

ABOUNDING IN THANKSGIVING
Colossians 2:6-15

(Read Colossians 2:6-15)

Intro: One of my favorite books when I was a young teenager was the 300 year old novel, ROBINSON CRUSOE. The book is fiction, and it was in the writing style and language of 1719 when it was published, but it was so riveting and full of adventure that I never really noticed. The book was probably based on the real life account of the experience a Scottish sailor named, Alexander Selkirk. I loved the book so much that I read it several times in my early teens, and now some 50 years later, I decided that I want to read it again, and I reserved it on my library app.

What got me thinking about that adventure novel was my search for a story about abundant Thanksgiving I could use to begin this message. I was pondering the question that I want us to consider this morning which is: What does it mean to be abounding in thanksgiving?, which is how Paul puts it in our text this morning.

This is what Robinson Crusoe did:

When he was wrecked on his lonely island, he drew two columns and listed the good and bad of his situation. He was cast away on a desolate island, but he was still alive. He was separated from humanity, but he was not starving. He had no clothes, but was in a warm climate and didn't need them. He had no means of defense, but saw no wild beasts that threatened him. He had no one to talk to, but the destroyed ship was near the shore and he could get out of it all the things necessary for his basic needs. He concluded, therefore, that no condition in the world was so miserable that one could not find something to be grateful for.

I think that's a good example of abounding in thanksgiving.

Then there is another story of an old English pastor who was famous for his pulpit prayers. He always found something to thank God for, even in bad times. One stormy Sunday morning, when everything was going extremely bad in the community and in the lives of many people in the congregation, himself included, he stepped to the pulpit to pray. A member of the congregation thought to himself, "The preacher will have nothing to thank God for on a wretched morning like this." The pastor began his prayer, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."

That is abounding in thanksgiving.

At Thanksgiving we are so often thankful for things like family and our nice home and our freedoms here in America and our abundance and our possessions and lots more. And these are all good things to be thankful for and so we do have very much to be thankful for.

But how about being thankful for our faith? Are we thankful for our relationship that we have with Jesus Christ and the grace that made it possible? Paul is pointing this out in our text, and I want to spend some time looking at it here in the time we have left.

Abounding in thanksgiving comes from . . .

An awareness of how good God is

- Now this sounds like a no-brainer, but too often we forget. A familiar Thanksgiving passage is the story of the ten lepers, in Luke 17:11-19, who come to Jesus asking for him to heal them, and heals all of them all. All ten of them! And they promptly go away very happy to finally be healed and finally be able to be united with their families. But one, just one, turned around and came back and actually thanked Jesus. It's interesting that once again that the one healed leper was a Samaritan, the enemy of the Jews, the kind of person that the Jews didn't think was able to do anything good. He was the one who came back to do the right thing.
- So we do have to remember how incredibly generous God has been with us. The passage that Karen read for us from 1 Chronicles 29 is a picture of this. I'm not going to spend much time on this, but I do want to point out that King David's preparation for his son's construction of the Temple of the Lord was a perfect example to his son and the people of Israel of what Thanksgiving looks like.
- Everything that David did was a product of the fruit of his thankfulness. The text says that David loved the house of the Lord. You give to what you love. Kathy and I get in a lot of trouble for how much we spend on our grandchildren. As a matter of fact, our daughters accuse us of outright neglect for the many, many things that we NEVER bought for them as they were growing up. What they don't know is that we were saving up our money to buy our grandkids everything they wanted. My point is you give to what you love. And yes, we love our daughters and their husbands that much too, but just are trying not to spoil them.
- Gratitude is the same way. Your gratitude is aimed at what you love. King David loved God, and according to the text, he loved the house of the Lord, so he gave incredible amounts of gold and silver and all kinds of things needed for the building of the temple – all because of his great love and his immense thankfulness to God.
- David actually gave enough that the people wouldn't have had to give anything. But instead he gave the people an opportunity to show their gratitude too. Our text points out that they were also incredibly generous as evidenced by the huge list in the text, which goes on to say, *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.* 1 Chronicles 29:9. The ending of that passage is David's wonderful prayer of Thanksgiving to the Lord where he calls him “father”, which is the first time in the Bible that God is referred to as father. It tells us that he exalts the Lord and thanks him, all in front of his people. And he ends with *And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.* 1 Chronicles 29:13.
- Gratitude comes from truly realizing everything God has done for us. And as we continue into our text from Colossians we see how the abundance of thanksgiving comes from. . .

Faith

- And you're probably thinking "Duh! Of course it does!" But let's look a bit at what Paul is talking about here in Colossians 2, as he proclaims that an abundance of Thanksgiving comes knowing what the truth is.
- Paul was dealing with false doctrine. He was actually dealing with the beginnings of Gnosticism, which we've talked about quite a bit over the years. It's a false religion that sometimes taught that Jesus was just an apparition rather than a real human being, and this is why Paul points out that in Christ . . . *the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*. Colossians 2:9 He was also dealing with the false teaching that there is a disconnect between the body and soul. This meant that, if you had reached this elevated state of knowledge, you could conveniently do whatever you wanted with your body as long as your mind was on Christ. That's a very simplistic explanation because you've already heard it, and because this message isn't about that. But I am pointing out that we need to be grateful that we haven't fallen into false doctrine.
- At the same time we also need to be careful that we don't fall into false doctrine. We need to make sure that we don't go for things that are not biblical. We need to examine what we do, and what we believe, and what stuff we wade into from what we hear in the media. The truth is, we NEED to be looking at the Bible to know what we believe.
- Yes, we need to be thankful for the truth. And abundance of Thanksgiving also comes from. . .

The goodness of grace

- What is grace? As real quick and simple definition that you are probably familiar with is UNMERITED FAVOR. That is getting what we didn't deserve, and getting what we didn't work for, and getting what we didn't know we need.
- As we look at our text from verse 11 to, really, the end of the passage, which is verse 15, we see how much God has done for us and how much we ourselves have not done. You see we can't do anything. God has done everything through Jesus and his sacrifice. What we need to do is actually receive it.
- Look at what Christ has done. Whereas in the Old Testament, circumcision, the mark on a body by another human being showing that we belong to God has been replaced by what Paul calls a circumcision of the heart in other letters, but here he describes it as a *a circumcision made without hands*. Colossians 2:11b
- And notice how we were buried and raised in baptism. Actually raised by the father and resurrected just like Jesus from the grave. God made us alive. We didn't do it – we couldn't do it. God made us alive. And then it tells us we were made alive, that is, recovered, from our trespasses. What is it when you trespass? It's when you step over the boundary into a place that you're not supposed to be. God brings us back into right relationship with himself. He actually uses the words that he has canceled all the debts that we have accrued by our sin. They've been expunged. They've been wiped out. They've been erased. All those

descriptors describe his total cleansing of our account books. This is the picture that the Colossians got of what God has done for us. It's the beauty of grace.

- That's a good reason to abound in Thanksgiving. And then finally, We can be abounding in Thanksgiving by the fact that . . .

Christ Jesus is all we need

- A little bit ago I referred to verse 9 where it says, referring to Christ, that in him, everything of who and what God is, dwells bodily. That's what the fullness of deity means. That means that Jesus Christ is God. He's God, the Son. He's the one who was given as a substitute when we read John 3:16, that *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son*. And this God the son is all we need.
- If he wasn't God then we couldn't be complete and our text plainly shows that in Christ we are completed he has finished the work of salvation. The sin that damned us is wiped away when we receive his free grace.
- Notice that Paul talks about us putting off the flesh, that is the body, which is the old you person and then he makes you into a new person. The original language gives a word picture of the casting off the old person like an old set of stinky clothes. The other day my brothers and nephews and I were having text conversation about the danger of having your wife wash your hunting clothes. You don't want your hunting clothes to be smelling like flowery laundry detergent or fabric softener. And also regular detergent makes fabric almost fluorescent for deer who only see black and white. So you need to have special detergent, which my wife, I'm very grateful and proud to say, knows to use. Well, it turns out, that my brother never washes his hunting clothes. He's never washed his hunting coat in 35 years, and he's never washed his coveralls in almost as much time. He said that his wife, who is a penny pincher extraordinaire, wanted to fix the broken zipper in his old hunting coveralls, but she inadvertently took out the wrong zipper and essentially ruined them which gave him the perfect excuse to drive to Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World which is conveniently only 10 minutes away so he could buy a new camouflage pair. He then said that he sat in the tree waiting for a deer to come along, smelling like, in his words, "the clothing department of a Boscov's department store". All the while he was telling this in the text, I was wondering what clothes smell like that have never been washed in 40 years?! Not good! I'm sure!
- Our old person, before we said "Yes!" to Jesus, was a smelly dirty set of stinky clothes. When Jesus saved us, he clothed us in pleasant smelling garments and they are garments of praise (Isaiah 61:3). And by that we have triumph over everything evil, and it's all in Christ Jesus.
- Jesus is all we need!

Conclusion: So, that's what it is to be abounding in thanksgiving. We abound in thanksgiving when we remember everything good he has done for us and provided for us. We are abounding in thanksgiving when we know that we have the truth, and we know the truth sets us free. We are abounding in thanksgiving when

we acknowledge the goodness and wonder of the grace of God. And we are abounding in thanksgiving when we realize that Jesus Christ is all we need. That's a good way to have an attitude of gratitude. It's why we can sing with great conviction,

Thank you Lord, for saving my soul

Thank you Lord, for making me whole;

Thank you Lord, for giving to me

Thy great salvation so rich and free.

This week and all year through. Let's be abounding in Thanksgiving. Amen.