

Thank God For Everthing He Created

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Date: 08 October 1989

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, help us to take the reality of our world on this Thanksgiving morning in October 1989, and from this reality to know the greater and far more substantial reality of your loving purpose towards us in Christ, of your kingdom, and of your gospel.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, the focus that I want you to have is in 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 4, 1 Timothy 4, 4, and it's page 196.

1 Timothy 4 is the subject for this morning's sermon. It deals largely in terms of its content with ministers and who are the good ones and who are the bad ones.

So, if you have opinions of your own and want to test them against the reality of the scriptures, this is the place to go.

And you can see what's good and what's bad in the function of the ministry. But then there is this problem of chapter 4.

[1 : 45] I remember as a child going to a circus where a little Volkswagen bug drove out into the middle of the arena, and there it stopped.

And then the door opened. And then somebody got out. And then somebody else. And then somebody else. And then somebody else.

And then somebody else. And then a total of 19 people got out of one Volkswagen bug. And then somebody else. Well, that's what happens to you when you look at a fairly innocuous chapter like 1 Timothy chapter 4.

You think at first there's nothing in it, and then there's so much in it you wonder you could cover it. In any way. So, I'm trying to be fairly selective and focusing largely upon these verses, this verse 4, and the implications that this verse 4 has for us.

Because what it says, everything created by God is good. That's a big statement.

[2 : 51] And God has to fight with us almost every day to show us that it's true. That everything created by God is good. A lot of arguments come right from that source.

Nothing is to be rejected. If it is received with thanksgiving. Nothing is to be rejected. If it's received with thanksgiving.

For then it is, by being received with thanksgiving, consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Note, if you will, in verse 3 it says, to be received with thanksgiving. In verse 4 it says, received with thanksgiving.

So, on this thanksgiving Sunday, it's the ability we have to receive with thanksgiving that which God has created.

[3 : 54] And because he has created it, it's good. And therefore it is appropriate that we receive it with thanksgiving. And what it means, I think, is that the universal and basic response of the whole created order is to look, that is, you and me.

It is our inestimable privilege this morning to receive the whole of God's creation with thanksgiving that overflows in our hearts.

Just to be so utterly and completely aware of the profound need of giving thanks to God for all the abundance of all that he's provided for us.

And I don't care what your human situation is. I don't care what struggles you're having. I do care. But I don't in this sense. That I think it is your responsibility and my responsibility to be filled with a great sense of thanksgiving.

When you see the potato harvest in the fields of Tawasan being turned up, give thanks. When the lumberman goes with his great big nine-horsepower chainsaw to the foot of a great Sitka spruce, do you know what he should do?

[5 : 21] He should give thanks to God for the wonderful gift that he's now going to help himself to. When the fishing boats are coming in from the sea, they should be alive with the praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonderful provision that he's made for us.

When the hotel proprietor receives his guests, he should be full of thanksgiving. Whether he is or not, I leave to you.

The restaurant, which goes through such an elaborate procedure and ritual, in order to put a wonderful meal before you, that restaurant proprietor should stand by your table and without his violin, give thanks to God for the wonderful thing that we are able to share this food.

The pilot, when he pulls back the throttle on the 747, his heart should burst with thanksgiving that such an amazing reality as those airplanes would be part of our world.

And the surgeon, as he selects his knife to do his job, should be full of thanksgiving to God that he has given to him the gift of aiding God in the process of healing.

[6 : 46] Everything should be marked by this. When you drive in to Oak Ridge Shopping Center, which alas is probably packed to the doors at this very moment, when they should be here or else we should be there, somebody should be bringing them all together to give thanks to God.

Like a great, huge choir that filled the whole of the parking lot, giving thanks to God, the material blessings which he has poured on us in so many ways.

When you go into the drugstore or get into your car or all these things, it should be part of our thinking, part of who we are, that we are in the constant process of thanksgiving.

You know, the great disadvantage of being a preacher is I live such a miserable, miserly life by myself, but when I get up in front of you, I can tell you how it ought to be.

And there is such a diversity between these two things. And I long that we're caught in, that we should be in the situation where we can be all we know to be, because we know so much more than we are.

[8 : 09] Well, look more closely at what is implied here. You see, thanksgiving is a function of believing.

I was offended when I read this, when it said, God created these things to be received by thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Why not just say, to be received with thanksgiving by everybody? You see, if you don't believe and know the truth, you don't know who to give thanks to.

And so, believing is part of good digestion. That's what it's saying. That you've got to be able to give thanks to God when you draw a breath, when you take a meal, when you take a step, in everything to give thanks to God, because he is the one in whom you believe.

So that thanksgiving is an interrelationship between us and God, which means that he is constantly providing the good gifts to us, and we are constantly responding with heartfelt thanksgiving.

[9 : 26] And that's why believing and knowing the truth are essential to thanksgiving. You know the atheist who said sometimes he feels like he wants to give thanks, but he doesn't know who to give it to.

Well, that's the problem that Paul puts the other side of in this passage. The created thing is given to the created being who lives by faith at the hand of a creator.

That's how it all fits together, and that's how we're meant to fit it all together. Thanksgiving demands that you know the truth, that is the truth about God.

You don't necessarily understand all that science has laid out for us to understand, but you know the truth of the God who has revealed himself to you in Jesus Christ.

And so thanksgiving demands, the full heart's thanksgiving demands that we are thanking a God whom we know the truth about because he has revealed the truth about himself in Jesus Christ.

[10 : 38] Thanksgiving is to know that the created thing is good. Thanksgiving is to acknowledge that the created thing is not to be rejected.

Now that's where the chapter begins with rejecting the created thing. The end of chapter 3 begins with the church, which is the bulwark and pillar of the truth.

Chapter 4 says, into that community of God's household, the pillar and bulwark of the truth in the later days, in latter days, will come. And that's where it begins.

Dissembling spirits, deceitful spirits, doctrines of demons, dissembling with seared conscience.

Now, dissembling is a wonderful word, isn't it?

I mean, nobody knows what it means, but we all use it when we come to say our prayers and the, you know, where we disassemble and cloak our sins before God.

[11 : 42] We make them appear to be something that they are not. And Paul says, that's what happens in our world. We have these two things there. We have the reality which we know and then the reality which we prefer.

And we really like the people that give us the reality we prefer, even though it is built entirely on conjuring trips and deceptions. We prefer it to the reality that is there.

And that's what happens in the church is the deceivers come in, the dissemblers come in, the deceitful come in. And we have created in our world an enormous industry that creates deceptions for us that we live by and pump them at us day and night.

And that's what we're doing. And that's what we're doing. The only truth that most of Canada wants to know right now is whether the Blue Jays can get into the World Series.

But in order to follow that most important development in our nation's history, we have to be subjected to lies and deceptions by the hour.

[12 : 58] Just because, I mean, it's done by people who have our best interest at heart. They know we want to be deceived, so they deceive us. And we say, thank you.

Now on with the game. You know, that's the kind of world we live in. But you need, you see, when Paul says that none of this is to be rejected, he means that we're not to be deceived, that what God gives is good.

What happens, you see, by these deceivers, what they come along to us and say, you must, if you are really going to know God, you must abstain from marriage.

If you are really going to know God, you've got to be very careful about your diet. Now, if you want to guilt, produce a lot of guilt in people, talk to them about sex and food.

And you've got them, you know. They're quivering with guilt. As soon as you talk about either of those subjects. And so these deceivers come along and say, if you really want to know what it's all about, abstain from marriage.

[14 : 13] Abstain from foods. And those are easy things to do. I came across a lovely statement by Karl Barth, which I'd like to pass on to you when he's talking about this problem.

He says, I've actually spent the last 24 hours trying to understand it, and I expect you to understand it on the first hearing, but listen carefully in the hope that you can.

He says, he talks about the strong who are really weak. He says, the strong in as much as life without supports or principles or particular practices is certainly more in accordance with the intrinsic character of their faith as a relationship to Jesus Christ alone.

Now what he's saying, in effect, is this. If you can give people some little thing like eat potatoes three meals a day or don't eat potatoes three meals a day, whatever, or do this or do that, all those things are much easier to cope with than live in a relationship to Jesus Christ.

And that's why we can so easily be deceived. because we want petty rules and regulations. We want somebody to tell us to do this and to do that and to do the other thing.

[15 : 39] And we follow that on obediently and slavishly instead of living in the tremendous freedom that we're meant to have. Well, that's why we have to go back to that statement with which I began.

The fourth verse. Everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving and then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Well, that's what happens. I mean, you know what's happened with this particular verse.

This is the absolute foundation, pivotal verse, which means that you say grace at every meal because that's what you're doing. You're consecrating with the word of God in prayer.

It says that your grace should include scripture so that when you are receiving, in a sense, food and you bow your head to say thank you for it, you are consecrating that food, which is good because it is a gift of God, and you are consecrating that food by, in a sense, seeing it through the word of God and receiving it with prayerful thanksgiving.

[17 : 13] And so, that's the way your life is to be lived. That's the way you are to receive life from God. You are to receive it with thankfulness, and by that thankfulness, you consecrate it with the word of God and prayer.

And that's what is the basis of our fellowship one with another. Father, in all the circumstances of our lives, in all the activities of our lives, in all the joys and sorrows, in all the hopes and despairs, in

every segment of our life, we are responsible to one another to help bring to that situation thanksgiving through the word of God and of prayer.

There was a fellow a few years ago who made the contention that you should learn to give thanks for absolutely everything. And of course, everybody started to play even for with him.

You know? Do you know how to play that? Well, it's just that you say, give thanks for everything, and you say, you mean even for, and then you put a list of things down that you don't want to give thanks for.

Well, he stoutly maintained that you go on giving thanks. And I'm sure he's closer to the truth than any of the even four types are. That there is a profound need for us to give thanks.

[18 : 40] There is that the most basic reality of our relationship to God is the continual giving of thanks. That by the word of God and prayer, these things are consecrated.

Our whole life becomes a life which belongs to him. And this verse has, this chapter has one other verse which I can't leave without bringing it to your attention.

You know, that lovely verse about bodily training is of some value and godliness is value in every way. Well, now, what that means is that I am told that people who run marathons get a rush from doing it.

I have no idea what they're talking about. But they assure me that it's a very exhilarating experience.

And I guess we do all know that some forms of physical exercise create a tremendous sense of well-being.

[19 : 46] and our society is in some elements highly addicted to that sense of well-being which comes from bodily exercise. But Paul says, it's little.

If you really want to get a rush, godliness is the way. And godliness is that relationship to God in which you are constantly giving thanks to him through the word of God and of prayer.

And in that you find, in a sense, the divine rush, the divine sense that fills our hearts to overflowing with a deep sense of thanksgiving.

Even if you're in a hospital bed. Even if you're on the point of death. The wonderful gift of godliness is a deep sense of thankfulness to God who has given you all that you've had, all that you have, and has promised you far more than you can ever imagine.

That's why it says godliness is far greater. And I want to commend it to all of you who are keen on physical exercise and get a rush out of it. There's a far greater rush made available to you in 1 Timothy 4 through godliness.

[21 : 11] So on this Thanksgiving weekend, do be careful to give thanks. Review the whole of your life, if you will, and learn all the things for which you have to give thanks.

I know that it's a world of, you know, of PCBs and holes in the ozone and the national death wish of abortion.

And it's a world where the Amazon jungles are being burned. and all those things for which, we are driven by fear to the point of despair.

We must begin as those who believe and know the truth to give thanks to God for his creation and that thanksgiving is the antidote to receive that which God has created as good, to receive it with thanksgiving.

See it through the filter of the word of God so that we can see it clearly and give it back to God in prayer and thanksgiving. So I hope you will have a very thankful weekend, no matter what your circumstance may be.

[22 : 26] Amen.