

1. I want to build on the message I shared last week concerning negativity.
2. We said that being positive is a choice.
3. We looked at the example of David in Psalm 98. Psalm 98 is a Psalm of thanksgiving and praise.
4. But that thanks and praise was not expressed because everything in David's life had been easy or a piece of cake.
5. David's life had been difficult. He had been lied about and mistreated and hunted like an animal.
6. So, knowing some of David's history I think it is safe to conclude that David made a choice to not focus on the negative but instead focus on the positive in his life.
7. I believe as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ we are called to do the same thing.
8. We are not called to ignore the negativity. That's called living in denial.
9. Instead we are called to choose to focus our heart, mind, and spirit on the most absolutely positive being there is, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. And it is right there, that I have been confronted by God. It is right there that my attitude is forced to surrender to God. It is right there that my negativity must look God square in the eye.
11. Because if Jesus is who he says he is. If he is the creator and sustainer of this world.
12. And if I am who I say I am. His child and the apple of his eye.
13. Then how can my life be controlled and dictated by negativity.
14. It can't be. **My attitude and your attitude must conform to who He is and not the other way around.**
15. And so, one of the ways we express or choose positivity over negativity is through thanksgiving.
16. And the bible gives us some direction as it relates to giving thanks.
17. The passage of scripture we are studying today is found in **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

18. Allow me to highlight three words here in this passage. In verse 16 it is the word always. In verse 17 it is the word continually. And in verse 18 it is the word all.
19. Always, continually, and all. What all three of these words indicate is an ongoing state of being.
20. Choosing the positive by thanking and praising God is not something that happens sometimes but always. Not sporadically but continually.
21. Not in a few, or in some, or in most, but in all circumstances.
22. I point out this ongoing state of being because this idea of an ongoing state of mind is in some ways different than what our modern-day idea of thanksgiving, or what Thanksgiving Day is all about.
23. Thanksgiving Day can be just a day where we focus on giving thanks.
24. It's not bad or wrong to give thanks on Thanksgiving Day. However, I think this concept of a day of thanks is somewhat incomplete.
25. If we are not careful, we can relegate thanksgiving to an action.
26. We can merely think of the act of giving thanks as just an action. Just something we do.
27. But I believe the intent of God. Actually, the blessing that God wants to give us is in understanding that **thanksgiving is not an action, thanksgiving is a state of being.**
28. If we take that a step farther, thanksgiving is not just an action it is an attitude.
29. And not just an every now and then attitude, but a continual attitude. Thanksgiving is something we must cultivate on an ongoing basis.
30. I have shared this before, but please allow me to share it again. God did not create us to be human doings, he created us to be human beings.
31. The way I interpret that is, the secret to life in Jesus Christ is not in doing, it is in being.

32. In the case of thanksgiving, it is not in doing thanks, or necessarily giving thanks, but rather in being thankful.
33. Not that giving thanks isn't important because it is. In order for thanks to be fully appreciated it has to be given. It has to be expressed.
34. But the Lord's desire is to cultivate in us a mindset. An attitude. A way of being that permeates every area of our lives.
35. As we focus today on what it means to be thankful, I want to go backwards in time, and I want to repeat a theme I share about 2 years ago.
36. It is a message that I need to revisit from time to time so that I know my attitude is in alignment with what God has for my life.
37. Maybe this reminder will be good for you as well.

TEXT: **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** Rejoice always, **17** pray continually, **18** give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

INTRO:

1. The message that I know I need to be reminded of is that God has called us to be thankful IN all things, not FOR all things.
2. In, and not for.
3. In verse 18 of 1 Thessalonians the Apostle Paul makes a statement. In reality he gives a command.
4. Meaning, it's not an option, it is something that we must make a mental note of and commit to memory so we can live by it.
5. It's important. And the command is this. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (NIV)
6. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (NLT)
7. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (KJV)
8. All three of these translations and version say the same thing, they just say it a little bit differently.
9. There is however one word that is found in all three passages. It is the word in.

10. The NIV says in all circumstances.
11. The NLT says in all circumstances.
12. And the KJV says in everything.
13. Now, I point out the word in because even though we read the word in, we need to know that sometimes our mind plays tricks on us.
14. Sometimes what is written is just as plain as day. It is clear. And we read it, but as we read it, it processes in our minds as something completely different.
15. I was at my doctor's office in Jonesboro a few weeks ago, and as I was checking out I was reminded of the first time I saw the little sign the lady has there on her desk.
16. Several years ago, I was standing, waiting for this very nice lady to end a phone call.
17. As I stood there I noticed a small vase and it had a note stuck to it.
18. It was a one-word note. The note was as plain as day.
19. I looked at it. It shocked me, so I looked at it again. I looked at it a third time and each and every time I looked at it, it registered in my mind as a very bad word.
20. I thought to myself. Why in the world would anybody put that nasty word on a note for everyone to see? In a doctor's office of all places.
21. At first I got embarrassed. Then I started to get a little upset. I couldn't fathom why this very kind; sweet lady would have a vase on her desk with a nasty word taped to it.
22. I was about to say something to her when all the sudden, after about the 6th time of looking at it, it registered.
23. That's not a bad word at all. It's a very innocent word. But even though the reality was the message was clear, my eyes saw that message; twisted that message, and sent a completely different signal to my mind.
24. I say all that for this reason. It is entirely possible for us to do the same thing when we read the word of God.

25. In fact, I am going to go so far as to say that the enemy loves to sidetrack us and confuse us and to twist meanings so that we don't get it.
26. This passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is a perfect example of a meaning that can be twisted in our thinking, even though it really is just as plain as day.
27. What it says is, IN everything give thanks. IN everything.
28. But what our minds can understand it to say is for everything, give thanks. Give God thanks for everything.
29. But that is not the message at all. The message is, in everything.
30. And getting that one little word right or wrong can change the entire meaning and purpose of what God is trying to accomplish in our lives.
31. Getting that one word wrong can sabotage God's work of cultivating an attitude of thanksgiving in our lives.
32. Here is the reason why. **Thanking God for everything borders on the edge of insane.**
33. I don't mean to be insensitive. I am in no way making fun of mental illness. In fact, I am fairly certain that all of us have some mental struggles and hang ups if you know what I mean.
34. But thanking God for everything is just crazy.
35. I know because I have tried it. I know because the enemy has attempted to get me to try it in the past couple of weeks.
36. At times it has been extremely difficult to maintain an attitude of thanksgiving, because at the time there wasn't much to thank God for.
37. But the reality is, it doesn't make any sense to thank God for everything.
38. Now, I might be able to stretch reality and thank God for some not so serious events in life.
39. I heard a person thank God once for a flat tire, and their justification was this. I just know God allowed me to have a flat tire because he was sparing me from an accident down the road.
40. Now, I'm not going to argue with that because I just don't know.
41. I'm not saying they are wrong, but I don't know.

42. I heard a person thank God once that their debit card was declined because it kept them from making an unwise purchase. Again, I'm not going to argue because I just don't know.
43. But there are just some things I can't thank God for.
44. I can't thank God for a friend who has Alzheimer's.
45. I can't thank God for a horrific accident in which someone dies.
46. I can't thank God for a loved one who contracts a deadly disease and suffers for months on end.
47. I can't thank God for the abuse of a child at the hands of an angry parent.
48. How many understand what I am saying? To attempt to thank God for those events is just a little bit Ludacris.
49. But there's good news. God's word doesn't tell us to thank God for everything.
50. God's word doesn't tell us to thank him for all the terrible, hurtful, painful things that happen to us and the ones we love.
51. God's word doesn't tell us to thank him for all circumstances, even the heinous, wrong, torturous ones.
52. **God's word tells us to thank God in everything.** In all circumstances. In everything.
53. The word in changes everything.
54. **Thanking God for everything makes us fake. Thanking God in everything makes us faithful.**
55. See, here's how thanking God in everything is different.
56. I can be in a terrible situation and still thank God in that thing.
57. How does thanking God IN work? Like this.
58. Here I am God. I am in this thing. I am in this mess. I am in this situation that makes me uncomfortable.
59. I am in this circumstance that is stretching me beyond what I think I can bear.
60. Lord God I am in over my head. Heavenly father, I am in trouble.
61. And even though I don't like what I am going through or what I am experiencing one single bit; I want you to know Lord that I am going to thank you in this thing.

62. I am going to give you thanks in the midst of this trial.
63. If we go back and consider the life of David and we view his life through the Psalms, many of which David wrote, we see this principle of thanking God in, and not for.
64. In many of the Psalms David pours out his heart to God. He tells God all about his troubles and trials.
65. But what changes his perspective and brings about hope in his life is not thanking God for all those things he is experiencing, but rather when he begins to thank God in those things he is experiencing.
66. An example is found in Psalm 13.
67. Psalm 13:1-6 How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? 3 Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, 4 and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. 5 But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. 6 I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.
68. Notice two things we don't see. Nowhere here does David thank God for what is happening to him.
69. The second thing we don't see is we don't see a change in David's circumstances. Every external thing in his life at the end of this Psalm is just like it was in the beginning of the Psalm.
70. But in this hardship, David expresses thanks and praise.
71. Vs. 5 but.
72. You see, always trying to thank God for everything constantly leaves us victim to the circumstances we find ourselves in.
73. Trying to be thankful for everything means that one day we will be thankful for something good, but then won't be able to be thankful for the difficult that normally follows.
74. Only thanking God for things leaves us tossed and turned and all out of joint, like a little boat being tossed on the giant waves of the sea.
75. But learning to be thankful in all circumstances. In everything, means we are stable, and we are strong.
76. That no matter what condition or situation I am in. I am going to be thankful. I am going to give thanks.

77. Being thankful in everything, means that no matter what the enemy throws at me, I am in God's care.

78. I am in God's keeping. I am in God's protection. I am in God's will.

Conclusion:

1. We can learn to be thankful in all circumstances, in everything, because we serve a God who is in it with us.

2. Matthew 1:23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

3. I love what one writer had to say about the name Immanuel. He said, Jesus is more than just the God who is with us.

4. He is the God who is in it with us.

5. Whatever you are going through, he is in it with you.

6. And because he is in it with you, you can give thanks in it. Whatever it is.

7. As we prepare to close this morning I want us to do two things.

8. The first is to cry out to God and tell him about all the hurtful or difficult circumstances we are in.

9. Then I want to ask you to literally thank God in those circumstances.

10. Don't thank him for, thank him in.

11. Salvation call.

12. Drawing.