

## **Sermon – Thanksgiving in July**

Colossians 2:6-15

July 25, 2021

Today, we're celebrating Thanksgiving in July!  
That's right, Thanksgiving in July. Now, there are a number of powerful, important points in our scripture lesson today, but I'll be highlighting the thanksgiving piece because I think that has the capacity to change my life today and it has the capacity to change your life today. And, that my friends, is why I'm here. It's why I breathe. It's why I preach. I want my life to be changed by thanksgiving because of Jesus Christ and I want your life to be changed by thanksgiving because of Jesus Christ. If there's one nugget to take away today, it's this: every day is Thanksgiving Day; every day is a day to give God thanks and praise. Anne Lamott is a brilliant Christian writer and says there are basically two

kinds of prayers: The first is help me, help me, help me and the second is: thank-you, thank-you, thank-you. So, today we'll look at Thanksgiving as a springboard into this scripture lesson and then apply it.

According to Wikipedia, Americans commonly trace the Thanksgiving holiday to a 1621 celebration at the Plymouth Plantation, where settlers held a three day harvest celebration feast after a successful growing season. Now, the operative words here are **“harvest”** and **“after a successful growing season.”** Harvest, and after a successful growing season. In other words, it was a celebration feast and a giving thanks to God for successful crops, an abundant harvest, a storehouse of food for the winter. It was a celebration and giving thanks to God for the product, not the process. It was a celebration and giving thanks for the goods and not

the daily growth. It was a thanks-giving to God for the bountiful produce, not the soil, the nutrients, the rain, the sunshine, the day by day, faithful growth. Well, this is common and ordinary, right? We often celebrate an accomplishment, an achievement, a goal reached, or a milestone obtained. We celebrate graduations, birthdays, and retirements, but we don't thank God for the daily grind, the daily striving, the daily energy, the daily growth, his daily providence, and his daily grace. But maybe we should! Maybe we should.

When Apple comes out with a new iPhone, the lines start to form two or three days ahead. There's a party atmosphere. Oh, boy, the new iPhone 10 or 11 or 12 is on it's way. The early adopters are camped out and are celebrating a new toy. Now, even if they would give thanks to God for this new technology, I doubt that they are daily thanking God

for the researchers, the engineers, the hours and hours and hours of developing, testing, programming and quality assurance that goes into such a phone. But maybe they should. Maybe we should be thankful daily for those who support our way of life. When we realize the imagination, creativity and work that goes into making our world smaller, more efficient, more accessible, and more connected, our response should be thankfulness to God. Or, now days, for nearly every level of school, we have graduation parties. I say this because a few years ago, I attended a preschool graduation for my granddaughter, Ella. The ceremony was complete with tissue boxes on the seats, for those of us who teared up when they sang the Josh Groban song, You Raise Me Up; with, “I am strong when I am on your shoulders; You raise me up to more than I can be.” We celebrate this type of achievement, this accomplishment, this milestone in the lives of our

loved ones, and we praise them for what they did, and some even give thanks to God for this milestone. But we don't typically give God thanks each day for another homework assignment, for the teacher's diligence, patience, and wisdom in their lectures and class presence; for the strength for the day, for the opportunity to learn, for the relationships with others. But maybe we should. You see, life is a daily, day by day process with God as the actor, initiator, and primary mover, to whom we respond with thankful hearts. We respond with thankful hearts, not only for what's been done and accomplished, but for the living of our every single day. Our text today shows us both the need to be thankful for what Jesus Christ did for us and the need to be thankful for what we can do each day. Thankfulness for what's been done for us and thankfulness for what we're able to do, even today. Thankful for what God did in the past to give us an

eternal future and thankful for the present. Let's look at those two topics, what's been done for us and what is being done for us even today.

**First, thankfulness for what's been done for us.**

We look at verses 13 and 14. It says, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." Do you see it? You and I **were made alive** with Christ. This has been done to us and for us. God made us alive in Christ. God, in Christ forgave our sins, while we were sinful. God didn't depend on us. God didn't rely on our work. God did the work himself. Do you realize how powerful this is? Do you realize how freeing this is? God not only buried our sinful nature, but God

disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them by triumphing over them by the cross. We have nothing at all to fear. So, first of all, for this accomplishment by God for you and for me, for this free gift of life, for this self-giving on behalf of Jesus Christ, our only fitting response is thanksgiving, thankfulness, overflowing thankfulness. This is better than any iPhone and better than any graduation ceremony. When this generosity sinks in, we overflow with thankfulness and we live with the attitude of gratitude for what God has done for us! That's reason enough for daily thankfulness and for having Thanksgiving today, even in July. The Psalmist in Psalm 44 shared this same "God did it FOR US" sentiment in verses 1 to 3, "We have heard it with our ears, O God; our ancestors have told us what YOU did in their days, in days long ago. With YOUR hand you drove out the nations and planted our ancestors; YOU crushed

the peoples and made our ancestors flourish. It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was YOUR right hand, YOUR arm, and the light of YOUR face, for you loved them.” Friends, it’s all about the LORD’S fight for the LORD loves us and defends us! That’s why we live with daily thanksgiving.

Secondly, it says, **“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”** Now, our text says “to live in him,” but the Greek word used here; could be translated as “walk.” So, we see that living in Christ is a daily joyful walk in which we overflow with thankfulness. Each day is another joyful, thankful walk in the garden that God created for us. As we daily walk on God’s green, flourishing, flowering garden called



earth, we give thanks! And each day is a day to look at one another and, as if you're seeing a painter's masterpiece, or a Stradivarius violin, and say, "AHH!" AHH! You're beautiful! You're gorgeous! You're created in God's image, you're a child of God, and you're precious! Each day is a day to be thankful for one another. Let me share a story.

I recently have been converting my VHS tapes into a digital format. I came across a tape with simply my wife's name on it. It was just labelled, Lisa. I didn't remember making this tape, but I started watching it and started tearing up and sobbing. You see I made this tape for her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and I included lots of her childhood photos, photos of her with her dad, photos of her with her mom, and photos of her with her family. It was set to some perfect music, like Chicago's "Color My World," and Simon and Garfunkel's "Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme."

I was looking back at her life as if I were at her funeral. This simple video made me appreciate her so much more. I am thankful for her life and so very thankful that she is still with me. You should have seen the hug I gave her after watching the video. Friends, we are all created in God's image and we're beautiful to behold. So take a moment now to turn to one another and say, "AHH! You're beautiful! You're gorgeous! You're stunning! And I thank God for you!" So, each day is a day to thankfully go "AHH!" at the world around us, AHH at the astounding beauty of one another and give thanks to Almighty God. Each day is another day to thankfully soak in the sunshine of God's love in Jesus Christ. So, friends, just as we live thankfully for what God did FOR us in Christ on the cross, we also live thankfully for each new day, for our daily living, for our daily walk. Now, this daily walk is not necessarily exotic. It's not newsworthy. You won't

make the front page of the Lancaster Newspaper. The reporters and TV cameras won't be pounding down your door. FOX, MSNBC and CNN won't be showing up at worship, at prayer, at Bible study, at your lunch table, or your puzzle table or at your card parties, but our daily, thankful walk is faithful, it's life-giving, it's growth producing, and it's living thankfully in the faith that we received. And, in case you were wondering what to be thankful for each day, we're told in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Give thanks in all things. All things. Do you want me to start listing all things? (I didn't think so.) If the Apostle Paul can give God thanks and praise and sing spiritual hymns while in prison, we can certainly give God thanks in all things, all things, daily. I once had an app on my iPhone called the 5-minute journal. Every morning at 8am it asked me: Do you want to start the day with gratitude? It then

asked me to name 3 things I was thankful for. What a marvelous daily thanksgiving reminder. I recommend you start your day with 3 things you're grateful for.

**Finally, let's briefly examine being rooted in Christ and then our challenge.** Now, for a typical thanksgiving celebration, we have dried, shocks of corn as a symbol of the harvest. Now, from planting a kernel of corn until harvest takes about 55 to 95 days. The first thing that has to happen is germination, which occurs within 5 to 12 days depending on the temperature and the moisture. Germination is triggered by absorption of water through the seed coat. Corn kernels must absorb about 30 % of their weight in water before germination begins. The first sign of a seed germinating is the radicle root. This is the root that first anchors the seed to the ground. Before any

growth can occur, there has to be some anchor, some rootedness, some stability. Now, the moisture and temperature conditions have a lot to do with the timing of this. In the same way, there are many, varied factors that affect our germination in faith. We need the seed planted and we need watering for faith growth to occur. In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul writes, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” So, we may not have any idea which touch, which note, which prayer, which sermon, which conversation, which hug, which smile, which act of kindness, which interaction watered our seed of faith and helped to germinate faith in us. But, once it’s germinated, the radicle root begins to grow, in order to anchor us in Christ. It’s that anchor in the storm. It’s the rootedness in our faith community. When we’re rooted in Christ, the conditions are ripe for being built up and strengthened in our faith which gives us cause to

overflow with thankfulness. So, here's where we can continue to give thanks daily. We give thanks when we receive the nutrients we need to grow. For we all need daily nutrients. We all need the water, the sunshine, the encouragement, the fellowship, the Word of God, the prayers, the worship, the giving of ourselves to grow and mature. We all need this faith watering and we all have the capacity to water one another. So, by serving, giving, encouraging one another in the faith, we live with daily thankfulness, overflowing with thankfulness for the process of growth in life and faith. So, today, ask yourself, who has watered my faith and nourished me? Who am I thankful for in my life? Write them a note. Call them up and tell them. And, then ask yourself, who could I water, nourish, bless, and encourage? Who could I water, nourish, bless, and encourage? Friends, when we are thanking God for His love, His providence, His grace and His care in our lives, we

thrive and grow. And as we serve Jesus Christ beside one another, nourishing and being nourished, every single day is Thanksgiving Day! Let us pray. Amen.