**Giving of Thanks** Matthew 6:25-33

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| Slide | Sermon |
| 1 | **Introduction:**  It is right and great so to do, at all times and all places to give thanks to God!  Today – last Sunday of Christian year – next week  Advent – 4 Sundays of Preparation for Christmas  Today – on this last Sunday of Christian year – what better time to “count our blessings one by one.” |
| 2 | But sometimes it’s hard to count them –  Sometimes life is so pressing, so demanding  Sometimes life is so chaotic, so stressful:  The boss is breathing down your neck, To Do List is pages long. You have reports and deadlines to meet, the kids are needing help with this and that, the church and PTO has this and that meeting, your parents need attention, your child is sick … list goes on and on.  Sometimes it seems your life has a life of its own and you are NOT in control. You try, but you can’t put the brakes on!!!  I want to suggest to you this morning that it is precisely in these chaotic, difficult times, it is time to pray and give thanks to God. |
| 3 | What is the first step to getting control back in life, to defeating all the things that seek to defeat you? The first step to finding your way back to God is by praising and thanking God for the blessings that are there in your life.  In other words – to name and count your blessings.  **Ex.** Dr. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh was famous for his pulpit prayers |
| 4 | . He always found something to be thankful for, even in the bad times.  One stormy bleak morning about this time of year when daylight was only about six hours, one member of the congregation thought to himself, “The preacher will have nothing to thank God for on a wretched morning like this!”  But Dr. Whyte began his prayer – “We thank thee, O Lord, that it is not always like this!”  Dr. Whyte learned an important truth that I want to share with you today.  The first step to getting control back in life, to defeating the things that are trying to defeat you: |
| 5 | The first step to finding your way back to God is: Giving thanks to God for the blessings that are there. How can I say this? Forty years ago I would have said this as our expression of faith. But today at the age of 66 I say this from experience. I have been through the death of a son, Wade, who was almost 23 when he died. I have been through a divorce. I have had medical issues in the last few years like COVID and hernia surgery. Now, I’m dealing with swollen retinas that make me wear magnifiers like this one to see the computer screen and to simply read my Bible and any other books.  And this list doesn’t account for the troubles we all face each day in our world. So, how can I say there’s always something for which to be thankful? Recall the scripture read this morning. It clearly tells us that God loves us more than we can imagine! God takes care of the lilies and birds which are here one day and gone tomorrow. How much more does he care about his creation made in God’s own image? Yes, there are many, many things for which to give thanks if we will pause to look and consider. |
| 6 | **One might say that Dr. Whyte had an ‘Attitude of Gratitude’ – Giving Thanks to God in All Circumstances. You may not thank him for the circumstance but look for a blessing. You may lose a loved one and that is not a blessing, but the fact that God put him/her in your life and the time you had with them – that IS a blessing! Thanks be to God for having that time with them.** |
| 7 | **Ex.** Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson – In The Adventure of the Naval Treaty  Holmes is found studying a rose. (Recall Holmes the English detective/sleuth who solves cases NO other detective can by his keen power of observation and deductive reasoning.)  Watson tells the scene:  “Holmes walked past the couch to an open window and held up the drooping stalk of a moss rose, looking down at the dainty blend of crimson and green. It was a new phase of his character to me, for I had never before seen him show an interest in natural objects,” said Watson.  “There’s nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion,” said Holmes, leaning with his back against the shutters. “Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all necessary for our existence in the first instance. But the rose is extra. It’s smell and color are an embellishment of life, not a condition for it. It is only goodness which gives extras and so I say again that we have much to hope from flowers.”  There is always something for which to give God Thanks – Always.  Because this is a promise from God –  If God cares for birds, flowers, grass – things that are here and then gone  Won’t God care for God’s people – you & me?  Answer YES  Again YES  If God is caring for us – there will be blessing. |
| 8 | Story: Thomas Edison’s laboratory was virtually destroyed by fire in December 1914. Although the damage exceeded $2 million, the buildings were only insured for $238,000 because then it was thought concrete buildings were fireproof. Much of Edison’s life’s work went up in spectacular flames that December night.  At the height of the fire, Edison’s 24-year-old son, Charles, frantically searched for his father among the smoke and debris. He finally found him, calmly watching the scene, his face glowing in the reflection, his white hair blowing in the wind.  “My heart ached for him,” said Charles. “He was 67 – no longer a young man – and everything was going up in flames. When saw me, he shouted, “Charles, where’s your mother? Find her. Bring her here. She will never see anything like this as long as she lives.”  The next morning, Edison looked at the ruins and said, “There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew!  Three weeks after the fire, Edison managed to deliver his first phonograph.  Edison, not known for his religious nature, could see the potential blessing in his tragedy – and begin anew.  Edison saw the blessing and thanked God.  Thanksgiving always makes the situation better and opens the door to God. |
| 9 | **Ex**. Fulton Oursler tells how an elderly black woman taught him about giving thanks. Her name was Anna and was born a slave on the eastern shores of Maryland. She never really had any material blessings to call her own, yet she taught Fulton how to be thankful, as St. Paul puts it, “be thankful in all circumstances.”  Once Fulton sat with Anna at her kitchen table, her old, gnarled hands folded across her starched apron, her dark glistening eyes lifted to the whitewashed ceiling, her husky voice saying, “Much obliged, Lord, for my vittles.”  “What’s a vittle?” asked Oursler.  “Why, son, that’s what we got to eat, that’s what a vittle is.”  “But Anna,” said Oursler, “you’re going to get your vittle whether or not you thank God for them.”  “Yes, Sah,” she replied, “but it sure makes everything taste better when you’re thankful.”  Looking for something to be thankful for and then telling God how thankful you are opens the way for God to be active and at work in your life.  Don’t you know this to be true in your human relationships?  When people treat you with respect, compliment you – say thank you with a phone call, a card or a gift, don’t you want to deepen your friendship with them, work with them again? |
| 10 | On this Sunday before Thanksgiving, I want you to:   1. Look for the blessings of your life –  * No matter how difficult things are:   1. illness   2. loss of loved ones   3. job problems   4. relationship problems * There are blessings to be found.  1. Give God thanks, and if possible thank the persons who have blessed you 2. If you do these two things, you’ll open the door to God’s active presence in your life and your personal relationships will be strengthened. Amen |