

## 11.25.18 ~ **Giving Thanks for God's Blessings!**

The Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Year season is often associated with times of celebration, get togethers with family, and expressions of gratitude toward God for His many blessings.

God's gifts come in a variety of forms, at various times, often providing or supplementing what we need, bringing many unexpected blessings-- day by day, year after year.

Have you ever gone to God in prayer, and you begin thanking Him for all the wonderful things He has created for us to enjoy: people, places, sunsets, sunrises, birds, fish, animals, insects, flowers, trees, fruits, vegetables, nuts, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, clouds, the ocean, etc.

You can't help but give thanks to God for all you are able to taste, touch, smell, see, hear and experience, not to mention the awesome hope we have of eternity in heaven with Him.

Today, I want you to consider the following blessings: salvation, truth, struggle, family and friends.

**1. Salvation...** Before coming to Christ a person is spiritually dead, guilty of sin, condemned to an eternal hell, hopeless; but God, in His great love, mercy, and kindness, provides forgiveness for sin and eternal life, to all who will believe in and receive His Son (cf **Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-10, 13**; see **Ephesians 2:8-10**).

We ought to continually thank God for His gracious gift of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ [**GRACE = God's Riches At Christ's Expense**].

God reached down to us with His life giving, everlasting, unconditional love (see **John 1:1-5, 14; 3:16-21**; cf **Romans 5:8; 8:1**).

**Romans 11:29**, "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Once you believe and receive, God's forgiveness and eternal life, you can't lose it, give it back, or have it taken from you; it is eternal!

God wants everyone to be saved, He doesn't want anyone to be banished to hell (cf **1Timothy 2:3-4; 2Peter 3:9**); no wonder Paul declares (**2Corinthians 9:15**), "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."

**2. Truth...** While watching the news, or reading op-ed pieces in the paper, or perhaps online, you may come away with a strong realization that the world we live in is in chaos and the world's people are very confused.

Major economic, health, social, and familial problems are increasing; and all the world's solutions are clearly temporary, and mostly ineffectual.

The world declares that there is no ultimate authority, no absolutes concerning good and evil, right and wrong, by which everything is to be judged.

Our world has abandoned "truth," common sense and modesty are extinct, marriage, family, two gender sexuality, and religious freedom, are under attack, bringing collateral damage to everyone.

But thanks be to God, all those who trust in Him have been given His eternal and sovereign Word of Truth, by which we can contemplate and judge all matters of life and death. As Christians, we can understand the purpose and plan of life better than all the so-called religious/spiritual gurus, educators, philosophers, politicians, and social engineers.

Jesus reassures us about 80 times in the Gospels, that He is "telling us the truth." The Bible tells us how to know and serve God, how to love our spouses, raise our children, serve as stewards of God's creation, care for the poor and needy, and all while sharing God's message of forgiveness and eternal life, with all who will listen.

God's Truth provides everything we need to know Him and to live on this earth, while trusting Him to bring us into heaven for eternity. Everything conforming to the character, nature, plan and purpose of God is Truth:

- **Jesus Christ** [God's Son] is the Author of Truth; everything He said and did is Truth (**John 14:6**).

- **The Holy Spirit** [God's Spirit] is the Spirit of Truth and He lives in each and every genuine believer and follower of Christ (**John 14:16-17, 25-26**).

- **The Bible** [God's Word] is Sovereign Truth; but only those who accept and apply it give testimony to it, having been sanctified [set apart for the holy work of God], by His Word (**John 17:17**).

**3. Struggle...** It is difficult to be thankful during times of struggle; and our first response is rarely to give thanks to God; but although being thankful during hard times is never easy, it is always the right thing to do; for difficult times often lead us to experience God's presence and power, as He strengthens and comforts our hearts and minds; leading us into a greater dependence upon Him (see **2Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 4:12-13, 19**).

Struggle is part of the Christian life (cf **2Timothy 3:12**), but God will see us through hard times, if we hold fast, seeking to honor and obey His Word (see **James 1:2-4; 2Corinthians 4:7-9, 16**).

It is often during times of struggle that we experience deep intimacy with God, and difficult times can prepare us to serve God more earnestly and effectively, while also enabling us to be more compassionate toward others (see **2Corinthians 1:3-4**).

**4. Family & Friends...** We often receive comfort and encouragement from the family and friends that God gives us, although we probably don't express our thankfulness to God or to those we care about, as often as we should.

My best friend, Nancy, is also my wife of almost 38 years. God has blessed us with four children, six grandchildren, one daughter-in-law and one son-in-law.

God is gracious to have given both Nancy and me Christian parents, to bless our children and our grandchildren; although, now three of our parents, one of our children and two of our grandchildren are now with the Lord in heaven..

God has also blessed us with many brothers and sisters in Christ, who encourage and exhort us to live by faith, as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.

We all have family, friends, and acquaintances, but true Christian family and friends are a special gift from God (**Proverbs 18:24**), "A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

True friends tell us what we need to hear, not necessarily what we want to hear, even if it temporarily hurts us (**Proverbs 27:6**), "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."

God is so good to provide us with family and friends during our life on this earth, some with whom we will share eternity in heaven; but the best friend God provides, is His own Son, Jesus Christ, who, although He is the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords, the Creator and Judge over all, He calls us His friends (cf **John 15:15**).

During this season of Giving Thanks, I hope you will consider and give thanks to God for His many blessings; but today, I especially want to encourage you to thank God for the following:

**#1** For **Salvation**, which is by Grace, through Faith in Jesus Christ who took our punishment and paid our penalty for sin, that we might receive forgiveness and eternal life From God.

**#2** For **Truth**, that provides all we need to know, so that we might serve God and enjoy this life, while trusting Him for the next. God's Truth is revealed in His Word, by His Spirit, through His Son: Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, concerning all things God.

**#3** For **Struggle**, which is a part of life on earth, even Christ Himself suffered to the point of death, on our behalf. God will not allow us more than we can bear and He will always supply everything we need to get through the tough times that we will experience on this side of heaven.

**#4** For **Family & Friends**, who are used by God to bring us both comfort and challenge, to supply our needs, while allowing us the opportunity to supply the needs of others. Earthly family and friends can be a blessing, but true Christian friends are family for eternity.

Thanksgiving is about giving thanks to God.

**Colossians 3:17**, "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."

**1Thessalonians 5:16-18**, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Our God is an awesome God, who reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power and love, our God is an awesome God.

*Pastor Mike*

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