

Thanksgiving 2007 **“A Thankful Heart”**

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A party of early American pioneers had suffered for weeks on the Oregon trail from lack of water and food as well as grass for their animals.

Most of their wagons had broken down, causing endless delays in the overwhelming summer heat.

Everyone was losing hope, fearing what would happen to all of them.

One night, one of the leaders of the pioneers called a meeting to give everyone a chance to voice their complaints and fears.

As they gathered around the campfire, one man stood to his feet and said “***Before we commence our grief session, don’t you think we should at least thank The Lord first for bringing us this far with no loss of life, no serious injury, no attacks from an enemy and the opportunity to even begin this journey?***”

The other settlers agreed. One by one they began to pray and thank the Lord for what He had done for them so far.

When the last person was through with their prayer of thanks, not a single sound could be heard in the camp except the cry of a wolf off in the distance.

No one had a single complaint that was important enough to voice.

They suddenly realized that if they couldn’t be satisfied with what they had already received, they could at least be thankful for what they had escaped.

Their new attitude of thankfulness enabled them to see the mercy and the Grace of God that had already been poured out in their lives.

Psalms 100:4

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

According to the “National Vital Statistics Report, September 16, 2002, you had a 10 percent chance of dying yesterday.

Approximately 30 million people will die this year in the United States, that is 2.5 million a month, 833,000 people a day.

- ☞ **Yesterday**, nearly a million people died in the United States, **but not one of us here this morning**, we are alive, and we are breathing air and we have a chance to live today.
- ☞ **I don't know about you**, but whatever else is wrong in my life right now, I am very grateful that I was not one of the **833,000** who died yesterday.
- ☞ **I have one more day**, one more chance to live, one more chance to love someone or be loved by someone, one more day to experience life.

As we sit at our tables on Thanksgiving enjoying a warm and cozy dinner, Over 100,000 of Americas finest young men and women will spend their Thanksgiving in the desolation and dirt of Iraq Thursday.

- ☞ **I watched a program** on The Fox News Channel where they brought some of the soldiers that are on the ground there in Iraq, before a television camera. At the same time, they showed on the split television screen, their families back home.
- ☞ **The tears and grief** that these families felt over missing their Sons, Daughters, Husbands, Wives and children was overwhelming.
- ☞ **There were mothers** holding newborn babies and even babies that were several months old **that have never seen their Daddies yet.**

I suddenly realized that whatever it is that I am struggling with here right now, pales in comparison with what these families are feeling.

- ☞ **I also saw a show** where the men and women who have been killed so far in Iraq, had their final letters to their families read live on TV by their moms and dads, wives and husbands.
- ☞ **I listened to the little children crying** for their Daddies and Mommies that they were never going to see again...

All because these brave men and women sacrificed everything they had, so that we could be here enjoying this thanksgiving season in the greatest nation in the world.

- ☞ **We are safe, We are Free**, we are so blessed, because they are giving up everything for us

I think that it is important once in a while to re-evaluate our own personal lives.

The Prophet Samuel said to the people:

1 Samuel 12:20-23

20 ..., "do not turn aside from following the LORD, but **serve the LORD with all your heart.**
21 And **do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things** which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.

22 For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because **it has pleased the LORD to make you His people.**

23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; **for consider what great things He has done for you.**

Consider this morning, what great things the Lord has done for you...

- ☞ **To look at what we do have** instead of what we don't have.
- ☞ **To give thanks** for where we are right now, because as hard as it might be, there are so many others who are having it much harder than us.

The following was a letter written to Billy Graham many years ago...

“Dear Reverend Graham, You will probably never see this letter. I know, however, I feel compelled to write to you.

I am twenty-eight years old, a victim of cerebral palsy since birth.

I have never been able to use my hands. They flop about, getting in my way, breaking things, hitting people and behaving like naughty children.

Everything I do is done with my feet. For example, I'm writing this with a ball-point pen between the toes of my left foot.

The right foot isn't much good for anything except turning pages and walking. But that is besides the point. The point is that for many years I have made spending change and bought most of my clothes by selling the fancy needle work that I do.

The Lord has blessed me with many wonderful friends and I have most always found ready sale from my wares, but I am slow and the little money I make is soon gone.

I do tithe my earnings but I have long wanted to do more. To be able to give to your Crusade has been an unattainable goal for several years.

Because of my speech defect I cannot talk to people about our wonderful Savior or be a soul winner. I felt that through you I might repay a little of my debt to Christ.

I am indeed Thankful. It was the greatest of Joy that I sign the enclosed \$10.00 check. I have high hopes that it will not be the last.

Eleanor A. Drath. Jan 15, 1959

Now, I have been through some pretty awful times in my life, but I have never felt or experienced anything like what Eleanor has had to live with every day of her life.

- ☞ **And in spite** of all that she does not have, simple things that we take for granted like the use of our hands, she said: *“I Am Indeed Thankful...”*

I think that Thankfulness in present circumstances is what is necessary first before we can ever be blessed with any more.

- ⊕ **I think** that when we take the time to evaluate what we do have right now, what we think we need doesn't seem nearly as important.
- ⊕ **Eleanor has almost nothing**, and yet she has developed a **wonderful heart of thankfulness** that compelled her to want to bless someone else with what she has.

Eleanor believes that if she could give someone Jesus, then she has given them Everything that they need.

2 Peter 1:3

as His divine power **has given to us all things that pertain to life** and godliness, **through the knowledge of Jesus** who called us by glory and virtue,

Whenever we are “**Taking Inventory**” of where we are with Jesus, and thinking about what we are really grateful for, It is important to remember **who we are**:

“We are the servants of the Most High God”.

Often Jesus used illustrations of how He is the Master and we are His servants.

- ⊕ **In Luke chapter 17**, Jesus talks about what a “**True Servant**” of His should expect for their service to Him.

Luke 17:7-10

7 And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and sit down to eat’?”

8 But will he not rather say to him, “Prepare something for **my supper**, and **gird yourself and serve me till** I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’?”

9 **Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?** I think not.

10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “**We are unprofitable servants.** We have done what was our duty to do.’”

What a great illustration this is to help us develop a True Servants Heart, full of Gratefulness.

- ⊕ **Does a servant** who works out in the fields, expect that when he is finished for the day, his master will fix him dinner?
- ⊕ **No**, in fact, that servant is expected to fix dinner for **his master**, even after he has worked hard in the fields all day.
- ⊕ **And then**, should that same servant who had worked hard out in the fields all day, then has fixed his masters dinner, expect afterwards that the master should thank him for what he has done?
- ⊕ **NO!**, The servant was just doing what he was supposed to do.

The term “Unprofitable Servants” in verse 10 means that if a servant doesn’t get a “Thank You” or some kind of acknowledgment from the Master for the work they have done, they should not think that they must not be a very valuable servant or must not mean much to that Master.

- ⊕ **As Jesus servants**, He doesn’t owe us a “**Thank You**”, every time we do something for Him.
- ⊕ **We should not expect** that other people will necessarily thanks us for what we do for them or for what we do in the Name of Jesus.
- ⊕ **We should not expect that we would receive any reward** or acknowledgment for anything we do for the Lord or His people.

Serving is what a Servant of Jesus is expected to do!

- ⊕ **If you need a “Thank You”** or an acknowledgment for your service to Jesus or His people, **then you did it for the wrong reason.**
- ⊕ **If it bothers us** when no one thanks us or acknowledges what we do, then we really need to check our hearts to see “*Why we are doing it to begin with*”.
- ⊕ **If we are hurt or upset** than no one thanked us or even noticed what we did, **then we were doing it for us, not for Jesus.**

Do you see what is happening here?

- ⊕ **Gratefulness is about our Attitude**, it is not what we have or don’t have, **it is about how we view these things in our own heart.**
- ⊕ **A grateful heart**, will always look for what they are thankful for, rather than what they don’t have.
- ⊕ **A True servants heart**, will always want to do whatever they do just because they really love Jesus and want Him to get the Glory for it.

One day, the people who had been following John the Baptist came to him to complain that people were now going to Jesus instead of John the Baptist, notice Johns attitude:

John 3:26-30

26 And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, Jesus who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and **all are coming to Him!**”

27 John answered and said, “**A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.**”

28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, “I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’”

29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

30 **He must increase, but I must decrease**

Man!, that is the kind of heart I want to develop. A Grateful heart, so full of love and thankfulness for what Jesus has done for me, that I just want people to see Jesus, not me.

- ⊕ **People don't need what Rob Robinson has to say**, they need what Jesus has said.
- ⊕ **People don't need to know me**, they need to know who Jesus is.
- ⊕ **People don't need to thank me** or acknowledge anything I have done, they need to be thankful for all that Jesus has done for them.

"Jesus must increase, I must Decrease..."

In that same chapter of the Book of Luke where Jesus discusses the fact that a true servant of His should not expect a thank you, Jesus gives another illustration about some men who had the awful disease of "**Leprosy**".

Luke 17:11-18

11 Now it happened as Jesus went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 Then as He entered a certain village, **there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.**

13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "**Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!**"

During this time, leprosy was an incurable disease.

- ⊕ **It was considered** so horrible, that any person who had contracted the disease was isolated from their friends, their family and all other persons of society.
- ⊕ **Those with leprosy** were doomed to a life of isolation and loneliness as they could not have any contact with any person except another with Leprosy.
- ⊕ **If you had Leprosy** and as you were walking down the street, another person should approach within 150 feet of you, the law required you to cry out "*Unclean, Unclean*".
- ⊕ **No one knew** during this time how Leprosy was spread, it was really a mystery to them as to how the disease was spread from one person to another.

Because of these characteristics of Leprosy, the Bible often used Leprosy as an illustration for what sin is like in the life of a human being.

- ⊕ **Like Leprosy**, sin isolates us from fellowship with God, and other people.
- ⊕ **Like leprosy, we** are seen as "Unclean".
- ⊕ **Like Leprosy, sin** is an incurable and deadly disease that cannot be removed apart from the sacrifice that Jesus made for our sin on the Cross.

So try to picture in your mind, here are 10 Lepers approaching Jesus

- ⊕ **Instead of crying out** "*Unclean, Unclean*", these 10 men cry out "*Jesus, Master have mercy on us.*"
- ⊕ **For the past 3 years**, Jesus has been healing people all over the region of Israel, no doubt that these men had heard of Jesus, they were perhaps even searching for Him.

There is not one single place in the Bible where Jesus did not heal someone that cried out to Him for Mercy.

Romans 10:13

For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

Perhaps you are here this morning and in great need of mercy or help in your life.

- ☞ **If you will just cry out to Jesus**, right there where you sit, He is listening to you, and He will help you.
- ☞ **The only thing preventing you** from receiving help from the Lord of the Universe is you asking Him...

Can you feel Him here right now? Calling out to you through His Word, “**Let Me help You**”

Jeremiah 23:29

“Is not My word like a fire?” says the LORD, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

It has always been very interesting to me that even though Leprosy was considered “**Incurable**”, the Bible still has the procedure that a person should go through if they are healed of Leprosy.

In the Book of Leviticus, chapter 14,

Leviticus 14:2-3

2 “This shall be the law of the leper **for the day of his cleansing**: He shall be brought to **the priest**.

3 And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, **if the leprosy is healed** in the leper

If something is incurable, then why does the Lord have a procedure for what to do when you are healed?

- ☞ **Because with Jesus**, there is no such thing as “Incurable”.
- ☞ **You might see yourself** today as a person who can never be cured of your life long struggles with sin.
- ☞ **Jesus can heal you.**
- ☞ **Yes, as long as you live** in this body of flesh, you are going to struggle with sin, I do, every person who loves Jesus still struggles with sin.

But, the guilt for the sin, Jesus can take that away. The horrible hopelessness that life’s mistakes and failures creates in our heart, Jesus can take that away.

- ☞ **The death sentence** that hangs over the head of every human being for their sin, Jesus took that away once and for all at the Cross.

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

Luke 17

14 So when Jesus saw them, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that **as they went**, they were cleansed.

Notice the term “*As they went, they were healed*”.

- ⊕ **There are many occasions** when you pray for healing, that it comes immediately.
- ⊕ **But most often**, healing takes place **over the process of time**.
- ⊕ **As Jesus told these men** to go out and do what the Word of God said to do, even before they actually saw any evidence of the healing, **it was as they were going that they received their healing**.

Have you prayed and asked the Lord to heal something in your life, but as yet you have not seen the healing?

- ⊕ **Don't give up so fast**, it is as you continue to go out and do what the Lord tells you to do in His Word, that your healing will come.
- ⊕ **It may begin slowly** and then suddenly you realize that your healing has come.
- ⊕ **It may be** that you will continue your whole life trusting in the Lord for this healing and then suddenly your body will die, **at that moment you will receive your healing**.
- ⊕ **Perhaps, it was better for you** or someone who is in your life, that you are not instantly healed.
- ⊕ **It may bring** the most glory to Jesus, for the healing to come gradually over time, or not at all until you pass from this life into the Lords presence.
- ⊕ **How Big is your God?**, Everyone that asked Jesus for healing received it.
- ⊕ **Does Jesus have to meet your formula** or expectations to be healed before you will believe Him?

“*As they went, they were healed*”. **You also, keep going on and trust Jesus for your healing, it is going to come...**

Luke 17

15 And one of them, **when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,**

16 and **fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks**. And he was a Samaritan.

17 So Jesus answered and said, **“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”**

18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

Only one out of the ten men who were healed was grateful enough to return and thank Jesus for His healing.

- ⊖ **Notice that after** this one man receive his healing “*He returned and with a loud voice glorified God*”.
- ⊖ **All 10** of the men were healed, but only this one man was “**Reborn**”.
- ⊖ **This is the difference** between the Physical and the Spiritual.
- ⊖ **If someone comes forward this morning** and asks for healing in their life, and they receive their healing, they are only receiving a part of what the Lord really wants to do in their life.
- ⊖ **What Jesus really wanted to do** for all 10 of these men was to heal them Spiritually, make them whole and forgiven, as they came to Jesus and believed that He was the One who could forgive them and give them a new eternal life.

In just a few minutes, we are going to give you the opportunity to come forward and ask the Lord for healing in any of your life that you have a need.

- ⊖ **But what Jesus really wants to do** in addition to healing your body, or mind or circumstances, **He wants to heal your spirit.**
- ⊖ **Notice that this one man received** his Physical and Spiritual healing as he came and had a Grateful heart to the Lord.

He knew that he had really been forgiven for every wrong that he had done in his life, and above everything else that he might have needed or was missing in his life, He was most grateful for knowing Jesus and being forgiven by him.

During World war two, Corrie Ten Boom wrote in her book “**The Hiding Place**”, that there was a time when she and her sister Betsy had been transferred to the worst German prison came there was.

The prison at Ravensbruck was extremely crowded and full of fleas.

The scripture verse they read that particular morning was from 1 Thessalonians chapter 5

1 Thessalonians 5:18

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters.

At first Corrie refused to give thanks to the Lord **for the fleas**, but Betsy persisted.

Finally Corrie began to give thanks for every part of their new home in the prison, even the infestation of fleas.

In the following months living in the prison camp, the two girls very surprised at how they were able to openly hold Bible studied and pray in their living quarters without any interference from the German guards.

It was several months after they had been released from the prison that they found out that the guards did not want to come into the barracks because of the fleas.

The very things that made their trial the worst, was the very thing that brought them the greatest blessing.

It was through thankfulness to the Lord in every circumstance of their life, that their greatest blessings came.

The words to the new song that we learned this morning, really sum it all up...

*Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name
And blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name*

*Every blessing You pour out I'll
turn back to praise
And when the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say*

*Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name*