

Thanksgiving Service Devotion

Romans 1:21

November 24, 2024

Coming out of the Camealy story

- Highlight a few things that they said.
- Their story points us towards what we often see in the Scriptures, praising and expressing gratitude even in the most difficult of circumstances.

(It may have been said well by the Camealy's) But... ***How is it possible to be thankful and to consider it pure joy when you face trials and difficulties of all kinds?*** (James 1:2)

I can remember being encouraged to “count your blessings” when I felt discouraged and had trouble being thankful. Maybe you’ve said that to someone else too at some point. If you can think back and begin to number all the good things in your life then your attitude will improve. The problem with that approach is that you are always weighing and measuring life’s circumstances by whether you felt them to be good ones or bad ones. Your attitude could improve but the gifts and blessings have to actually outnumber the hard times and problems.

Jonathan Edwards was a preacher from the 1700’s and may be the most significant American theologian that has ever lived. Edwards describes the flaw of counting blessings in order to become thankful.

“True gratitude or thankfulness to God for his kindness to us, arises from a foundation laid before, of love to God for what he is in himself; whereas a natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation. The gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God, for kindness received, always are from a stock of love already in the heart, established in the first place on other grounds, God's own excellency.”

Edwards says that we are able to give thanks in all things because it is not first in the things we are thankful for, it is in person and character of God. If in order to be thankful we have to sit back and count the many good things God has done for us then our gratitude becomes dependent on how and when God has been good to us. It can become a transactional gratitude. God has done his part and my part his to praise him.

Edwards is saying that the best source of thankfulness comes from a foundation laid before the gift is given, it comes from a love of knowing who God is. It is God's character and his nature that moves us best. If gratitude is not rooted in the beauty of God before the gift, it is probably disguised idolatry. This is the essence of Romans 1, the root problem with humanity. Paul says...

Romans 1:21

21 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.

Paul says that humanity began to love the gifts rather than the Giver. That even though we knew God, we didn't glorify Him or give thanks to Him, instead we took the gifts of God and made them ultimate things.

It is not wrong to look at your life and see the many gifts, but we are to look through those things and love most the Giver. Let God's character and nature amaze us most. That is how we stay grateful even in terrible circumstances because God's good character hasn't changed. He is steady and true.

Psalms 145:1-13

- 1 I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- 4 One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- 5 They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- 6 They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- 7 They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- 8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.

9 The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

10 All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.

11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,

12 so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.