

Thanksgiving Sunday

October 9th 2016

Thanksgiving and Thanks Living

Prayer: God, we come to worship with grateful hearts, but sometimes anxieties and worries push the gratitude aside. Help us to live with more gratitude and less *attitude*. Now may the thoughts and words that we share be your wisdom for us today. With thankful hearts we pray. .Amen

Do you know what Thanksgiving and Christmas have in common? I am not thinking about Turkey dinners? They are old, familiar traditions and it is hard to find something new to say that will re-inspire you. Today you will hear this annual message about Thanksgiving, but I hope you might hear it in a new way as we build gratitude into our daily attitude.

I got very excited Friday, when the new Observer came. I was looking for something new to offer you and here is a great article on **The Gratitude Effect**, written by Trisha Elliott. Apparently the field of gratitude had not been *scientifically studied* until 2003. Research now shows : “Gratitude reduces the aches and pains of life.” Emmons is the researcher and he describes gratitude as: “a felt sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life.”

Elliott writes: “The effects of gratitude are as complex and varied as its definition... The word stems from the Latin root *gratia* meaning grace, graciousness or gratefulness, and is described as a feeling, a character trait and a world view.... In nearly every definition, it implies recognizing an undeserved gift conferred by someone else.”

Do you hear some God language? GRACE is an undeserved gift. We know God’s grace is a gift just waiting for our acceptance.

Then I read this in that article: “The apostle Paul wrote about Gratitude in his letter to the Philippians.....”
Read p. 25

I knew this was the scripture I wanted to emphasize with you today, so this affirmation by the Spirit was exciting! I have this passage marked in all my bibles. It is so powerful, a life guide!

It begins: “*Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!*” Rejoice, be thankful and give your thanks to God!! Your presence here is a time to pause and give thanks to God. I am aware that usually I have chosen the words for you. Now I want you to have a chance to say what you are grateful for.

What are you thank-full for? Great value when we say it aloud and when we say it directly to the person. I was surprised to find a Jacquie Lawson card waiting for me when I opened the computer to start writing the sermon. Take time to say thank-you to others today. Sometimes we forget to express gratitude to those closest to us.

I have spoken before about an attitude of gratitude and quoted MJ Ryan’s book

How to Give and receive Gratitude Every Day of Your Life by MJ Ryan

Consciously cultivating thankfulness is a journey of the soul, one that begins when we look around and see the positive effects that gratitude can create. As we come to understand the gifts

of gratitude, we realize that being grateful is not something remote or foreign, but part of the natural joyful expression of our full humanness.

Take time to look at **the attitudes of gratitude** – those beliefs that foster a sense of thankfulness. Attitudes are the underpinnings of action. We can't change on the outside until and unless we transform our thinking, transform the way we imagine ourselves and our reality. The good news is that we really can see the glass half full instead of half empty, and that decision will have a profoundly positive effect not only on our happiness and those around us but on the way our whole lives unfold. And a positive effect on the life and work of this community of faith.

Other people notice our cheerful, grateful attitude. We need to put our **attitudes into action**. When we begin to practice gratitude, we create a powerful resonance between our thoughts and our actions, and our souls shine forth in all their brilliance.

When we begin to **actually inhabit gratitude**, our every inhalation and exhalation a breath of thanksgiving no matter what is going on in the external world. At each level of gratitude our soul's capacity deepens. We experience a deeper meaning of gratitude – we are here for a purpose and therefore grateful for all life's lessons.”

May you experience all the levels of thankfulness and the soul gifts that each offers. With an attitude of gratitude it is possible to give and receive joy every day of your life.

We all understand that Gratitude is not always easy. The next line from Paul is: “*Do not worry about anything but in prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.*” Philippians 4: 6

We all worry, it is part of human nature. We can find so much to be worry about, our families, our health problems, our home situations. The abundance of world news is invasive, so we worry about the effects of the hurricanes, the war in Syria, climate change. What can we do about all these disasters? We can pray, we can share our concerns and worries with God. If one word with God changed the world it would be incredible, but prayer is effective. And we know that prayer can bring us a sense of peace beyond understanding. When we pray, we are often inspired and empowered to do something about our worry issues. Somehow, through this peace that passes understanding, our hearts are lifted. Prayer may not change the world but it can change you.

So if we put the Observer article called *the Gratitude Effect* with Paul's words of wisdom: “*being grateful reaches the aches and pains of life! Prayer reaches the anxieties and worries and gives you peace beyond understanding.* We have a great plan for thanks living.

Thanks living emerges from an attitude of gratitude. Let us take the opportunity this Thanksgiving weekend to appreciate the abundance of God's blessings in our lives. Put thankfulness into every day, live a life of abundant gratitude, and you will be blessed. Amen