came across how his own people, the Hebrews, were ill-treated by an Egyptian guard. He then beat the guard to death and hid the corpse in the ground giving him time to escape into the desert. The rabbis similarly explain that Moses had to be thankful for the land, and because the third miracle involved striking the dust of the land which turns into gnats, Moses was not the one to perform this miracle.

While we may not take this as gospel truth, this shows us that the Jewish rabbis see the call to be thankful and grateful as very important and a big deal to God. If Moses was taught thankfulness to inanimate objects, how much more should we be thankful to people, and how much more so to the good God who has blessed us and whose faithful love endures forever?

Give thanks in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

We may find it really difficult to give thanks for certain things that are going on in our lives that bring pain, such as when someone that we love is going through a tough time and we may lose them, or when we have lost our eyesight, lost mobility or are critically ill.

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- God calls us to give thanks *in* everything, even though we may not be able to give thanks *for* everything.

Though we may be going through a tough time, we can still be thankful for something in the midst of it. For example, when our parents are suffering from dementia, we can still be thankful that our parents are with us, that our siblings are there to help us, thankful for the memories and conversations with our parents, that we have enough resources to take care of them, that there are doctors to help and medication to slow it down.

- We just need to lift our eyes from everything that is causing us sorrow and pain and distress and agony and start looking around for signs and evidence of God's goodness in our lives.
- As we push ourselves to walk to this place where we begin to count our blessings, in the midst of everything to purpose to be thankful, we will then move into this posture of thanksgiving, which makes it possible to find something to be thankful for; to give thanks in everything that we go through.

Jesus gave thanks for His final meal with all His disciples even when He knew that He was going to be betrayed that night. (1 Corinthians 11:23-24) He knew He would soon be in so much agony that He would sweat drops of blood; He knew too that after this betrayal His journey will lead to the cross. Jesus did not give thanks for all this agony (Matt 26:39) but gave thanks for what He could.

CONCLUSION

We may not be able to give thanks for all things especially those that bring pain and suffering, but there are things that we can be thankful for in them. Let us lift our eyes to our good God whose faithful love endures forever and see the evidence of His goodness so we may give thanks in everything, as that is God's will for us, so we may really reap the benefits of having a thankful heart.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. How does this verse speak to you?

- b.
 - (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “Giving Thanks”?
 - (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. In Psalm 136:1, 2, 3, 26, it was repeated, "His faithful love endures forever."
What does this mean to you?
- 2b. (i) What are 3 things that you are thankful for today?
- (ii) How do you see evidence of God's faithful love in each of them?
- 3a. Even though you may not be able to give thanks for everything, especially those that bring pain and suffering, are you able to give thanks for something in it?
- 3b. What is one thing that hinders you from seeing God's goodness and faithful love in everything, especially those that bring agony?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you achieve 3b above, so you may be able to reap the benefits of having a thankful heart, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how you have experienced God's faithful love which endures forever in your life.

OR

Give thanks for evidence of God's goodness in this COVID-19 pandemic.

5. With a prayer partner, bring all the concerns in 3b and 3c to God asking Him to remove anything that hinders thanksgiving to overflow from your hearts.

Take time to pray for your group members who may be going through a difficult time. Pray that God's presence be real to him/her during this period, and for His love to cover him/her so that despite the challenges and ordeals faced, he/she will be able to see God's goodness and faithful love in his/her life and give thanks.

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