

Whatever you do ...

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, for those who are visiting us, we normally just work our way through books of the Bible, passage by passage, so that we can get to see what's being said within context, within the context of the wider book of the Bible and the Bible itself.
- But today, being Thanksgiving Sunday, it's a little bit more topical, although we'll still be looking at a particular, a few verses in particular. And so I've put all the verses that you'll need on the screen, but, you know, by all means, you can open your Bibles too.
- I'm never going to stop you from doing that. How about I pray for us and we'll get into it. So let's pray. Gracious Father, we do thank you for your word.
- And so as Glenn prayed before, we pray now again that you would help us to hear it, to understand it and to live in light of it. We ask it in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Well, I wonder how you would finish this sentence. Whatever you do, dot, dot, dot. How would you finish it? Would it be, like this person, whatever you do, be happy?
- [1 : 0 9] This is an actual book you can buy on Amazon by Julia Dellert. Or would it be, whatever you do in life, don't give up on your own dreams, from that wise sage, Nicole Kidman.
- Although, what if your dream was to have a body that never aged? I mean, I guess we get a new dream, don't we? Or would it be, like Derek Chen, who says, whatever you do, eat dumplings?
- And he's really enjoying them there. Now, dumplings are good. Don't get me wrong. I like dumplings. But we've already heard from our second reading how God might finish that sentence, whatever you do.
- And we heard that it included giving thanks. But before we get to that, I want us to realize that the fundamental reason for thanksgiving is that it's part of worshipping God rightly in life.
- So, point one in your outline. You see, worship is more than just singing. We often talk about we're going to now worship God in song, and that includes that. But it's much more than singing.
- [2 : 1 8] It's living for God in all of life, which includes thanksgiving. And so, in the book of Revelation, when the living creatures give glory and honor to God, they also give thanks to him who sits on the throne.
- And all the angels, when they fall down on their face and worship God, they say praise and glory and wisdom and thanks, and so on, be to our God.
- Thanksgiving is part of worshipping God. In fact, we saw it in our first reading from Psalm 100, where the psalmist encouraged Israel to go to God's temple and worship God.
- Enter his temple gates with thanksgiving. And his courts with praise give thanks to him and praise his name. You see, giving thanks goes hand in hand with praising God.
- It's part of worshipping God. Why? Well, because it rightly acknowledges God as the good God who gives every good gift we enjoy.

- [3 : 26] So, in verse 5 on the screen, for example, the psalmist gives the reason for giving thanks here. He says, for or because God is good. And then he describes God's goodness in his love that endures forever and his faithfulness that continues through all generations.
- But we also see God's goodness in the way that he gives good gifts. So, James chapter 1, every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father.
- You see, when you thank someone for giving you something in life, something good in life, you're not just showing your gratitude, you're actually acknowledging them as the giver, the one who gave it to you, aren't you?
- And so too with God. Giving God thanks rightly acknowledges that he is the good God, the creator who is ultimately responsible, who has ultimately given us every good thing we enjoy in this world.
- As one Christian writer puts it, when giving thanks, God the creator is acknowledged to be the source of all goodness.
- [4 : 39] Which is why if we don't give thanks, we are actually denying that truth, aren't we? We're inadvertently saying that, you know, God doesn't give good things, which is pretty offensive.
- I mean, even non-Christians understand how being ungrateful is really shameful. Did you hear about that couple? I think it was this past week, a Melbourne couple who won a house worth \$4 million.
- It was one of the houses that they did on the block. I think it was last season, if you watched that show. And they won this house, \$4.2 million, I think it was. And as they walked through the house, they complained that the paintwork wasn't quite right in one room.
- And they complained that it didn't come with the wine fridge as well. And so there's this big backlash in the media, where apparently Australia erupts over the couple's ungrateful reaction to winning the \$4 million home.
- You see, even non-Christians know that being ungrateful is shameful. Or how much more so when it comes to God, who gave us everything good we enjoy in this world, from family to friends to food to fun, even a nice cup of tea on a cold day or a great cup of coffee in the morning to help us wake up.
- [5 : 59] I mean, the very fact that for breakfast, you do not have to eat porridge every single day. I mean, there's nothing wrong with porridge, don't get me wrong. But the very fact that we have such a variety to enjoy is because God's goodness and generosity towards us.
- In fact, being ungrateful is not just shameful, it's actually sinful, did you realise? And so when Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, he describes sinful people, and notice how he includes being ungrateful next to unholy and so on.
- Because it denies that truth, that God is good and gives every good thing we enjoy. And like all sin, in the end, being ungrateful is actually not good for us, is it?
- I mean, if you're always ungrateful, you just end up being grumpy, don't you? Our problem is we often focus on what God has not given us, and so complain about that and forget all the good things he has given us, don't we?
- Or maybe that's just me. The point is, Thanksgiving is part of worshipping God rightly in life, for it acknowledges that he is the source of every good thing we enjoy in this world.
- [7 : 22] And since Thanksgiving is part of worshipping God in life, then it ought to be part of our church life too, oughtn't it? Point two. This brings us to our second reading in verses 15 to 16.

I think the focus here, he's writing to the Colossian church, so it's true for all of them all the time, but it seems to be, the focus seems to be on a church meeting at this point. He's talking about as members of one body, he's talking about when you teach and admonish and sing together, that kind of thing.

That's what it seems to be talking about. And as we gather for church, verse 15 says, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body, you were called to peace and be thankful.

Now, before we get to the be thankful bit, given what's happening in our world at the moment, let's focus on this peace part first.

The peace of Christ is the peace that Christ gives us, both with God and with one another. As you probably know, when we sin, it doesn't just offend God, it makes us enemies with God.

[8 : 34] But Christ took the punishment for our sins at the cross, so that every single person who believes in Jesus can not only be forgiven, but also given peace with God.

Peace in terms of a relationship. It's not just a cessation of war, but actually more, a loving relationship with God. Plus, Christ then brings us together as members of his body, as God's family, and in so doing gives us peace, relationship, friendship with one another.

A few verses earlier in chapter 3, Paul actually says in Christ, there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, that were the two big categories for the Jews and still are today, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.

In other words, being brought together in Christ means our old identities that divided us are now superseded by a new identity that unites us, that is, Christ.

He is, to misquote the Lord of the Rings, he is the one identity that rules them all. Christ is all and he's in all of us and that brings peace.

[9 : 57] You see, before we were divided by our different cultures, our different interests, our different jobs, our different genders, so that we may never have actually spoken to one another or cared for one another or worked with each other.

But now, by bringing us together in Christ as one body, one family, he's given us peace in terms of relationships so that we do now talk to each other.

I mean, we do talk to each other, don't we? We do. We do care for one another. We do work together. This is why, more than anything, Palestine and Israel need Jesus.

I'm not just saying that because I'm a minister. I'm saying it because it's true. He alone brings true peace. Again, not just in terms of stopping the war, but more bringing them together to enjoy friendship.

I mean, can you imagine a Hamas and Israeli soldier not just putting down their guns but then sitting down together to enjoy a meal, laugh, talk with each other?

[11 : 05] I mean, I know it's hard to imagine right at the moment but that's what the peace of Christ can do. I've heard stories of it happening before. I've heard of people who came out of Rwanda.

Do you remember? Tutsis and Hutu hated, killed each other, next door neighbours. I've heard a story about two of them becoming Christians met in a Bible study group in Sydney. They sat down and talked together.

That's what the peace of Christ can do. And this peace that we have is meant to rule our hearts, verse 15.

We're to let this peace direct our hearts so that we'll always seek to maintain it. In fact, the word rule here has the idea of being an umpire or a referee.

In a game, an umpire makes a call when there's a dispute, you know, whether it's a foul or not or whether it was in or out. Well, when there's a dispute in the church, we're to let the peace of Christ umpire our hearts so that the call is always for peace, that we always seek to maintain peace with our hearts.

[12 : 16] If, you know, someone sits in your seat, we're to let the peace of Christ umpire our hearts so that we seek peace by not telling them to move but sitting somewhere else.

Or more seriously, if someone says something hurtful, we're to let the peace of Christ umpire our hearts so that we seek peace by not holding a grudge but forgiving, forbearing.

If someone voted differently to you yesterday, we are to let the peace of Christ umpire our hearts so that we seek peace by not being judgmental but acknowledging our freedom to vote differently on this issue.

Of course, it's not peace at the expense of truth. We are to uphold the truth of God's word. But when there are disputes because of personality differences, or conscience issues, or even sinful natures that say hurtful things, we're to let the peace of Christ umpire our hearts so that we'll seek peace with one another, maintain the peace we've already got through Christ.

But then Paul adds at the end of verse 15, and be thankful. I take it thankful for all things peace, but in this particular context, especially this thing called peace.

[13 : 40] I mean, how good is peace compared to war? How good are loving relationships compared to hatred? Has not the images we've seen from Gaza and Israel this past week reminded us of this?

We often forget how good peace is until we see how horrific war is, don't we? And so we're to be thankful for it and for everything else God gives us.

And this idea of being thankful is again seen in verse 16, where we're not just to let the peace of Christ rule our hearts, we're to let the word of Christ dwell richly amongst us.

How? Well, it says, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and through singing, it says, with gratitude in your hearts.

You see, as we sing songs full of Christ's word, we're actually teaching one another. We sing, when we sing, we don't just sing to God, we also sing within earshot of each other, don't we?

[14 : 44] And so we can hear the truth. That's how we teach and that's how Christ's word dwell. Well, one way, Christ's word dwells richly among us. And so it's why our songs need to match the truth of Christ's word and why Paul lists some examples of that, like psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit or spiritual songs.

There are lots of songs in the world that are not spiritual, that don't have Christ's word in them. You know, like, what's that classic Taylor Swift song? Shake it off, shake it off.

No? Okay. It's really catchy, I clearly, but it's not spiritual, is it? It's not spiritual. And sadly, I need to say that there are even some church songs that are not spiritual because they don't have the words of Christ.

This song called Champion by Bethel Music says, when I open up my mouth, miracles start breaking out. I have the authority Jesus has given me. That's not quite right, is it?

But verse 16, songs that are full of Christ's word, like hymns, psalms, and songs from the spirit, it's one way of letting his word dwell richly among us.

[15 : 57] It's one way we can teach and admonish one another. And so, thank you to all those who choose the songs and help us to sing them week by week. But notice how we're to sing at the end of the verse.

It doesn't say we're to sing well, which is a great relief for me, but it does say we're to sing with gratitude in your hearts. We're to sing with thankful hearts because the words in this song reminds us of great truths.

I mean, for me, when I sing before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is love and whoever lives and pleads for me, is that not a moving truth?

Is that not something to be thankful for that the Lord Jesus stands before God's throne right now pleading and praying for you and me? I saw this website last week that lists 24 signs of a healthy church, of church health.

And it even gave a bonus 25th sign of a super healthy church of honest self-assessment. I'm not sure exactly what that means. But the 24, amongst the 24, it didn't use these words, but I think there was, you know, letting the peace of Christ rule amongst us.

[17 : 23] It talked about, you know, forgiving and forbearing with one another. I think it is and talked about letting the word of Christ rule amongst us as well. But not one of the 24 or 25 signs mentioned being thankful.

But it's God's sign here, isn't it? God wants us to be thankful. It is a sign of a healthy church. For thanksgiving is part of worshipping God in life.

And so it ought to be part of our church life and it ought to be part of our own lives. Verse 17.3. So verse 17 says, And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Here is how God finishes that sentence we started with, whatever you do, dot, dot, dot. And he says, Whatever you do, whether word or action, so in other words, in everything, in all of life, we are firstly, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does that mean? Well, remember our name represents our character, who we are, doesn't it? So to drag someone's name through the mud is to drag a person's character through the mud, isn't it?

[18 : 33] To praise someone's name is to praise that person, isn't it? And so to do everything in the name of Jesus means to do everything in his character, in his likeness. In other words, the verse is saying, Whatever you do, be like Christ.

After all, if we are all part of Christ's body, then we're all to reflect Christ's character, aren't we? But notice again, Paul adds at the end of the verse, giving thanks to God, the Father.

Out of everything he could have added here to do in all of life, he adds giving thanks. That's how important it is.

And so in these three verses, we've got three exhortations to give thanks. That's how important it is. In fact, in verse 17, it's equated with doing everything like Christ.

Giving thanks and being like Christ with each other. That's how important giving thanks is. And so we're to give thanks in whatever we do, not just in good times when we enjoy God's good gifts, but also in bad times when we struggle to trust God.

[19 : 46] Because even then, we have reason to thank God. For example, in chapter 1 of Colossians, we're told to give thanks to God the Father who's qualified us to share in the inheritance in the world to come.

We're reminded in our own chapter, chapter 3, verse 12, that we are God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. Is that not worth giving thanks for? And so, verse 17, whatever you do, whether in word or deed, whether it's good or bad times, we're to be like Christ, giving thanks to the Father through him.

I must confess, I've found it hard to feel thankful this past week when I've seen what's been happening in Gaza and Israel. Especially when we hear the horror stories over what happened to women, children, babies.

I mean, that's not how you try to reclaim land. And yet, as my anger arose at the atrocities that are happening, you know, it's in both places, I'm not going to get into who's right or wrong, I became even more thankful that God will hold all those who do evil accountable.

That there will be justice and that there will be a world to come where there'll be no more evil anymore. How good will that be? And so, even as we're angered and even as we lament and grieve and pray for peace, we can still give thanks.

[21 : 27] We've still got something to give thanks for. We'll take a lady I was visiting in hospital a couple of weeks ago. She was told that she did not have long to live. She wanted to live. Obviously, and her children wanted her to live, her two daughters.

And so we pray that God would enable her to live. Yet, not knowing what would happen after we prayed, this is what she said. She said, thanks be to God.

He will either heal me or take me. And then she pointed up heaven. And then she added, the Lord's will be done.

Here is someone who in whatever she did, she was like Christ who himself prayed, not my will, but yours be done. And gave thanks to God.

despite her awful situation. We'll take another person from church. She had \$20,000 stolen from her through a banking scam a few months ago.

[22 : 27] The bank claimed it was not their fault. And yet, despite being, you know, not that rich herself, this is what she said to me. She said, Andrew, I'm still thankful because it has really taught me that it's all God's money anyway.

And so, we prayed about it nonetheless. And with a persistent help from another member of our church, several months later, the bank amazingly reimbursed her with interest.

But then she said, I'm so thankful for the good lesson God taught me. I want to give it back to God and his work. And she gave all \$20,000 away.

The point is, here is another person who not only acted like Christ, but was still thankful even despite an awful situation. There's still reason to give thanks.

Derek Chen may say, whatever you do, eat dumplings. Dumplings are good. But for us as Christians, God says, whatever you do, be like Christ with thanksgiving.

[23 : 35] Let's pray God would help us to do that. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for this reminder this morning that it is right to give you our thanks and praise for every good thing we enjoy comes from you.

And so help us, we pray, in whatever we do to be like Christ with thanksgiving. We ask it in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.