

A Pause for Thanks

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 November 2024

Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 0 0] Well, during this Thanksgiving season, I want us to start this morning with a simple question. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to overlook the little things in life?

You know, how often do we just stop and think that the sun rising, the air that we breathe, and the people that we love are all incredible gifts, gifts given to us by God.

And even if we know all these things, how often do we pause to appreciate the things that are in our lives? Even the good things, the things that are not all that enjoyable, as we think they're all part of life.

And if we belong to God, everything that's in our life has to go through God, just like we've seen in the Old Testament in the life of Job, when Satan wanted to do anything in Job's life, God had to allow it to happen.

And all the things that happen in our lives are all things that can grow us, can strengthen us, and even in the worst of times can move us toward God.

[1 : 1 5] You see, we live in a world that's moving at lightning speed. Almost everything in our culture, from TV to radio to social media, tells us what we need to be happy and what we need to be vying for.

And in the hustle and the bustle, it's easy to take all the things in our lives, the gifts that God gives to us, it's easy to take all of these things for granted if we don't take the time to stop and to simply appreciate the blessings that God showers on us every single day.

So today we're going to hit the pause button on life. We're going to look at what it means to stop and recognize God's blessings in our life and to be thankful for the things that God provides for us and to cultivate a heart of gratitude and respond to all these blessings in our life with being thankful, especially during the Thanksgiving season.

It's about embracing a life of gratitude, not just during the Thanksgiving season, but every day of our life to recognize what we have to be thankful for. So let's see this morning how we can open our eyes to the gifts all around us and be able to live with a thankful heart, just as God intended.

And the first thing that we need to do is recognize God's blessings, recognize the blessings that God provides in our lives. Let's take a look at James chapter 1 and verse number 17 this morning.

[2 : 5 7] James chapter 1 and verse number 17. Isn't it amazing how often we overlook the everyday miracles in our lives?

And yes, they really are miracles if we stop and think about it. James chapter 1 verse 17 says, Everything that comes into our lives is a blessing from God, is a miracle, if you will, from God that He provides for us in our lives.

What does this verse tell us? This verse tells us that everything is a gift from God, every good thing in our life. So do we actually stop and notice these things in our lives?

Think about it. We wake up each morning. The sun is shining. Or maybe it's raining. And isn't rain itself a blessing as well because the rain nourishes the earth?

Now for us here in the South, the rain makes sure that we have to keep cutting the grass. Even in November, we'll probably have to be cutting grass in December. But we have grass to cut. And we thank God for all the little blessings that He provides for us each day.

[4 : 2 6] We have food on our tables. We have clothes to wear. We have people that care about us. But in the rush of our daily routines, these blessings can become background noises.

As we allow life to rush past us, the blessings of the people in our lives, the food that we have, the sunshine and the rain, can simply fade into the background as we are racing for the next thing that we think we need to make us happy.

But what if we took a moment and just looked at these gifts in our lives? The person sitting next to you. The person that you love. The people that love you.

The food that you're going to be eating, I'm sure, when we leave from here. What if we took time every morning to thank God for those blessings He gives us?

It would be like putting on a new pair of glasses where we see everything from a new perspective and where the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

[5 : 38] I believe our hearts would fill with gratitude if we were able to do that every morning. Now, recognizing God's blessings in our life isn't about pretending that life's perfect because life's not perfect, isn't it?

I mean, we get sick. I was talking to some this morning and said they've been sick last week and probably still not feeling well. There are some who get bad reports from the doctor.

And we know that relationships aren't always going to be 100%. We're going to have problems in our life. And being thankful isn't about making things up that everything is going to be okay, but it's about seeing the hand of God in every area of our life, in the blessings as well as the difficulties.

Now, Jesus Himself modeled this for us. There's an account in the New Testament of Jesus when He was teaching a whole bunch of people and they were hungry and there's a young boy, one of the disciples finds a young boy, he's got his lunch and it's a few small fish and a few pieces of bread.

And Jesus takes that and He thanks God for this small provision and He then goes and He multiplies it and it's multiplied and He feeds 5,000 people.

[7 : 11] So what Jesus modeled for us is even the little things in our life, be thankful for it. And God can multiply those blessings in our lives. However small they seem, God can take those and can make a big difference in our life.

So let's take a cue from Jesus and let's start recognizing the blessings in our lives. There's a song in a hymn book, Count Your Many Blessings, Name Them One by One.

How would it change our life if we stopped and did that? If we just took a sheet of paper and we would write down blessings, how many things could you come up with?

Probably quite a few. If you'd name them one by one and you think about the blessings and probably things that you normally would not think of being a blessing is a blessing.

What about gravity? Anybody ever think about gravity? Think about the perfect gravity, the perfect atmosphere that God has provided for our bodies to be at optimal functioning.

[8 : 27] everything that we see around us, the colors that we see. That's a blessing. The sunrise, the sunset, everything being on a perfect schedule.

The sun as it revolves around, or the earth as it revolves around the sun, as the earth rotates on its axis at a perfect degree of inclination or declination in order for the seasons to be what they are.

All of these things are blessings that God gives us. So what would pausing and thanking God every day and starting every day with gratitude, what would that move us to do?

Well, I think it would move us to be thankful. You might be saying, well, duh, that's kind of a given. But being thankful is actually a blessing in the Bible.

Let's look at 1 Thessalonians 5, verse number 18. 1 Thessalonians 5, verse number 18. And in that verse, what the Apostle Paul is doing as he's writing to the church in Thessalonica, he's letting them know what God wants when it comes to recognizing God in all things.

[9 : 55] In verse 18 of 1 Thessalonians 5, it says, in everything, give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Notice that Paul doesn't say, give thanks in only the things that are good. Or give thanks in only the things that feel good.

No, he says, in every circumstance, in everything, give thanks. Why? Because it's God's will. Because it's what God wants for you.

And it's what God wants for me. Now, that's a pretty tall order, isn't it? Thank God for everything. You know, there are a lot of things I can think about in life that I would rather not be a part of life. But Paul says, it's God's will that we be thankful in everything and for everything. Think about the times when life doesn't go as planned.

[10 : 58] Maybe you faced a tough problem at work, a disagreement with a friend, a bad result from a test from the doctor, or maybe a challenge at home.

You know, it's in times like these when gratitude is probably the last thing on your mind. When the car won't start in the morning, or you've dressed in your nice clothes to go somewhere, and you are halfway there, and you have a flat tire on the side of the road.

That's not when you stop and say, God, thank you. I'm so thankful for this blessing. But Paul says, in everything, give thanks. Why? Because it's God's will for us.

And when we think about things, God's in control, and there's always a reason for what happens in our life. Because if we shift our perspective, and when we have our nice clothes, and that we have that flat tire on the way to something important, and by the way, that's why I have triple A, but we say, what if we say, God, thank you.

What did you have? What did you, why did you accomplish this? Was there something that you're saving me from? Is there something that, is there a reason for this? And thank you, because I know that you have a perfect plan.

[12:25] That would change our perspective. That would change our attitude toward the things in our lives. So God, what's your plan? What's your plan? God is doing something.

Now being thankful doesn't mean we ignore our problems. Instead, it's finding something to be grateful for, even in the midst, even in the middle of the problems in our life.

It's trusting that God's at work. It's trusting that even when things don't go as planned, God is still there. He's working things behind the scene because we don't see the full picture.

We don't see what's around the bend. We don't see that maybe someone would have run that next traffic light the very moment we might have been at that intersection, and that flat tire might have saved our life.

See, we don't think about things like that when things don't go our way, does it? But God is in control. He's at work behind the scenes, even if we don't think about it.

[13:28] And the way Paul said, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God. Gratitude is actually aligning ourself with the will of God.

When we're thankful, we align ourselves with God's will. So Jesus showed us what that looked like. When Jesus was nearing the end of his earthly ministry, he was sitting with his disciples at a table, and he took bread, he broke it, and he thanked God for that meal.

But what they didn't know was just the following few hours Jesus was going to be brought before the mock trial.

He was going to be beaten. He was going to be mocked. And ultimately, he was going to be placed on a cross and would be crucified and would be separated from God for that span of time that he was taking our sin upon himself on the cross.

What did Jesus do? Jesus demonstrated gratitude and showed us that gratitude is possible even in the face of unthinkable pain.

[14:52] Knowing what he would be facing in just a very short time, Jesus was thankful for what God was doing and for what God had planned.

His example teaches us that we can be thankful and that thankfulness is a powerful act of faith. So how do we cultivate this kind of gratitude?

Well, we can begin by thanking God for the simple things. Our health, our family, the beauty of creation, seeing a sunset at the lake, seeing a beautiful sunrise.

So as we practice gratitude, it becomes a habit. The more we practice it, the more we see the things we can be thankful for, the more that we can live that life of gratitude.

So let's commit to gratitude even when it's not easy, just like Jesus did. But in every circumstance, trusting that God is with us and He's working everything for our good.

[16:00] Finally, let's think about where we go from here. The third thing, if you're taking notes, let's respond to God's provision with gratitude. Respond to the things that God provides us with gratitude.

We've talked about recognizing God's blessings. We've talked about cultivating a heart of gratitude or being thankful for what God does in our lives.

So now it's time to consider how to respond to all that God's done for us. Let's take a look in the book of Philippians. The letter of Paul to the Philippian Christians in chapter 4 and verse number 19.

Philippians chapter 4 and verse number 19. This is a promise from God where He says, and my God.

The people that He was writing to needed to have the confidence knowing that God was going to take care of them even when they were going to be going through difficult times.

[17:00] Paul says, and my God shall supply how much? All of your need according to His riches.

According to His riches. Elon Musk, I think right now, I don't know if that's changed this week. What was it? 480?

Was it 200 or 400 billion dollars that he's worth? I mean, more money than probably many countries' gross national product put together.

So if Elon Musk wanted to give you something, pay off your house, pay off your car, pay off a medical bill, would that hurt him to do that?

No, of course not, because he would be doing it out of his riches. And how much more does God have than a rich man in today's world? God owns everything.

[18:01] He created everything. So when God provides, He supplies all of our needs, not all of our greeds, but all of our needs. He provides all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This promise reminds us that God is our provider. He meets not only our spiritual needs, but God provides our physical needs as well. He gives us food.

He provides the air that we breathe. He provides the measure of health that you and I have. And when we fully get it, the depth of God's provision, our natural response should be one of gratitude. When we really get the full depth of what God does for us, it should cultivate within us thankfulness. You know, God, thank you. We don't think about it all day long, but God, thank you for what you've done.

Thank you for, have you ever gotten home after you're driving and your mind is somewhere and you got home and you don't remember how you got there? Been there, done that.

[19:10] I don't know if I was sleep driving or what, but I got home. I don't remember how I got there. My mind was elsewhere. I didn't think about stopping for traffic lights and stop signs and putting on the brakes.

You know, God takes care of us. God provides for us. What about our loved ones? Those are all gifts and miracles that you and I have. God made us, created us for relationships.

So what does it mean? I think it, I think it means living with a, an awareness of God's faithfulness every single day of our life.

It's acknowledging that everything that you and I have, our talents, our resources, and our opportunities come from God. Everything that you and I have. Consider how Jesus responded to God's provision.

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, he gave thanks, didn't he? Was Jesus in full contact with God every day? Of course he was. He was God.

[20:14] He was God in flesh, but he was fully God. The thing about, what to think about is, if Jesus took time out of his schedule to thank God every day and talk to him every day, how much more should we take time, pause, and thank God for the things that we have.

Before they ate, he thanked God. Before they did something important, he talked to his Heavenly Father. Jesus consistently gave thanks, whether he was breaking bread with his disciples or he was performing miracles.

See, his gratitude was not just a feeling, but it was a way of life. Jesus lived a life of gratitude. And it influenced how he reacted with others and it influenced how he reacted with his mission.

So for us, if we stop and pause and think about being thankful in our lives, it means in our gratitude, we should be able to bless others as well.

It's about sharing our time, sharing our talents, sharing our resources with others. Because God saw fit to bless us, we should see fit to bless others and be a blessing.

[21:33] How often do you pray each day, God help me to be a blessing to somebody else? God help me to be a blessing to somebody. It could be time, it could be a phone call, an encouraging word, it could be meeting a need.

But God help me to be a blessing to somebody today. See, when we do this, we become a conduit of God's blessing. We become a conduit of God's grace, allowing His blessings to flow through us. So let's remember that Jesus is the ultimate provision. When He gave His life, when He gave His body on the cross, He gave us the gift of salvation.

What better gift could He have given to you and to me? Our gratitude should flow from the recognition of this incredible gift. Every single day, thankful for God's salvation that He provided through Jesus Christ.

So as we reflect on God's provision, let's ask ourselves, how can we respond with gratitude? How can we use what's been given to us to serve others?

[22 : 46] And how can we glorify God? When we do this, we not only express our thankfulness, but we also participate in the work of God, not only in our lives, but in the lives of others.

So as we leave here today, as we go through this week where, as a country, we celebrate Thanksgiving, let's choose to be thankful in every circumstance and respond to God's blessing by sharing His love to others.

And let's remember that Jesus is our ultimate example of gratitude and He invites us to follow in His footsteps.

So let's pray. Father, this morning, as we've gathered together, in Your name, we pray that we might be a blessing to others and may we cultivate an attitude of gratitude each and every day as we recognize the miracles all around us, the blessings that You provide for us and that You would move us to thankfulness and that we would respond to Your provision with gratitude each and every day.

We thank You for this offering we're about to receive. We pray for those who are traveling today. Bless them, keep them safe. We thank You for all that You're going to do.

[24 : 09] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.