

TURN UP THE GRATITUDE

Oct 21: My Heart Hears the Sound: Romans 1:16-23.

Intro: A lack of gratitude will turn the human heart into a dark place. The scandal of refusing to acknowledge God is that it leaves the human heart ungrateful for existence itself. Giving thanks reorders the world and turns the lights on.

The world may be going to hell in a hand basket, but the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony refused to accept this as their ultimate reality.

The first governor elected under the Mayflower Compact died along with half the population of the colony in that first cruel winter. William Bradford was elected to succeed him, and he declared that the struggling community would celebrate the traditional English Harvest Festival in the fall of 1621, the first “Thanksgiving” on these shores.

President Lincoln endured the merciless and crude criticism of himself and his wife throughout his presidency. I suspect that no president before or since suffered such no-holds-barred vilification by the national press of his person and policies.

This is the president who, in the midst of the bloodiest war in our history, when even the survival of these United States was in question, declared Thanksgiving an official national holiday. Lincoln was big enough in vision and character to look beyond the troubles to the many good things that crowd into every life.

We who have been blessed with so much should be embarrassed at our bitterness of soul, resentful spirits, and ungrateful hearts. No generation has enjoyed better health or economic prosperity. Yet we grumble and complain perpetually as if we are the objects of unusual plagues and debilitations.

What in the world is wrong with us? Are we to complete our days on this planet surrounded by bounty and yet stuck in the pit of despair?

Notwithstanding the many dismal prophecies in our personal and political rhetoric, we have much for which to be grateful. We all need to remember this, and we ought to celebrate it together.

I. Among the WORST DESCRIPTORS: *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness (v18)*

A. Godless

B. Wicked—

1.

2. “suppress the truth”—this is the suppression of the truth in two ways:

a. In my own heart

b. In my teaching and relationships

C. Without excuse

1. They rebel against God’s rule of this world. Why do they need an excuse? Because there a Judge before whom they will stand one day to give a report of the deeds done in the flesh. They defy the MORAL ORDER of God’s rule.

2. They REBEL against their own mind and heart as they deny God his glory, to their own shame.

3. INGRATITUDE is the VIOLATION OF GOD’S LAW:

a. The First Commandment: no other gods.

b. The Second Commandment: no images.

c. The Third Commandment: no profanity.

d. The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath. This is built upon the knowledge of God. It acknowledges the need for rest as humans because God rested.

e. The FIFTH Commandment: Honor your father and mother. My parents are now reduced to receptacles of seed and embryo. They are no more significant than I am in my world without gratitude.

f. The Sixth Commandment: no murder. I kill with impunity because life is no longer precious.

g. The Seventh Commandment: no adultery. My sex life is only an animal instinct. I sink to my lowest self.

h. The Eighth Commandment: no stealing. I take what does not belong to me because I am not grateful for what I have and I am not grateful for the relationships of my life.

i. The Ninth Commandment: no lying. I lie with impunity. I no longer respect any truth, having denied the greatest truth of my own existence.

j. The Tenth Commandment: no coveting. I am not grateful for my life and existence. Life itself has become a burden to me. I want all that others have and am not grateful for what I have.

D. Neither were *Eucharisteo*

1. Did not give God glory introduces the lack of thanks.
2. “Nor gave thanks to him” is *eucharisteo* which has *charis* imbedded in it as a root.

II. Are the FUTILE IMAGINATION and FOOLISH HEART: *Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened (v21)*

A. “Vain (futile) in their imaginations”

1. This is emptiness, vanity. Ingratitude brings your mind to the great abyss of emptiness. It empties the world and it empties your own mind.

2. This is not just thinking, processing. The word is for argumentation, inner discussion, imagination. This is not about logical thinking. It is about picturing yourself as the sum of all things, imagining yourself alone in the universe.

***I think this may be the explanation for the almost universal depiction of the human future in the darkest of terms. Science fiction is no longer like *The Jetsons*. And there is scarcely any positive element left in our art and imagination about it. Instead, we think of the future in terms of the worst kind of destruction and chaos. As an aside, I recommend to all Christian artists, writers, and thinkers that they take hold of GRATITUDE as the way to see the future of this planet and of the universe. Seen with thanksgiving, the future looks a whole lot better than our terrible scenarios suggest. And a positive view of the future will distinguish you from the atheist and secularist depictions that are so dismal and depressing.

B. “Foolish hearts” is *asunetos*, the negative alpha with the word for “understanding”—“no understanding.”

***This building is constructed on top of more than 800 pilings that go 121 feet into the ground. On top of these pilings are PILE CAPS as large as small houses. That is the understanding of this building, and it is the reason it does not move when thousands of tons of steel rumble by during worship.

1. The height of human folly—the opposite of intelligence and understanding—is to remove the pilings that hold up the meaning of human life and, indeed, of this universe.

2. Rehearse the word “meaningless.” This is the end of the folly that finds us alone in this universe with no Maker to praise and no Savior to embrace. We are left with NO EXPLANATION for our existence and NO FORGIVENESS for our sins—no remedy for our guilt and shame.

C. NIGHT FALLS upon my soul as ingratitude creeps over me. I am left without light for my own steps or for the steps of others. I can neither navigate my way in the world nor show others how to do so. I am in the darkness because my own heart has become darkened.

III. Only CURED BY GRATITUDE: *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ (Romans 1:8).* We can go back through this passage and see what we need to do.

A. We need to acknowledge God’s invisible qualities: his eternal power and divine nature. These we can see from all that he has made. They are understood by anyone who wants to look at the existence and design of the world.

B. We need to GLORIFY HIM AS GOD. Having acknowledged that God created all things, we exalt him in our thinking and give him the glory that is due his name.

C. We need to GIVE THANKS to him. Gratitude is a SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE.

1. It makes us wise instead of foolish.
2. It brings light to our heart instead of darkness.

D. We need to repent of our ingratitude.

***The atheist who read Psalm 14:1-3: *The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

1. It is not only atheists and secularists who need to discover the virtue of a grateful heart. Everyone in this room needs to do so.

Conclusion: I want you to consider what you can give thanks for on this day of worship. Tell God thank you.

Start living in a conversation with God about all the good things in your life. Everyday keep saying thank you to God for all of his good gifts. “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever” (Psalm 106:1).

Tell your spouse and your children thank you. Start living in the Grateful Mode. It will lighten up your heart.