

Hearts Thankful

Introduction

We are in a series focusing on prayer. Jesus told His disciples...WHEN you pray. Not if, not if you choose to. Jesus expected His followers to be praying. So we decided to look at those who walked the earth with Jesus. Those who were eyewitnesses to the way He prayed. In doing so, we have learned that they often prayed differently than we do. We have seen how they prayed:

- Extended Hands
- Eyes Open
- Stomach's Empty
- Voices Lifted

And today we close this series by noting another trait. They prayed with Hearts that were thankful. Their thankfulness grew out of their relationship with Christ. Today we are going to look not at the first century prayers, but those of King David 1000 years earlier.

Thanksgiving weekend years ago...When I was 5 years old....Ben Franklin store looking for Christmas toys...There it was....Stuffed Fake Tiger **PHOTO 1** head on a plastic piece of fake wood. It was the only thing that I wanted. I had to have it....nothing else mattered or compared. My parents tried to talk me out of it. But you can't play with it...it just sits on your wall and after 15 minutes you would be bored with it. It is going to freak you out in the dark...

Wouldn't you rather have lincoln logs? No a tiger...etch a sketch? No a tiger...Hot wheels?...No a tiger...No the only thing in the world that mattered to me was that faked stuffed tiger head...I was only 5...I didn't understand that my parents knew that there were many things better than a stuffed tiger head, but I couldn't imagine anything better

My parents were probably thinking...Do you appreciate all the things you have already been given? We have already given you things much better than a stuffed tiger head. They were probably thinking...Frank do you realize what we could give you? They weren't rich...but they could do better than a stuffed tiger plaque....But I just didn't understand...I was 5 years old.

From my perspective...my childish perspective.....Nothing could be better....nothing will make me happier than a stuffed tiger plaque.

On Friday of this week.....Black Friday....millions of people will flock to the stores or online...and I will be wondering....What is their stuffed tiger head?

You have to admit...Thanksgiving is a bizarre holiday. It seems to have little to do with giving thanks...to God at least. We watch parades.....watch football....eat massive amounts of food..Nap...more food...more football.....Pour over Black Friday ads....make that Thursday night ads... Plan our attack on stores...join thousands in line...maybe camp out...Spend money we may

not have on what we likely don't need. We limit our thanks to a few minutes of prayer right before we pig out.

We deceive ourselves into believing we are thankful because we give God a few moments...before a meal...in November. Yet God commands us to be thankful...in every moment....of every day...we are alive. Paul reminded those at Thessalonica

1 Thessalonians 5:16–19 (ESV) 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit.

3 Things we are commanded to do. "Rejoice Always....Pray without ceasing....Give thanks in all circumstances"...That is the will of God...What is the will of Christ in our lives...that's it.

I think we are all a lot like me when I was 5,,,That is a nice way of saying we are all acting childish. We go to the God of the Universe who just wants a relationship with us...but who has all...owns all...can give us more than we can imagine or comprehend....And we say..God I want a Stuffed Tiger Head. Then I will decide if I want a relationship with you...Give me what I want....In that moment...we miss the real gift He offersHimself. Since all we focus on is what we don't have...We miss the relationship and so we don't live lives full of thanks

So How do we live Thankful lives?

Living a life of thanks is not about how but rather why. When you understand why...you will know how.

Living a life of thanks...is a byproduct of your relationship with Christ. In fact it is the measurement of your walk with Christ. The closer you are to Christ, the more gratitude overflows in your life.

Christians are called to live in a state of constant thankfulness....To live in a condition where our hearts are glad in all circumstances. All circumstances? Even the bad ones? God said...all...circumstances. I can't do that God....I don't know how to do that...That's right. A heart of thankfulness...that penetrates all circumstances...is not from man...It must come from God....It must come from the Holy Spirit as He is manifested in us. It comes from the Spirit letting us see the bigger picture....letting us see beyond ourselves.

Did you notice **verse 19?** Do not quench the Spirit. A lack of thankfulness comes from hindering the Spirit in our lives. When we are connected with God...with the Spirit...thankfulness fills our hearts.

This is a verse with a promise at the end.....Promise verses....Bible Study tip....when you see a promise verse....you can safely read it backwards. Let me show you. If you want to quench the Spirit....then don't rejoice always....don't pray without ceasing and don't be thankful in all circumstances.

Today as we conclude our series..."When You Pray" I am going to exit the book of Acts and look at the way King David prayed.

David knew what it meant to live a life of thanks. He was so close to God....thankfulness naturally flowed from his heart. Just read his Psalms....He had a deep relationship with God...Thankfulness naturally flowed from that bond...and from his prayers, we have a great deal to learn

1 Chronicles 29- Background

King David coming to the end of his rule. He has had a great run...His son Solomon is ready to assume rule....The people are in a good place with God....Solomon is going to build the temple that David wanted to build....David has given a great deal to God ...Not only a life of service and sacrifice...But David has given a great deal of his possessions ...He has sacrificed personally to see the temple built and his God honored

Then he sees the people respond in the same way. They poured out gold, silver, iron, precious stones....But more importantly they did so with the right heart.

1 Chronicles 29:9 (ESV) 9 Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

David at the end of his rule is looking back over his life and doing what we I hope we do every Thanksgiving. Taking inventory of what God has done. Pausing to see what can be blurred by busyness... Acknowledging God instead of ourselves....Thanking Him for everything...David brings all the people together....and prays an amazing prayer.

1 Chronicles 29:10–13 (ESV) 10 Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

This part of the prayer can be summed up in two words..."Sovereign Lord." The first thing that we are to acknowledge in our prayers is that God is Sovereign....Not because He needs to hear it...but we need to say it. Knowing God is Sovereign is the key to any prayer. Why should we remind ourselves of who God really is? Why is it important to know that He is Sovereign Lord? Because that is how Jesus taught them to pray.

Matthew 6:9–10 (ESV) 9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God is Sovereign....if you want to amp up your prayer life...start there.

In this prayer of David....as he begins....notice carefully what he says....

1 Chronicles 29:12–13 (ESV) 12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

All riches and honor come from you...Now we thank you....You are not just God..you are our God...we have a relationship with you...We praise your glorious name

Note here that David lists God's...Greatness. Power. Glory. Victory and Majesty. Every thing in Heaven and Earth is yours. You God rule and are exalted over it all.

All riches and honor come from you 1. Now we thank you.... 2. You are not just God..you are our God...we have a relationship with you 3. We praise your glorious name

1 Chronicles 29:14–16 (ESV) 14 "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15 For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. 16 O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

God you are so Big....who are we that we should be able to give willingly? He moves from Big God to little us....Who are we that we can give back to you? What could we possibly have to offer you?You are God..and we are nothing in comparison...We can't give anything that you have not already given us...Why would you...God...provide for us so richly?

We are just passing through life...our days are a shadow...we are not here forever. God the only way we can give so lavishly back to you...Is because we have already had these riches poured out on us. It is all yours...it all came from your hand...it is all your own.

When my daughter was about 10 she told me that it had dawned on her that every gift I have received from her and her brothers for Christmas or my birthday....I had paid for. They could only give me a gift if I first gave them the money to do so. God owns it all....we can only give Him what we have received from Him.

1 Chronicles 29:17–18 (ESV) 17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. 18 O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you.

God you test the heart...Giving is a measure of our love for you...We always give to those we love. Those we have a relationship with. David says..I have given freely...I know where my heart is....But look at the people God. I am so proud of them...I have seen your people...who are here. Not only offering freely, but doing it with JOY....God you see them right?

God look at how much they love you... God please... Don't let this moment end...it is everything I want...everything I hope to be...Keep moving their hearts to you God....keep these purposes in their hearts and direct their hearts to you

1 Chronicles 29:19 (ESV) 19 Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision."

God please...my son...Solomon....Please God grant my son a heart that always chases you. Your commandments....Your testimonies....Your statutes-Not that he just knows them...but he keeps them

God he needs a pure heart to build the palace. David prayed that day.....For the generations to come..For his Son Solomon...For God's Temple....For the people of Israel....Did you notice what he didn't pray for?

He never prays a single word for Himself. A grateful heart does that....grateful hearts pray selfless prayers.

David has learned....**THANKS-LIVING**

His life has not been perfect....He was an adulterer...a murderer...and a liar....Yet God said he was a man after God's own heart. What did he learn from those circumstances that moved him to a heart of gratitude? David used the uncomfortable times in his life, to draw close to God...to develop a relationship with Him... David lived what James would later teach the believers.

James 1:2-4 (ESV) 2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

"Let perseverance finish its work." In other words, God tells us through James.... If you want to be mature and complete....Get comfortable being uncomfortable...We have highlighted this many times. Our goal is not to be comfortable here on earth. It is not our home. We have been given strict instructions to not be conformed to this world....to not get comfortable here.

Our world has made an idol out of comfort. Above all else we just want to be comfortable. Too often, we have made our comfort more important than God.

When circumstances in our lives make us uncomfortable we cry out to God. God I am uncomfortable...don't you see it? God take this illness away...God take this hurt away....God fix this...I don't like it....

Interesting that our prayers often ask God....to put us in a place where we no longer need Him. Rather than persevering through trials...and drawing closer to God....we ask Him to fix them...Because we are more interested in being comfortable....than being closer to Jesus

So often we pray for God to take away the very thing that is keeping us close to Him.....We choose comfortable and incomplete....Over being stretched and matured. Our comfort is not the goal of those who follow Christ, becoming Christ-like is our goal. And Christ was always at peace but rarely comfortable.

So..what can we learn from David?

1. We focus on religion but David focused on relationship

The center of our obedience must be a greater desire to know God....The reason you do things..read your bible..pray...serve...must be to know and love God more, not to check it off your to do list

We must want to know Jesus more than we want to know what Jesus can do for us.

2. We focus on the gift and but David focused on the giver

We want a stuffed tiger head. It is not what we need....it is not even what God planned for us. In fact..God want's to give you something amazing...that you couldn't even imagine. So we miss out on more of God.

We focus more on our desires...than God's desires for us. Worse....we start grading God on what He does for us.

We decide how God is doing as our Genie....That is not a relationship...it is superstition. We become consumers looking for the best deals...Rather than contributors looking for God's heart. Our prayers sound like this....

God please remove this discomfort in my life. Please God make me comfortable...so I can get back to being God. Because God...I am not interested in the giver...just the gift. Give me what I want....and I will worship you....until I want something else.

If you are obsessed with what God can do for you...you probably have no idea of what He has already done for you.

If you want more of Jesus' stuff instead of more of Jesus....Then there is a good chance you don't understand who Jesus is.

3. We don't understand the real gift, but David understood that God's gift to us is Himself.

The great prize is more of Jesus. Jesus died for us...He gave up everything for us. But we don't always appreciate what we have already received. He DIED for US! and we just want to know if we can get the stuffed tiger head.

Do you realize what God has already given you? You were a Dead Man Walking...destined for eternity in Hell...He sent His Son to save you...you couldn't save yourself....Then while your were worshipping yourself...God pursued you and opened your eyes to see who Jesus really is....then He gave you the faith to believe....You and I did nothing but agree with what God made obvious....God says..I did it because I am all about having a relationship with you.....When you surrendered to me I put my Spirit in you....have you forgotten?Forgotten what I have done?Forgotten me? Has your salvation become stale? comfortable?

David knew the key to Thanks-living. The key to living a life full of thanksgiving....is to realize what you have already received. When we embrace what God has done....when we want more of Jesus than anything else.

Thanks-livers pray like this.

Sovereign God.... God don't allow me to ever get comfortable. Keep me constantly stretched. If you have to remove some of the blessings you have given me....So I can have more of you Jesus....so be it. Because the answer God is Yes....I do want more of you...more of who you are...No matter what happens to me.And not just more of your stuff...God if you never give me another thing...I will thank you God for what I have already received every day that you allow me to live.....And not just a moment before a meal on a November afternoon

I have learned a lot since I was 5...When we are 5....Fake Stuffed Tiger heads rule. Good thing we outgrow our childish attitudes.

God asks...What do you want?

Money God, I want more money. A Husband God. I want a Husband. Children God. I want Children..Great Job God. I want a Great Job. Good health God. I want good health. Comfort God. I want comfort. God are you listening to me?????

Yes....listening very carefully...to your true heart...Your ungrateful heart....The one that fakes it on Thanksgiving and almost every other day of the year.

Kylie knew that the only thing that she could give me is from what I had already given to her. But what she was too young to know is that all I really wanted was the love from her heart. The gift never mattered. I wanted her to want more of me. The joy came from knowing she spent time thinking about me.

My parents were right...That Stuffed Tiger head entertained me for about 15 minutes. It scared me at night and I could sleep in the same room. The things we want come and go...they don't last. Health...jobs...marriages...earthly life...don't last.

Everything is fleeting except Him...

We live a life of thanks when we live our lives constantly aware of our need for Jesus. In comparison every other pursuit is a waste of time

In the end...as you look back over your life...like David did....I pray that your heart is full of gratitude....because you realize....that all you get that lasts....Is more of Jesus....He has always been the prize.

Living a life of thanks is about understanding that all you ever needed was more of Jesus. He is everything.

If that is not enough for you....You have yet to get to know Jesus. Maybe every time He tried to draw close to you, you demanded He take away the very thing that was moving you toward Him...You chose comfort...and missed Jesus.

You settled for a fake...stuffed....tiger head...on plastic wood....When Jesus....the real gift...stood by saying....I have so much more to offer to you...but first I have to know something...DO YOU REALLY WANT ME ABOVE EVERYING ELSE? Those in the First Century had that question nailed down without any hesitation or doubt....that is why their prayers were different.

Do you want to pray like those in the First Century? Do you want to pray expecting that God is going to do something incredible and miraculous? Do you want to pray with an understanding of God's plan? Do you want to pray and know that you are connecting with the God who created everything? Do you want to experience and intimacy with Christ that in every way completes you? Do you want to wake up in the morning excited to get to talk to God? To know that no matter what you experience in life, it will be an experience with the Almighty? Do you want to live your life praying without ceasing?

You and I can pray with our hands extended, our eyes open, our stomach's empty, our voices lifted....and yes with our hearts thankful. When we truly decide that the most important thing in our life is knowing Jesus.....that He is the Gift...that He is everything and yes....each day we do want more of Him.....no matter what that means. Any thing....any time....any where.....any price.....Just Give me Jesus....then we...like the first century disciples pray out of the experience of that relationship.....and our relationship with Jesus changes everything. Let's Pray.