

Devotions – November 23-29, 2014
By Pastor Dave Johnson
Faith Lutheran Church, Ishpeming, MI

Sunday, November 23

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

This week is the week of Thanksgiving. There has been a trend for the past couple of years to take time for the entire month of November to write down one thing each day that you are thankful for. We have all been given so much, and a lot of times things, stresses, and even other people can get in the way of us seeing those things that we can be thankful for. So to start off this week I want to encourage you to think of something each day to be thankful for, write it down, pray a thankful prayer to God for whatever you have written down, and rejoice for the thing that you are thankful for.

Let us Pray: Thank you God for all that you have given me, and even though I don't always take time to do so, thank you for all that you have given me. Amen.



Monday, November 24

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

What are you thankful for today? Don't forget to write it down, pray a thankful prayer, and rejoice over what you are thankful for.

It can be difficult to give thanks in all circumstances. It's so much easier to stress, worry, and fret over the big things that hit us in life. It seems our sin tries to force us to lose the trust that in all things God has promised to look over us and never leave us; especially in our time of despair. Jesus gives us the encouragement (I repeat, encouragement, not command) to not worry. Why, because through your faith God will never leave you nor forsake you. In your greatest time of need God will never leave you stranded, and even when all hope seems lost, God brings light into your darkest hour.

Let us Pray: Thank you God for never leaving my side; especially during the times that I want to run and hide from everything. Amen.



Tuesday November 25

Text: Philippians 4:6-7

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What are you thankful for today?

It's amazing at how much we like to focus on the things that go wrong in our lives, in others' lives, or even our world. Think about the conversations that you have with other people and how long they last. It seems to me that when people are talking to each other, the conversation goes much longer if they are talking about things that they can complain about instead of things they are thankful for. Just think of the last time you talked with someone else the things that you are thankful for and how long the conversation lasted versus that last time you brought up a complaint and how long that conversation lasted. For me, it always seems that I can keep on and on about the things I can complain about and spend only a few seconds or if I'm really trying, a few minutes on the things that I'm thankful for or the good things in my life. What would happen if we were intent about changing that and spending more time talking about the good things in life instead of the bad?

Let us Pray: Thank you God for _____, it can be so easy to stay focused on stresses, worries, and complaints that I can spend little time on the things that I'm thankful for. So today I am taking time to focus and thank you for _____.



Wednesday November 26

Text: Philippians 4:6-7

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What are you thankful for today?

Every good thing you have comes from the God who created and made you. There is a saying out there that is frequently quoted, "God will not give you more than you can handle." I think

that even though this saying is true (this is a saying and not a quote from the Bible), I think it is also very misleading. I believe that God only gives us good gifts and blessings, and so there is no way that God would ever over-burden us or put heavy weights on our backs that would crush us. In fact Jesus encourages us all to come to him and carry His yolk which is easy and His burden is light. So if this is the case, then why does God think certain people can handle so much? I have heard people use this saying and then add, "I really wish God didn't think so much of me."

Here's the truth, people do get more than they can handle. They get burdens that threaten to crush them. Maybe you're one of those people who are carrying more than you can handle. Even though God would never give us more than we can handle, this world is ready and willing to crush us all in a heartbeat. The demands of this world will crush us and kill us. Thankfully we have a God that was willing to bear the weight of this world and our sin on the cross and free us from those burdens. If you are carrying more than you can handle, bring it to the cross; you don't have to carry it alone.

Let us Pray: Thank you God for bearing my sin and my burdens on the cross for me. Even though there are times I feel like I carry this weight alone, help me to give my burdens over to you so that I can see the blessings you have given me instead of seeing the burdens that this world has placed on me.



Thursday November 27

Text: Ephesians 5:18b-20

Instead, be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What are you thankful for today?

Do you have a favorite song; a favorite hymn? What do you like about that song? Do you belt it out as loud as you can, do you dance to it, do you bob your head, do you whisper the lyrics under your breath? Music has been used by humans for thousands of years to release the deepest emotions within us in song and dance; to connect what we've been feeling to words and music.

Miriam sang a song of thanksgiving to God when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, Mary couldn't contain the song in her heart after she was told that she was going to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, and there is a book in the Bible with 150+ songs in it.

Music has been used to give a voice to our deepest despair and our greatest joys.

During this thankful time of year, what song communicates your thankfulness for the things God has given you? I want to encourage you to find it, listen to it, and even sing it out with all of your heart out loud or even in a whisper and give thanks to God in song for all that you have been given.

Let us Pray: Thank you God for all the good things that you have given me. Help me to stay focused on those things and see how much you have blessed my life.



Friday November 28

Text: Ephesians 5:18b-20

Instead, be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What are you thankful for today?

When I was growing up there were times that I spent more time at my grandparent's house than I did my own house. They lived only a half mile away, and I enjoyed going and spending time over there building forts with my cousins, watching television, or eating the goodies that they always had there for us kids. A lot of times, especially during the winter, I would be leaving to walk back home after it had gotten dark. I would ask my grandpa Lee for a ride home, and when he said yes I would say thank you. Then my grandpa would tell me, "Don't thank me yet, I didn't give you the ride yet."

We have a reason to be thankful to God because through what Jesus has done for us on the cross and through our faith we have already received all that God has, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and the freedom to live this life the way we were meant to live it, loving God and loving our neighbor. Paul reminds us that we have already received all of God's blessing and that we have already been made perfect through the gift of faith. So we have a reason to give God thanks at all times and in all places because we have already received the best that God has to offer.

Let us Pray: Thank you God; thank you. Amen.



Saturday November 29

Text: Ephesians 5:18b-20

Instead, be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What are you thankful for today?

How did your week go? Were you able to write down something to be thankful for each day this week? Have you been doing it already for the month? How did doing so impact your day? Did you go back and remind yourself of what you are thankful for throughout the day?

Were there times that you ended up focusing on stresses, burdens, or worries? Were you able to keep a thankful heart, for those of you that went Black Friday shopping, as you pushed your way through the stores? Did you end up complaining more than being thankful?

I'm not through the week yet as I'm writing this right now. I am sure that there were a few times that I lost sight of the things that I'm thankful for and worried about things that I cannot control. However, it's good to be reminded that we have a lot to be thankful for. Especially for us who have faith in a God who saw people fumbling about in their day to day lives, stuck in sin, and left to die and entered into our world; into our flesh, bearing all of our burdens, sin, death; all those things that have separated us from God from the very beginning. All so that we could finally really live. All so that the breath that God breathed into our very being would never die. All so that you could truly know that you are never alone. What Jesus did for you on the cross is something we will never fully comprehend until that day we see God face to face.

Let us Pray: Thank you God for entering into my life and bearing on the cross everything in this world and in my life that would crush me and kill me. I cannot express how much your sacrifice means to me. Amen.

