

# Thanksgiving: A Double Helping!

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## Introduction:

### **A. Everyone has their favorite holidays... I love Christmas and the other is Thanksgiving.**

1. You would have to be living under a rock to not know both these holidays are around the corner!
  - a. Been shopping? Shelves are packed, turkeys are cheap, & recipe suggestions everywhere.
  - b. But there's other signs: Commercials about the holidays, gas prices will likely skyrocket every day until Thursday, greeting cards aisles are full of people, and 96.5fm is playing Christmas music – Shame on you if you listen to it before Friday morning!
  - c. You would think I love Christmas because of presents and Thanksgiving because of food, but that's not the case. Maybe it used to be, but not anymore. It's family getting together & doing nothing together... Even if some family members are really weird!
2. To us Thanksgiving involves a feast fit for a king... or several kings. If you are lucky, like me, you get to go to more than one feast. This year I'll have two... A double helping of thanksgiving

### **B. With Thanksgiving being Thursday, I knew I wanted to preach on being thankful but I could not decide which direction I wanted to go. I had two options and I liked them both. So this is going to be two lessons in one really... so you're getting a double helping of thanksgiving.**

## A Double Helping Of Thanksgiving

### **A. People Of God Are An Appreciative And Thankful People:**

1. When it comes to thankfulness and gratitude, Christians have a real opportunity to let the light of Jesus shine since these characteristics seem to be fading fast in our culture **(Rom 1:21)**
  - a. Too many people have an attitude that goodness is "owed" to them or its their "due" – They act like everything good in their life was earned and deserved. In contrast, when something negative comes into their life, it must be someone else's fault and it's not fair.
  - b. Too many people live like it's everyone else's responsibility to serve them. They see a need, but assume it's someone else's job. They don't mind taking advantage of good opportunities, but they do mind doing the work that creates them. You do the work, I'll enjoy it!
  - c. As a result, more and more people just don't know how to say "thanks." This isn't just about speaking the words, but how they treat property and how they treat others **(Illust: new car)**
  - d. Paul describes such a failure to be thankful in heart as one of the driving factors in the downward spiral of mankind into godlessness. This explains a lot about our own society doesn't it!
  - d. We see in this some things that destroy this attitude of gratitude that we have to guard against: Pride, complaining, materialism, forgetfulness, bitterness, and busyness.
2. People of God ought to be full of thanksgiving by nature. It should be more than just an occasional polite word, but a characteristic of who we are... a gracious and thankful spirit and mindset **(1 Thess 5:16-18)**
  - a. Thanksgiving is not just something we should do, but it should be a way of life. We are to walk in thankfulness just like we walk in faith. It is something we do continually **(Hebrews 13:15)**
  - b. Being a thankful people means living with a daily awareness of our blessings. It means not taking for granted our blessings. It means being humble about our blessings. It's not just about understanding things could be worse, but understanding we don't deserve all we have!
  - c. We should be a thankful people by nature since grace & thankfulness are inextricably connected
    - 1) You cannot live in grace without thanks! "Charis," the word for grace is actually within the word "thankfulness." It literally means "well favored" **(Illust: Saying "grace")**

- 2) Being thankful is simply an awareness of the grace we have received. When we fail to be thankful we cannot say we appreciate the grace of God & others... We aren't grateful
- 3) Christians have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus... we live in the grace of God... so, there should be no one more thankful than a Christian!
- d. If we are thankful, it will be seen in our response to God – We will pray often, work hard to be holy, tell others about Him, give ourselves in service to Him, worship Him, and more.
- e. If we are thankful people, it will show in our response to others – We will express our appreciation for others to them and others, treat opportunities that are given to us and property with respect and honor, serve others (not just the person who is gracious to us), and more.
- 3. Consider now the impact of thankfulness... What our thankfulness does for us and those around us:
  - a. Thankfulness keeps pride down and humility alive (**I Tim 1:12-16**)
  - b. Thankfulness helps keep us faithful to God (**Col. 2:6-7**)
  - c. Thankfulness gives us strength to endure difficult times (**Philippians 4:6**)
  - d. Thankfulness increases our impact on the lost (**Acts 27:35-36**)
  - e. Thankfulness also simply gets us farther in life (**1 Tim 2:1-2**)
- 4. It is easy for us to make thanksgiving simply a holiday we celebrate and not a discipline we practice. It is easy for us make thankfulness be simply a matter of formality in prayer or courteousness in conversation. We need to make the commitment to being a people full of thanks! (**Psalms 9:1-2**)

#### **B. A Personal Note Of My Thankfulness For You:**

- 1. So often in preaching the focus is about what's wrong and what needs to be fixed. This is important, but it's also important to show what is going on that is right... to rejoice & be thankful for what's good
- 2. Paul did this often by expressing thankfulness for the people he wrote to. He not only expressed his thankfulness to them, but he expressed thankfulness to God for them in prayer and let them know it! (**Rom 1:8-10; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Eph 1:13-16; Phil 1:3-5; Col 1:3-5; 1 Th 1:2-3; 2 Th 1:3; 2 Tim 1:3-5; Phm 1:4-6**)
  - a. Some may think Paul was just being strategic or courteous... that he was just buttering them up before ripping them apart. But that's not the case, Paul was being genuine. His sincerity is clear in that he thanked God for them and that this was something he did often, daily even.
  - b. Paul was thankful for the faith they showed, their acceptance of the gospel, their salvation, their spiritual growth, their love, their service, their support of him, and their steadfastness.
  - c. This thankfulness not only encouraged and comforted those Paul was writing to, it also motivated Paul and kept him strengthened in the faith. Are we that thankful for and to one another?
- 2. I am thankful for you because of your genuine love for one another and the unity you share (**I Pet. 3:8**)
- 3. I am thankful for you because of your interest in God's word and participation in Bible study (**Acts 17:11**)
- 4. I am thankful for you because of the personal spiritual growth many of you have shown (**1 Thess 2:19-20**)
- 5. I am thankful for you because of the balance you show in your faith. This is shown in your attitude toward others, your stand for the truth, and the decisions that are made (**Ephesians 4:15**)
- 6. I am thankful for you because we have elders who love God, His word, and lead like shepherds. I am thankful for you because we have deacons who willingly serve. I am thankful for you for all those who take a part in services, teach classes, prepare materials, & serve behind the scenes (**Rom 12:4-8**)
- 7. I am thankful for you because of the encouragement and love you offer me in preaching the gospel and to one another as we seek to grow in grace and faith in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (**Rom 1:11-12**)
- 8. I am thankful for you because others have come in, have seen the grace of God, & were glad (**Acts 11:23**)