**Gratitude is an Attitude, Not a Platitude**

John 6:22-35

**Introduction:** Two old friends bumped into one another on the street one day. One of them looked heartbroken, almost on the verge of tears. His friend asked, "What has the world done to you, my old friend?" The sad fellow said, "Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, an uncle died and left me forty thousand dollars." the first friend replied, "Wow, that’s a lot of money."

"But, two weeks ago, a cousin I never even knew died, and left me eighty-five thousand free and clear."

"Sounds like you’ve been blessed...." He said, "You don’t understand!" he interrupted. "Last week my great-aunt passed away. I inherited almost a quarter of a million." Now the first friend was really confused. "Then, why do you look so glum?" "This week... nothing!" (via Joel W. Lohr)

It is so easy to take what we have for granted when we live in a land of plenty isn’t it? Even in the midst of our most recent economic downturn, we still have abundantly more than a majority of the world.

David Platt wrote in his book Radical, *“…if you and I have running water, shelter over our heads, clothes to wear, food to eat and some means of transportation (even if it is public transportation), then we are in the top 15 percent of the world’s people for wealth.*” Like the man in the story who received so much, we eventually come to expect the blessings that God gives us and forget that it is He who gave us the blessings.

The Israelites were warned about this danger of taking God's blessings for granted in the Old Testament: "*And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*. (Deu. 6:10-12)

In the passage I have just read, a group of people came looking for Jesus – after he had fed 5,000 of them. They had followed him all the way to the other side of the lake. Frankly, they were not seeking him; they were seeking another free lunch. You could almost hear the tummy’s growling as they stood before him in expectation. With plate in hand, they said, “Fill‘er up Lord!” There was very little gratitude in their heart… **gratitude is an attitude, not a platitude**. A platitude is something good that we repeat over and over again until it loses it's meaning. Thankfulness can become a platitude if it does not come with the right attitude.

If we are to have an attitude of gratitude, then we must…

1. **LIVE WITH GODLY MOTIVES (v. 26)**
   1. These people were following Jesus for all the wrong reasons – they wanted as free lunch and Jesus called them on it! They wanted to satisfy their physical hunger and had little concern for their spiritual need.
   2. “*Most men are willing to receive temporal good from the hands of God; but there are few, very few, who are willing to receive spiritual blessings*.” Adam Clarke
   3. These men came with plate and fork in hand to Christ. **Why do you come to Jesus? Why do you follow Him?**
      1. Fire insurance? Oh, Jesus, I don't want you to change my life while I follow you, I just want a bailout from Hell.
      2. Family expectations? In other words, my family comes to church and they make me come to church. What will happen when you get your freedom?
      3. Temporal blessings? Following Jesus is like playing the lottery to some people. "I'm gonna hit it big some day!" I just have to muster up enough faith. I Keep pouring my faith into the Jesus lottery hoping to win.
      4. Or do you follow him because he is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and worthy to be praised and honored?
   4. "*Many people want the blessings of God but want nothing to do with God*." - Dr. Bill Thomas
2. **REALIZE THERE ARE SOME THINGS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS LIFE (v. 27)**
   1. Jesus said, “*Do not labor for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life*…” We need perishable food to sustain us physically. That is a fact. However, if that is the main focus of our life, the perishable things, then we are missing the most important thing…
   2. Why are we so focused on the things of this life? People used to say that someone was so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly good. Now people seem to be so earthly minded, they are of no heavenly good.
      1. In the Bible, we are reminded that we ought to "*look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal*." (2Co 4:18)
      2. In another place, Paul reminds us that: "*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*" (Col 3:1-3)
   3. In the multi-volume book of eternity, this life is only a period at the end of a sentence. This world is our temporary home. We are only here for a brief moment in light of eternity.
   4. I truly believe that those with an eternal perspective will be among the most grateful of all people. They may not have much material wealth but they appreciate what they do have more. If you have ever been to the mission field in a third world country, you would know.
3. **RECOGNIZE THAT GOD’S MOST IMPORTANT GIFT TO US IS ETERNAL LIFE (v. 28-29)**
   1. “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” they asked him. Their question revealed total misunderstanding of what it took to be in a right relationship with God. They picked up on the word labor and misinterpreted it to mean they had to work for their salvation.
   2. Judaism stressed righteous works, but Jesus singled out one work, **faith in Him. He made that clear just a couple of verses later when he said:** "*For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*" (John 6:40)
   3. I didn’t earn my salvation; it was given to me, and to everyone who has received it, as a gift from our Father. I didn’t deserve it.
      1. I deserved to have to full wrath of God poured out on me.
      2. I deserved every fist-blow delivered by the soldiers into the body of my Savior.
      3. I deserved every lash of the whip that fell across the naked back of my Lord.
      4. I deserved every jeer, insult, mock and curse that was hurled at my King as he made his way down the Via Dolorosa.
      5. I deserved every jolt of pain that shot through the body of my shepherd as they drove nails into his hands and feet.
      6. I deserved every labored breath as that pure and Holy Sacrifice hung upon that cross.
      7. I deserved to be the one hanging in mid air crying, “My God, My God – why have you forsaken me.”
      8. I deserved everything that Jesus took for me on that tree and more.
      9. Yet unlike my Savior, I deserved to be cast into a sinners Hell forever to be completely shut off from the presence of God.
   4. Those that believe they can earn their salvation are among the most ungrateful people that I know because they think they deserve heaven when they do not. (Illus. If we could earn heaven, your dog would go in and you would stay out)

**Illus.** To close out today, I want us to think about the blessings we live with each and every day, yet take for granted. These blessings are intangible things, but I believe we need to thank God for those too...This list is not original to me. It was in a sermon preached by pastor Joel Lohr.

* Be thankful that you don’t already have everything you want. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?
* Be thankful when you don’t know something, this gives you the opportunity to learn.
* Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times you grow.
* Be thankful for your limitations, because they give you  
  opportunities for improvement.
* Be thankful for each new challenge, because it will build strength and character.
* Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons.
* Be thankful when you’re tired and weary, because it means you’ve made a difference.  
    
  It’s easy to be thankful for the good things. But, a life of true fulfillment can come to those who are also thankful for the setbacks. As hard as it may be, find a way to be thankful for your troubles, and they can become your blessings.