

Thanksgiving: Invest in Jesus' Work Through Our Hands

1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

11/24/24

In joyful response to Christ's love. That's the only reason we do anything. In joyful response to Christ's love. The reason I love being a pastor: in joyful response to Christ's love. The reason we invest in Jesus' work: in joyful response to Christ's love through our hands. The reason we worship and invest in worship: in joyful response to Christ's love. The reason we nurture disciples and invest in children and families: in joyful response to Christ's love. The reason this church tithes each dollar received: in joyful response to Christ's love. The reason we pour time and energy into Loaves & Fishes food pantry: in joyful response to Christ's love.

Thanksgiving is not one day a year: for Christians, Thanksgiving is life. Thanksgiving is in joyful response to Christ's love.

We are in the life-changing business. Paul's life was changed by Jesus Christ and was one of the chief investors in Jesus' life-changing business. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is the oldest piece of Christian writing that we have. He writes it about 50AD, only a dozen years after Jesus' ascension into Heaven. Jesus lives and the reason Paul invests in Jesus' life-changing business is because Jesus lives in him.

NPC commits to telling people about Jesus so that they can trust and follow Jesus to have Jesus live in them. That's the life-changing business. Another way to say it is God desires friendship with you as Jesus Christ. When you read the earliest Christian writing in its entirety you see that Paul keeps saying the "good news of God." There are many ways to tell the story of Jesus, who is the good news of God. One way to describe the good news is to say we are made for joy! Yes, there is sin and suffering in the world because of us and yet God so loves the world that He sent His Son so that whoever trusts in Him will not perish but will have eternal, meaningful, joy-filled life.

God does not want to condemn you, God desires to forgive and save you as Jesus Christ. On the cross, all the messed-up stuff of our lives is condemned, and if we trust Jesus, we are already forgiven and we will live as friends of Jesus. Unlocking the code to friendship with God, unlocking the code to forgiveness, unlocking the code to joy is trusting Jesus. As we will hear Jesus teach us "Your faith makes you well." Christians have vision of where we are going that's why Paul can say by the power of the Holy Spirit, "Rejoice always...you are made for joy...pray without ceasing...we were made for friendship with Jesus Christ...give thanks in all circumstances...The Christian life is Thanksgiving for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Let's continue to celebrate Thanksgiving as we hear Luke 17:11-19.

Twice, Jesus uses the Samaritan as the faithful one. The first time is when he tells the story of the good Samaritan after a lawyer asks Jesus, "What is the meaning of life?" This would be like Jesus showing up in Israel today and using Palestinians as the example. Showing up in Palestine

and using Israelis as the example. Showing up in Ukraine and using Russians as the example. Showing up in Russia and using Ukrainians as the example. And hear in America, showing up at the Republican convention and using Democrats as the example. Showing up at the Democratic convention and using Republicans as the example. Why? Why does Jesus point out the perceived enemy as the one who is faithful? Why does Jesus point out the perceived enemy in a state of thanksgiving. To remind us we are all God's children and to show us anyone can be a friend of God even our perceived enemies.

Generous living is our thank you to God. The good Samaritan generously gives his time and money. Jesus tells the lawyer, Jesus tells us the meaning of life is generosity. The reason Paul invests in Jesus' life-changing business, Paul sees generosity in the cross of Jesus. Pain, death, and sin do not have the last word. The Christian life is in joyful response to Christ's love for us on the cross. Invest in Jesus' work through our hands in joyful response to Christ's love.

Now in Luke 17, Jesus lives out the Good Samaritan story. 10 people call out for help and Jesus says, "Go and worship." For Jesus, showing up for worship is the simplest way to say thank you to God. Investing your time in worship is one of the simplest ways to say thank you to God.

Generous living is our thank you to God. Count your blessings. No matter where you are at in life count your blessings. Be aware of the good things in your life. Be aware of what God has done for you as Jesus Christ. The Christian life is Thanksgiving.

And what I mean by that is what Paul believes is the good news of Jesus and separates following Jesus from any other priority. Jesus and Paul agree with God's Word in the Old Testament that God is fair. God will ultimately judge if we are fair. Do not rely on yourself nor try to save yourself. God's Word teaches that if we try to save ourselves, if we try to rely on ourselves, this is a fool's errand. Its ultimately ungrateful, ignorant, and unformed. Fall at the feet of Jesus and thank Him for forgiveness. Thank Him for showing you the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Don't be like the 90% of the world that doesn't recognize what God has done for us as Jesus Christ. They are healed but not complete. They are healed but not at peace. They are healed but do not have life. Peace, perfect, whole, complete, health are all ways to translate "Shalom." They may be healed, but they do not have life...eternal life, meaningful life, intentional life. Thanksgiving is not one day, for Christians, Thanksgiving is life!

Your faith has made you well. Trusting in Jesus is ultimately believing that when you die there is nothing to fear. You have already been judged. You have already nailed your sins to the cross of Jesus Christ. You now live a life of Thanksgiving.

This is why Paul can boldly write to Christians...Rejoice Always...Pray without Stopping...Give thanks in all Circumstances. In joyful response to Christ's love, invest in Jesus' work through our hands.

Amen,
Pastor Curtis

