

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

Thanksgiving Sunday 2018 October 7

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-9 (RSV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. 6 Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Message: "Thanks for Life!"

Introduction:

- The CBC television has a program called "Anne With an E," a takeoff of Lucy Maud Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables." The latest episode has the precocious Anne showing her rather infectious joy of life as they all go the ocean. When Anne sees the Atlantic she is full of glee. She stands and she looks out over it, raises her hands in praise, and then says something like: "It's hard to believe how many shores and how many lives this body of water are touching right now!"
- There's a good lesson to be learned on this Thanksgiving Sunday about simply praising our Lord and Saviour.
- I wonder this – how many of us truly are thankful today? How many of us, instead of being thankful, are thinking about other things in life, like

our cell phones, or friend sitting beside us or some part of our busy life, or the business of the rest of the holiday weekend? Can we truly be thankful this day? Can we?

Part one: A Heart of Thanksgiving?

- Philippians 4:6 reminds us to have a heart of "thanksgiving." Can we go through life truly giving to God all things that happened in around and about us, and do so with a heart of Thanksgiving?
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says this: "*... In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" God expects us to have Thanksgiving. In fact we are to have a heart of Thanksgiving for all things, in all situations, and it all time. Is it easy to have a thanksgiving heart all the time? Let me point out just 4 areas of concern.
- 1. In just 10 days Canada will legalize marijuana. In my short lifetime we've rapidly spiralled downward in a trend of descending morality where we have embraced euthanasia, abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, transgender issues and now cannabis. We've been told that we are to do so name of tolerance, and that this is the will of the people. Are these issues in Canadian society ones for which we are thankful?
- 2. On Friday, September 21 the city of Ottawa and its neighbours

around it endured as many as eight tornadoes. One life was lost in Elgin Ontario, and more than a dozen people ended up in the hospital in critical condition. In talking to some of the people at the one Gatineau Québec Relief Stations some have a hope of returning very soon to their homes and lives, while others are lost in limbo. Thousands of lives were changed in roughly 2 to 4 seconds. Is this something for which we can be thankful?

- 3. International tension has never been higher. Tariffs and name-calling has been a part of Canadian life for most of 2018. It seems that every government that comes into power has questionable leadership, It really seems that our politicians in 2018 really don't know what they're doing. Is this something for which we can be thankful?
- 4. Our schools have been instructing to our young people how to make poor choices when it comes to sexuality, and how to use their bodies inappropriately. Our schools are rapidly becoming, or perhaps have been for a long time, a place where the Christian voice is anything but tolerated. Our schools have long ago removed God from her halls. Is this something that makes us thankful?
- Is it easy to be thankful all the time?

Part two: With a heart of Thanksgiving!

- Let's forge a path that truly leads to Thanksgiving on this Thanksgiving Sunday. While all the things that I've mentioned are true, and while the Christian voice is becoming more difficult to hear in the din of the world view which is our Canada today, there really is so much for which we can be thankful.
- There are people in Canada that are standing up for unborn babies rights to be able to live. There are people in Canada that realize that while euthanasia sounded like an appropriate step, that any form of the taking a one's life comes at a great price, to say the least. There are those in Canada who have realized that it's okay to stand up in the face of the sexual teachings and lack of morality. There are many Canadians who realize that God is in our schools, and that our God is mighty and powerful, and working in the hallways, in the classrooms, and the lives of teachers and students across Canada to show His enormous love, His joy, His peace and His hope. God is and has been there in the disaster in Ottawa, and He is in Indonesia and Japan today, and people are seeing the love of God in powerful ways. And while we wonder about governments, there are so many strong, Biblically-minded, God-

honouring leaders who dare to make a difference.

- Remember: Jesus didn't try to change the entire world all at once, but instead one step, one person, one situation, one place for the need of His hope, love, grace, and peace to be infused, with one situation after another.

Part 3: Philippians chapter 4

- Let's take Philippians chapter 4 verse by verse.
- Verse 4 says *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I'll say rejoice!"* In the face of adversity, problems, and even fear, the truth is that we Christians can indeed be those that know how to rejoice. This is because we can rejoice in the Lord. This is so because we have invited the Lord into our lives. This is so because we've accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. This is so because we have opened up our hearts, minds, soul, our everything to the Lord and His teachings in our lives. He is the God of all. He is the Lord of creation. He is the God of this day, and for eternity – time beyond all time. Therefore, how could we not but rejoice in the Lord? How could we not rejoice in the Lord always." Listen... Life can be tough. There's no guarantee of things being easy or simple. But our God is a God loving and powerful and all knowing. Therefore

we can "rejoice in Him always." Can you take that with you to your tables of Thanksgiving this weekend?

- Verse 5 says: *"Let your forbearing spirit been known to all men. The Lord is near."* We don't talk about a forbearing spirit or our forbearance that much in this world. Another word for forbearance would be peaceable-ness, or peace-loving-ness. The NIV has the word "gentleness." It is word all about our desire to seek God's peace in all situations. The ladies have challenged us all across the CBOQ, our denomination, to take a seven day walk, a fast, from criticism. This is a great idea. Having a critical heart never helps anybody. Having a loving, gracious, gentle heart helps others around us to see and to know God. Today the CBOQ "Fast from Criticism" is supposed to come to an end. Can I ask you something seriously? Why should it? Can we not walk away from a bad habit, leaving it in the hands of the Saviour, and stop criticizing? Let me put another way (Philippians 4:5): *"let your gentleness be evident to all."* Why? Because (as the verse ends): *"The Lord is near."* God is here. God is watching. God knows what's on your heart. God knows what's in your mind. God knows what's on your soul. And God knows if you're serious about walking with him, letting your

gentleness be evident to all. Would it not be wonderful to know that all of us are going to go away to our Thanksgiving family gatherings ready to be with people that would be astounded that we are gentle, and have left criticism behind?

- Verse 6: This line from the Bible, this sentence from God's Word, this portion of God's Holy Scripture is perhaps the sweetest verse that we can pull out for this day. Verse 6 says: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* I have learned this truth: when our God says that we do not have to be anxious, it is reality. God is the God of all things. He is all powerful. He is loving, and gracious, and kind, and is the One who is "Our Father Who art in heaven." Have no anxiety. God then gives us a recipe of how to not be anxious. In all things come to God by prayer and with requests, and with a heart of Thanksgiving present your petitions to God. Perhaps the most important part of that sentence is "with Thanksgiving." When you give Thanksgiving for something that you have been praying about, about something you are hoping for, you are making it very clear that you expect, and you understand, that God is going to do great things with your life. And not

just with a small part of your life, but "in everything." We've been talking in our Wednesday Night Bible Study about prayer. If you have never made it, you're missing something awesome, and is not too late to begin now. One of the things that we have been reflecting on is how to make our life a prayer to God. We have been asking ourselves how to pray at all times. Can we walk through our day praying as we go, giving all things to God in prayer? And when we do so, can we with a heart of Thanksgiving?

- In Philippians 4:7 we have another reason to give all things to God in prayer with the Thanksgiving heart: the peace of God. *"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Such a beautiful passage! Think about it. Verse 6 says that if we come to God in prayer, if we lay out our love for Him, and give it to Him our aches, pains, and petitions and requests with Thanksgiving, God promises a peace that will descend upon us. God promises a peace that passes all understanding. And it is a peace that will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.
- Let's go next verse eight. Philippians 4:8 begins with the word "Finally.." Paul is about to draw a conclusion that will help us to have a

good Thanksgiving weekend, and to live our life with Thanksgiving.

Take a look at this list: "... *Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about these things.*" You are not going to find these things looking at trash on your computer. You're not going to find these things by talking to the wrong person who is foul-mouthed, or lives a life that is crude. You won't find these things in dirty magazines or listening to music that has objectionable language. You will not find this list in the woodlot beside the schoolyard, or when your fellow workers are getting together for wild party. You are not going to find anything on this list by giving that woman a second look at you twist around your wedding ring. They are not found in gambling, abusing God's Sunday rest, or in violating any of the other 10 commandments. You will not find the wonderful things on this list until you decide to walk with a Thanksgiving heart, praying to God, and looking for that which truly is "... Noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy." These things are of God. And they truly are the best way to live.

Conclusion:

- It's time to go to this Table of Remembrance this Thanksgiving Sunday. And as such, let us not go to this table if our minds are on things of this world. Let us come to this table because we are people of Thanksgiving, coming to a worthy God with our Thanksgiving hearts, ready to rejoice in the Lord always. Let us come to this table because we have a gentleness that is within us that we want to cultivate as we get nearer to the Lord. Let us come to this table because when leave our anxiety behind, and bring our prayers and petitions to God, with Thanksgiving, we get close to the One who can give us His peace that transcends all understanding.
- Let us remember with Thanksgiving.