

1. Today we begin week two of our series, "An Attitude of Gratitude".
2. The passage of scripture we are studying 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.
3. We highlighted three words here in this passage last Sunday. 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.
4. Always, continually, and all. What all three of these words indicate is an ongoing state of being.
5. Not sometimes but always. Not sporadically but continually.
6. Not in a few, or in some, or in most, but in all circumstances.
7. 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 thanksgiving day is all about.
8. Thanksgiving day can be just a day where we focus on giving thanks.
9. 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.
10. If we are not careful, we can relegate thanksgiving to an action.
11. We can merely think of the act of giving thanks as just an action. Just something we do.
12. 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 so much as thanksgiving is a state of being.
13. If we take that a step farther, thanksgiving is not just an action it is an attitude.
14. And not just an every now and then attitude, but a continual attitude. A continual attitude of gratitude.
15. I shared this last week but please allow me to share it again. God did not create us to be human doings, he created us to be human beings.
16. The way I interpret that is, one of the secrets to life in Jesus Christ is not in doing, it is in being.
17. In the case of thanksgiving, it is not in doing thanks, or necessarily giving thanks, but rather in being thankful.

18. 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.
19. 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.
20. So this morning, let's dig just a little bit deeper into what will cement this attitude of gratitude into our hearts.
21. Let's read 1 Thessalonians chapter five again.

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.

My title this morning is really the meat of the message.

TITLE: **Growing up IN Thanksgiving.**

INTRO:

1. In verse 18 of 1 Thessalonians the Apostle Paul makes a statement. In reality he gives a command.
2. In other words, 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.
3. 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)
4. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (NLT)
5. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (KJV)
6. All three of these translations and versions say the same thing, they just say it a little bit differently.
7. There is however one word that is found in all three passages. It is the word in.
8. The NIV says in all circumstances.
9. The NLT says in all circumstances.
10. And the KJV says in everything.
11. 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.

12. 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. Or we don't process it at all because our minds are pre-occupied thinking about something else.
13. Several weeks ago my wife and I were traveling. I think we were somewhere in Alabama.
14. There was a fairly long line of cars, and it seemed like most of us were traveling to a similar destination because several of us made the same turns.
15. At one point I looked back and I could see this vehicle driving erratically. It was weaving in and out of traffic, on a two-lane road mind you, and it was passing vehicles in what I thought were some dangerous places. On a double yellow.
16. Near one of the intersections this vehicle was right up on my tail so close I couldn't see the headlights, and I guess it was our turn to be passed.
17. The car jumps out in the other lane and then jumps in front of me at the very same time all the traffic was slowing down to make a turn. It was crazy and I have to tell you I wasn't very happy.
18. Several vehicles turned to the left including the vehicle that was driving dangerously, and I said to my wife, thank goodness that person turned. Just let them go on.
19. When my attention got back on the road, I realized there was no one in front of us or behind us. I thought this is great.
20. So we drove for about 5 or 6 miles and all of the sudden signs begin to appear warning that the road was closed up ahead.
21. I was reading them, but really my mind wasn't processing them clearly because there was no alternate route, the only thing to do was turn around and go back. So when the road ended, I in fact turned around and we drove back those 5 or 6 miles.
22. And I kept thinking all the time, this is stupid. Why didn't they put some signs up way back there at the last turn letting us know that the road was closed up ahead.
23. So we get back to the intersection. Remember Mr. dangerous

driver. That place where he had passed me and then cut in front? When we got back to that intersection, I could see the signs everywhere.

24. Both sides of the road. Probably for half a mile before the intersection. All of them said road closed ahead. Detour this way.
25. But because I was distracted. In fact, my wife had missed them too. Because we were both distracted, we missed every sign.
26. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. What it says is, IN everything give thanks. IN everything.
30. But what our minds can understand it to say is for everything, give thanks. Give God thanks for everything.
31. But that is not the message at all. The message is, in everything.
32. 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.
33. Getting that one word wrong can sabotage God's work of cultivating an attitude of gratitude in our lives.
34. Here is the reason why. **Thanking God for everything borders on the edge of insane.**
35. 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.
36. But thanking God for everything is just crazy.
37. 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.
38. But the reality is, it doesn't make any sense to thank God for everything.
39. Now, I might be able to stretch reality and thank God for some not so serious events in life.

40. 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.
41. Now, I'm not going to argue with that because I just don't know.
42. I'm not saying they are wrong, but I don't know.
43. 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.
44. But there are just some things I can't thank God for.
45. I can't thank God for a friend who has Alzheimer's.
46. I can't thank God for a horrific accident in which someone dies.
47. I can't thank God for a loved one who contracts a deadly disease and suffers for months on end.
48. I can't thank God for the abuse of a child at the hands of an angry parent.
49. How many understand what I am saying? To attempt to thank God for those events is just a little bit Ludacris.
50. But there's good news. God's word doesn't tell us to thank God for everything.
51. 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.
52. God's word doesn't tell us to thank him for all circumstances, even the heinous, wrong, torturous ones.
53. **God's word tells us to thank God in everything.** In all circumstances. In everything.
54. The word in changes everything.
55. Thanking God for everything makes us fake. Thanking God in everything makes us faithful.
56. See, here's how thanking God in everything is different. And getting this and applying it to our lives can be the difference between being and staying a baby Christian, and being transformed into a mature follower of Jesus Christ.
57. I can be in a terrible situation and still thank God in that thing.
58. How does thanking God IN work? Like this.

59. Here I am God. I am in this thing. I am in this mess. I am in this situation that makes me uncomfortable.
60. I am in this circumstance that is stretching me beyond what I think I can bear.
61. Lord God I am in over my head. Heavenly father, I am in trouble.
62. 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.
63. I am going to give you thanks in the midst of this trial.
64. If we attempt to live our life thanking God for rather than in, what happens is we essentially become the center of our own world.
65. If I thank God for rather than in, then I can only truly thank God when I think the thing or situation is good. For me.
66. If my thanking God is limited to thanking God for, then it's all about what is happening to me, or for me, or around me.
67. But when with the help of the Holy Spirit we commit to thank God in everything, then what happens is He becomes the center of our world.
68. When we thank God in everything our attention is continually focused back on him.
69. When we always, and continually, and in all circumstances give God thanks, then the common denominator is the Lord.
70. He is at the center, and what is happening around me or to me is on the side.
71. That's what I call an attitude of gratitude.
72. Learning to thank God in everything.
73. You see, always trying to thank God for everything constantly leaves us victim to the circumstances we find ourselves in.
74. Trying to be thankful for 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.
75. 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.
76. But learning to be thankful in all circumstances. In everything, means we are stable, and we are strong.

77. That no matter what condition or situation I am in. I am going to be thankful. I am going to give thanks.
78. Being thankful in everything, means that no matter what the enemy throws at me, I am in God's care.
79. 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. Someone reminded me this week that quite often I will ask you to do things or press in and worship the Lord even when you don't feel it or feel like it.
8. You may or may not feel like thanking God in everything. But the truth is, I don't have to feel it first in order to be obedient. What the Lord asks is for my obedience.
9. And I believe one of the ways the Lord is able to make this transformation in us is when we practice his word by faith.
10. Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.
11. Isaiah says, the Lord wants to bestow on them a garment of praise.
12. God provides the garment, his word, but we have to put it on. And if we will put on the garment of praise it will drive away the despair.
13. I am going to ask the worship team to lead us in Good, Good, Father

this morning.

1. I am asking you to sing truth, and then worship the Lord because of the truth, not because of feelings, and my hope is that it will build faith in your heart.
2. Let's worship.
3. Salvation call.
4. This morning I am not going to pray for deliverance or miracles or anything like that.
5. We could and there is nothing wrong with that.
6. Instead what I am going to ask you to do is thank God no matter what circumstance you are in.
7. Whatever your in everything is. Thank him.
8. Don't thank him for. Thank him in.