

I Wish You Enough
Deuteronomy 8:7-20
November 21, 2021

In just a few days we will celebrate Thanksgiving, a day to reflect on God's blessings on us. Actually, reflecting on God's blessings should be something we do every day, rather than doing it once a year. I am sure most of us do that more often than once a year but at least once a year, we share with others about what we are thankful for. It forces us to think about what we have and what we have received; rather than what we do not have.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had everything they needed. They had access to everything except to the fruits that would give them the knowledge of good and evil. It seems as though resisting the desire to have the fruit would be easy, because there were so many other fruits they could have. But the very fact that they were prevented from having it triggered their desire to have that very thing which they were prevented from. The more they looked at it the more they wanted to have it.

With the help of the snake, Adam and Eve began to think about why they were prevented from having the fruits. They began to focus on what they did not have, instead of what they already had and that thought led them to think that God was withholding something good from them. When that happened, they were no longer thankful for what they had.

Pause for a moment and think about it. Adam and Eve were not very different from us. Even in this economy, when the supply chain is interrupted and many of the items people want are not available, most of the people in our society have a lot already; more than just the bare necessities. However, they don't think about the many things they have. They think about the things others have which they themselves don't have. They spend most of their lives in discontent because they do not have as much as their neighbors. Wouldn't that be a miserable way to live?

The motivational speaker and a radio talk show host, Dave Ramsey, has a philosophy that is very appealing. Ramsey is very successful both financially and in his career; but he truly believes and openly says that he does not deserve everything he has. So whenever a caller asks him, "How are you?" he always answers, "Better than I deserve." "Better than I deserve; I have more than I

deserve.” I think that is the attitude we should have for our lives; because honestly, we all have more than we deserve.

Did you know that having a thankful heart is not something we naturally have? A thankful heart is something we develop, something we acquire. It is something we learn, and once we learn to be thankful, once we learn to realize that we have lived most of our lives with more than we deserve, then no matter what happens in life we still can have a thankful heart.

The song we sang this morning, “Now Thank We All Our God” was written by a German pastor Martin Rinkart. He served in the town of Eilenburg during the Thirty Year War (1618-1648). This war started as a religious war between the Protestants and the Catholics and developed into a very complex political war. It wasn’t a single war. It was actually a series of wars involving most of the countries in Europe. It is recorded as one of the longest and the most destructive conflicts in European history.¹

During the horrors of this war, Eilenburg became a refuge for the fugitives. All kinds of people came to the town, and the town was overcrowded. The people suffered from epidemic and famine. In 1637, the Black Plague broke out in the region and claimed about 8,000 lives.

At the beginning of the year, there were four ministers in Eilenburg but one abandoned his post and moved to another location, and the other two died of the plague. Pastor Rinkart officiated their funerals.

As the only pastor left in that town, he often conducted funerals for 40 to 50 persons a day. He conducted some 4,480 funerals in all. In May of that year, his own wife died. By the end of the year, the refugees had to be buried in trenches without services, for there were so many.

That wasn’t the end of their sufferings. There was food shortage, and the Swedes came and demanded a heavy tribute from the people. The hardship was almost indescribable. In the midst of all these sufferings Pastor Rinkart wrote that song. He developed a thankful heart; and no matter what happened in his life, he did not lose that.

A thankful heart is something you develop by constantly reflecting on what you have and how much God has blessed you thus far. As you constantly reflect

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years'_War

on that you develop a thankful heart and thankful life, and once you have that heart, once you develop a thankful life, you don't lose it. It may be challenged often, and even constantly, by many hardships, but you don't lose it.

Gratitude brings fullness of life. It turns what we have into something more than we deserve. It turns brokenness into wholeness, doubt into faith, and selfishness into generosity. It turns a simple meal into a feast. Gratitude brings a wonder and awe about our past, making us wonder "why this blessing for me." Gratitude brings peace for today, and creates a new hope for tomorrow.²

Most of us have lived a good life, a life without trouble, a life without severe hardship. Yes, we had some challenges, some illnesses, lost loved ones, and at times illnesses that were life-threatening. For the most part, we have lived a fairly good life and enjoyed wonderful things in life. Perhaps we have had so many blessings that we take them for granted, and thanksgiving becomes nothing more than a holiday.

If we sit down and count the blessings God has given us, the Thanksgiving Day will be a holy day and not just a holiday.

The famous author and speaker, Dale Carnegie, once went through a period of prolonged depression. He felt miserable every day. He could not concentrate on his work. He was saturated with negative thoughts, and his mood was down all the time. Then he did something interesting to defeat his depression.

He visualized what it would be like to lose everything that is important to him. He wrote down each tragedy. He wrote down whatever tragedy he could have in life. The long list went something like this:

My children are in jail.

My wife left me.

I am flat broke.

I am sick with a terminal illness and nobody cares.

My children are victimized in a violent crime.

I am in jail, etc.

As he wrote them down, some of the things brought him to tears but after writing down all the things he could think of, he began to cross out each item that

² Modified from Melody Beattie's reflection on "Gratitude"
<http://www.slooble.com/quotes/gratitude-quotes.htm>

was not true. He eliminated the whole list. Once he established that “the worst possible scenario” wasn’t true, he could focus on the positives again, and soon his depression was lifted.³

Maybe that would be a good exercise for all of us. Make a list of all the bad things that could happen in our lives, then maybe we would have an appreciation for all that we have.

Rabbi Harold Kushner once said, “If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul.”⁴

Bob Perks is a Professional Speaker, and travels quite often. One day when he was at the airport at a gate he was sitting near the boarding entrance. He noticed a middle-aged daughter and her father saying goodbye. They hugged and the father said, “I love you. I wish you enough.”

She in turn said, “Daddy, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I wish you enough, too, Daddy.”

They kissed and she left. The old man walked toward the area where Perks was seated. Perks could see the old man wanted and needed to cry. Perks tried not to intrude on his privacy, but the old man turned to Perks and asked him, “Did you ever say goodbye to someone knowing it would be forever?”

“Yes, I have,” Perks replied. In fact, not long before that, Perks actually had spent some time with his Dad whose remaining days were limited.

“Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever goodbye?” Perks asked.

“I am old,” said the man, “and she lives much too far away. I have challenges ahead and the reality is, her next trip back would be for my funeral.”

Perks asked, “When you were saying goodbye I heard you say, ‘I wish you enough.’ May I ask what that means?”

The old man smiled and said. “That’s a wish that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone.” “When we say ‘I

³ Norman Vincent Peale, “Being Thankful Makes Everything Better” (Pawling, New York: Foundation for Christian Living, 1961), pp. 7-8.

⁴ <http://www.sloomble.com/quotes/gratitude-quotes.htm>

wish you enough,' we want the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them." Then he added the following:

I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.
I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.
I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.
I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.
I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.
I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.
I wish enough "Hello's" to get you through the final "Goodbye."⁵

Let me ask you, friends, "Do you have enough; enough good things and enough challenges?" God has given us more than enough to satisfy all our needs, and remembering it brings joy and gladness. Let us be thankful for who we are, whose we are, and for all the things we have in life.

⁵ <http://www.iwishyouenough.com>.