

PAUSING TO SAY THANKS

I. Philippians 1:1-11

A. We are coming into the Holiday Season (*season of Holy Days*). Perhaps you are among those who want to escape or maybe you're like Clark Griswold who covers every inch of your house with Christmas lights. Either way, it's still coming. But first we get to celebrate Thanksgiving!

B. Whether you go all out for Christmas or merely close your blinds, beginning the season with a day set apart to give thanks to God is tremendous! My encouragement to you is to let Thanksgiving be your theme all the way through Christmas and New Years, even moving from thanksgiving to *thanks-living*.

C. Our text this morning is Philippians 1:1-11. Today we hear from a grateful apostle, writing a humble yet generous church, seeking to encourage their hearts. Paul writes them from prison but you wouldn't know that by the tone of his letter or his attitude throughout each chapter. I want to use Paul's words today as a springboard for expressing my own gratitude for all of you.

D. Philippians 1:1-11 (ESV) is Paul's Thank You Letter to a family of believers whom he deeply loves and is grateful for...

1) V1-2 "*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (This past Wednesday, I got a call from someone who we've been praying for. His post-surgery pathology report had just come back and he was declared cancer free. He wanted to express thanks for everyone's prayers. And then He said, "*I don't understand how God could be so good to me!*" And I told him that this is called Grace--God's undeserved mercy and love--and the fact none of us deserve it is what makes His grace so amazing.)

2) V3-5 "*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*" (I can say the same to all of you--I thank the Lord for each of you...)

3) V6 "*And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*" (And yes, I'm praying for this too--for all of us. I look forward to the unfolding of everything God has in store for each of you.)

4) V7 "*It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*" (More and more, I want us to find ourselves in this journey together, collectively, arm in arm, heart to heart, bound together, committed to one another, increasing in our love for God and increasing in our love for each other.)

5) V8-11 "*For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*" (The fruit of righteousness is what is produced in our lives by the Righteous One. If we truly have become the righteousness of God, had the righteous record of Jesus imputed to us by faith, then the outcome of that happening should be visible and what becomes visible should resemble Christ-likeness, and the prime fruit of Christ-likeness is love, and this kind of love, fully expressed, will indeed bring glory to God. *What's love got to do with it?* Everything!)

E. Let me again encourage you to keep Thanksgiving at the top as you trek through this *holy day* season. Here are some encouragements...

F. As you pray for people, pray with thanksgiving. Pray with passion and expectancy. Be bold in your requests for people as you entrust them to God.

G. As you read God's Word, be thankful for every syllable. Thankful when it convicts you and challenges you. Thankful when it befuddles you. Thankful when it encourages you and lifts your spirit. Then use it to do the same for others.

H. As you find yourselves in the busyness of the season, be thankful. Keep your heads up and your eyes roving to and fro (*like Gideon's best warriors*) and see if God points you to some folks who are less fortunate, deep in need, lonely and forgotten, struggling to get through. Thank God for whom He leads you to and then go and minister. Be as generous as you can. This one may just need a visit and some prayer. That one may need some groceries or an anonymous gift placed in their door. Bake the cookies, send the card, make the call, and do all this with thanksgiving. And when the holidays are over, don't stop, just keep on keepin' on!

I. More than anything, let your thanksgiving be to our Lord. Remember *Whose* birth we are celebrating. Despite those Hallmark movies, it's not about family first, it's about Jesus first. Of course there is plenty of room for family but celebrate and worship Jesus first. Reflect deeply on how He came and why He came and what that means for you. Jesus came to alter eternal destinies, yours included!

J. With thanksgiving, remember the very first Christmas tree--that was the one our Lord was nailed to, shed His blood upon, suffocated upon and died. Our sin was such that no angels or wise men, no prophets, priests, or kings, nor even the sacred law of Moses could make us right with God. Only Jesus Christ, God the Son, could do that. And He did that. He did that for you! So let us be thankful, and then some, then some more...

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Philippians 1:1-11 (ESV)

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **3** I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, **4** always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **7** It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. **9** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, **10** so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Film Clips & Other Links

"Psalm 138" - The Psalm Project (featuring Miranda de Vlieger)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URlxQO6ugVo>

"All That I Can Do" - Ted Sandquist (Courts of the King)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kefiB1HZ2c>

"Your Steadfast Love" - Don Moen (Written by Ted Sandquist)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eslr9HfAWsA>

Christian Gratitude - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mnidQuLZ1Y>

"The Thanksgiving Song" - Igniter Media

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pyvls0xXcU>

Clark Griswold's Christmas Lights - National Lampoon Christmas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2l-tIDV-4>

Bonus Stuff

2 Chronicles 5:13 (NIV)

13 "The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; His love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud..."

Psalm 9:1-2 (NIV)

1 I will give thanks to You, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonderful deeds. **2** I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing the praises of Your name, O Most High.

Psalm 100:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! **2** Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. **3** Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. **4** Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. **5** For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

Ephesians 5:19-20 (Amplified)

19 Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices [and instruments] and making melody with all your heart to the Lord, **20** At all times and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Quote by John Bunyan

"A sensible thanksgiving for mercies received is a mighty prayer in the Spirit of God. It prevails with Him unspeakably."

Quote by Hannah More

"There are three requisites to the proper enjoyment of earthly blessings: a thankful reflection, on the goodness of the giver; a deep sense of our own unworthiness; and a recollection of the uncertainty of our long possessing them. The first will make us grateful; the second, humble; and the third, moderate."

Quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich!"

Quote by A.W. Tozer

"Gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God, and it is one that the poorest of us can make and be not poorer but richer for having made it."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"We ought to give thanks for all fortune: if it is good, because it is good, if bad, because it works in us patience, humility and the contempt of this world and the hope of our eternal country."

Quote by Kay Arthur

"God is in control, and therefore in EVERYTHING I can give thanks--not because of the situation but because of the One who directs and rules over it."

Quote by John MacArthur

"A thankful heart is one of the primary identifying characteristics of a believer. It stands in stark contrast to pride, selfishness, and worry. And it helps fortify the believer's trust in the Lord and reliance of His provision, even in the toughest times. No matter how choppy the seas become, a believer's heart is buoyed by constant praise and gratefulness to the Lord."

Quote by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth

"Be thankful. God has commanded it--for our good and for His glory. God's command to be thankful is not the threatening demand of a tyrant. Rather, it is the invitation of a lifetime--the opportunity to draw near to Him at any moment of the day."

Quote by Priscilla Shirer

"When we choose thankful prayer over wallowing in anxiety and worry, we are demonstrating an unwavering trust in God."