

# Embedding Thankfulness into Your Lifestyle

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We have been for the last 12 weeks, 'Out in the Ocean' so to speak. We have been trying to give the spiritual life journey some tangible hand holds. We have used words like Cynicism, Authentic Hospitality, Spiritual Preparation, Risky Faith Steps, Suffering, Focus, Discipline and Isolation.

All of these words may just be beginning to form in your minds as to their meaning. Now I am saying, 'Let's go back to shore' and begin living these principles and concepts out.

I have become convinced over the years that I have been in ministry that there are 2 gospels that the church proclaims.

1. There is a Gospel that is found in the pages of scripture.

2. And there is a gospel that we make up

Both have been handed down to us, and both are extremely active today and each cuts its own path in a church

One path leads to a church that is really all about us and the other path leads to a church that is all about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. True Godly Thankfulness is a key indicator of the difference between these 2 gospels.

From a distance both seem pretty much the same

But once you get closer to people living one gospel or the other you can begin to be able to tell the difference.

It's like when I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I loved my 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher. She was about 300 years old, but I loved her. So I asked my mother if I could spend the night over at Mrs. Alexander's home. It worked out and for 2 weeks prior to spending the night, my parent's drilled me on table manners. I was nervous, but the day came..Everything went well through the dinner and bedtime. I woke up the next morning and came down for breakfast and I was sitting at the breakfast table when Mr. Alexander came in the room behind me and gave out a loud GOOD MORNING. Combined with my nervousness, when he did that I dirtied my pants. I had no other clothes. So I didn't tell anybody. I thought no one would notice, and for a while no one did. We went to school, everything was fine, about an hour into school however, something began to change. By library hour, I was in trouble, the kids in my class would come into the library row I was in and just turn around. Luckily my Mom showed up, and saved the day, for everyone.

I looked the same from a distance, but up close things had a different air about them.

What the apostle Paul, realized early on was that the church could become a perfect hiding place for people who wanted the social connection that church provided, acknowledge that God was very important but not really exchange their dirty laundry and let the spirit of God cleanse them from within, thus embedding thankfulness forever into their lives.

(A potential short article from Christianity Today- Maybe?)

The Colossian church was a perfect example. He spoke in Chapter One to them about a life lived for Christ and the Kingdom of God and then he said:

*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7*

In saying this he laid out the scriptural gospel for

## The Path Of A Thankful Life

**Follow Him** - means: to live in obedience, to walk

This is the bottom line of Christianity. Those who are Christians have decided to Follow Christ. They don't demand their own way. They don't build cases for their own way.

They actually have given up their rights to call their own shots and have turned the direction for their lives over to God. Now when they do that, I want you to see a verse that exposes the nature of God to them. God said this to Abraham.

*"Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you."*  
*Genesis 13:17*

When I gave my life over to Christ's control when I was 16, it was the beginning of me understanding this part of God. That God actually wanted me to *Take a walk (with him) in every direction and explore the new possessions He was giving me.*

I encourage a person when they first come to Christ, to begin the practice of Giving – in their service, in the finances, in their time. But don't over give. What I mean when I say that to new believers is, don't give beyond your ability to be totally Thankful and enjoy it, if you do, you will be in danger of turning your giving into obligation.

Paul goes on to say

**Let your roots grow down into Him** – This phrase means: to make firm

What Paul is saying here is that no matter how old you are, when you accept Christ, you are a new creation. It is that your soul has been reborn. At first you are a tender shoot just poking through the ground. But as you study, as you read the bible, as you interact with other believers, all of those actions cause your spiritual roots to go deeper. As they do you discover this truth in Romans *"But some of these branches from Abraham's tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God's special olive tree. But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root. Romans 11:17-18*

The truth is that the promise really was for you, and if you study all this and you have not really given your dirty laundry over to God, you will think that you are the root. You will think that you are the source of your own goodness.

What causes your roots to go deeper, is when you take certain challenges. Like we have been talking about over the last 12 weeks, some are serving opportunities, some are teaching opportunities, and some like today are giving opportunities. There are some people today that God is calling to trust God in a deeper way to higher financial commitments. This is one of those moments when you hear God's voice say, "It's you he is talking to" and you respond. Then you get in your car on the way home and say to yourself, "What have I just done?" But it is just at a time like that, that you are putting yourself out on a limb to believe God and not your own understanding and your roots grow.

3<sup>rd</sup> Paul says

**Let your lives be built on Him** – which means: to be established

It is just this kind of stepping out on a limb for God that develops that trust in Him that He will provide for your every need and then you find yourself in a whole new place. After taking risk after risk for God, one day you wake up and you realize that your decisions are now based on God's voice in your life. Giving financially or otherwise is not an option in your life, it is your life. God's voice is your direction. His voice is your dreams. As that happens the book of Habakkuk has an extremely important message for us

*"Then the LORD said to me, "Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others. This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed."*

*Habakkuk 2:2-3* (I will speak about this briefly)

As we close this service I am asking you to take 2 risks for the kingdom of God in this place called Tipp City United Methodist Church. For whatever reason God has called you to this time and this place to be a part of His work.

1. The first risk is I want you to take the pledge card you hold in your hand and I want you to fill it out, in the amount that you hear God calling you to pledge to the work here for 2011. This is utterly between you and God

2. The second risk I want you to take is to take the sticky note on the back of your sermon notes and I want you to write a dream that you have for God's work in this place, in our church. It may be about a ministry, a particular group of people, a person you want to see receive Christ., any number of things.

As the organ/band plays I am going to give you a few minutes to write down your commitments and dreams. When you have finished just wait and perhaps pray as others finish. Then together we will come forward place our pledges in the basket and our dreams on the boards provided.

You may take time now. I will call us back together in a few minutes.