

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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A Thankful Heart is a Regenerate Heart

December 1, 2019

Sermon Text: Romans 1

Scripture Reading: Psalm 118

Rom 1:16-25 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

(17) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” (18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

(20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in

the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

(21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

(24) Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty – *and there is thanksgiving.*

Thankfulness to God and, in contrast, what an un-thankful person evidences

about his or her heart. The Thanksgiving holidays are a good time to give serious thought to these matters.

Thankfulness grows out of *grace*. We see it in daily life. When someone is given a gift – something undeserved or unearned, simply a gift – we expect to hear them say “thank you.” When that thanks is not forthcoming, we know that something is very wrong. A large part of raising children is teaching them to give thanks because their sin is naturally selfish in nature – a nature that we all were born into this world with.

We saw in Matthew 20 last time that our salvation in Christ is all of grace. It is entirely a gift which leaves the Christian no room at all for boasting. Jesus drove this home:

- The parable of the land owner hiring workers at different times of the day yet paying them all the same
- Reminding His disciples that He himself came to give his life, not to be served
- In the request of James’ and John’s mother that her sons be particularly exalted in Christ’s kingdom – Jesus corrected them
- In His healing of the two lowly, despised blind men

It is all of grace from beginning to end. The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

Anyone who is a recipient of this grace – this salvation in Christ – *understands that his thanksgiving is due to God. Where there is no thanksgiving, there is no salvation.*

Luk 17:11-19 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. (12) And as he entered a village, he was met by **ten lepers**, who stood at a distance (13) and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

(14) When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed.

(15) Then **one of them**, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; (16) and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.

(17) Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?”

(18) Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (19) And he said to him,

“Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

See it? While all ten were healed of their leprosy, *only the one was healed of his sin*. His faith was genuine, that of the other 9 was false. *And so we see here how thankfulness is an integral part of genuine faith, and that its lack is sure evidence of a false faith*. Note also the rate of the real thing: 10 per cent at least in this case. One out of ten.

We should also note that *love and thankfulness are inevitable linked as well. Those whom we love, we are also thankful for and to*. The person who does not give thanks to God does not love God.

Psa 100:1-5 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! (2) Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! (3) Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (4) Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! (5) For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Let me ask you this morning: *does your heart, the person you truly are,*

give thanks to God? Is thankfulness a habitual characteristic of your life? Is one primary reason you come to church on the Lord's Day so that you can worship and praise Christ and thank Him for all He has done for you? Are you truly thankful? If not, then you are unsaved. You are dead in your sins. Your heart is stone, not flesh. You must be born again or you will never give God the thanks due Him. You will give it to yourself and to your own false gods.

Col 2:6-7 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, (7) rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

It is impossible to worship God, to give Him praise, without being thankful. Giving of praise and worship is inseparably bound up with the giving of thanks.

Heb 13:15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Now, consider these verses from Romans chapter 1 once more:

(Rom 1:21) For although they knew

God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Do you see from this that UNthankfulness is an innate quality of man's fallen nature? Therefore, where there is sin, there is unthankfulness.

People point to all kinds of sins, their lists often emphasizing particular evils that are seen as especially dark. But in fact Paul is telling us here what the very foundation of sin is. The basic reason God's wrath is upon the sinner, you see. What is it?

Refusing to honor and give thanks to God.

And it turns out that the litany of sins we so often focus upon is a result of this foundational sin. Paul will continue:

Rom 1:24-32 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served

the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (26) For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; (27) and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

(28) And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (29) They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, (30) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, (31) foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

(32) Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Do you understand how important this is to understand? Churches will launch out on some anti-homosexual campaign, for example, lobbying for

laws to make gay marriage illegal, for instance, but never actually get to the root of the problem. Such movements will also ignore so many of the other sins Paul lists here, ALL of which originate in the very same root evil – *the refusal to give honor to God as God and the refusal to give Him thanks*. In other words, living one’s life as if God were *irrelevant*. Hating any mention of His name.

This means that a person can be, for example, a very conservative person in many of their views: against homosexuality being legitimized, patriotic, a hard-worker and opposed to handing out money to people who won’t work – *and yet if that same person refuses to honor God and give Him thanks, that person is in fact to be found right in this list of the fruit of a debased mind*. Fornication is fine with him or her as long as it is heterosexual, you see. Blaspheming God’s name is quite alright in everyday speech as long as we teach the kids how to be hard workers, really good at hunting or fishing, and respectful to their elders. The thing is virtually identical to the attitude of the Jews:

Rom 2:17-24 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God (18) and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; (19) and if you are sure that you yourself are a

guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, (20) an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— (21) you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? (22) You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? (23) You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. (24) For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

The Lord is Worthy of Thanksgiving

Let’s consider David’s words in Psalm 100 once more and spend some time really thinking about what is here:

Psa 100:3-5 Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (4) Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! (5) For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Know that the Lord, he is God. This is what Romans 1 tells us the perverse man refuses to acknowledge. He will not honor God *as God*. But God is,

God, WE are not. It is HE who has made US. We are HIS. The KJV and NASB have *It is he who has made us and not we ourselves*. Something has gone very, very wrong when the creature begins to act as if he were the Creator!

We owe our very being to God. The fact that we even exist, we owe to God – no one can take credit for birthing themselves! Listen to Paul tell it to the Athenians, demonstrating to them that they are created beings and that God is their creator, not they themselves:

Act 17:26-29 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; (27) That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: (28) For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (29) Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

unthankful person is an idolater. Because he or she is giving thanks to someone or something other than God just as the Athenians were.

And so it is that the Christian necessarily is the most thankful person on earth. If that is not true of someone, then they surely are not a Christian at all. And here then we are provided with a very good way to examine ourselves to see if we are in Christ or not. *Do we honor God and given Him thanks for every good gift we have, and in particular for the indescribable gift of His Son?*

The idolater, you see, is an UNthankful person. And in fact we can correctly state the corollary: *An*