

Addicted to Thanksgiving

Text: Ephesians 5:18-21

My title may be a little strong. "Addicted to Thanksgiving." One man had a unique take on drug addiction. He said, "I had a drug problem when I was a young person. I was drugged to church on Sunday morning. I was drugged to church on Sunday night. I was drugged to church on Wednesday night. I was drugged to Vacation Bible School. I was drugged to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents, told a lie, brought home a bad report card or did not speak with respect. Those drugs are still in my veins, and they affect my behavior in nearly everything I do and say and think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack or heroin. If more children had this drug problem, America would certainly be a better place. I'm not sure I agree with all of that, but I would like to drug you into an attitude that I know will transform your daily life. I would like for us to become addicted to thanksgiving.

DON'T YOU LIKED TO BE THANKED FOR THINGS YOU DO?

People need to be appreciated. There's a creative book entitled 1001 Ways to Reward Employees. It's based on the premise that every person wants to be appreciated. They want to feel that what they do makes a difference. Saying thanks can be done in so many ways. For a number of years I have received the National Geographic Magazine. It has been a gift subscription from a former church member. It comes as a thank you for ministry. The book speaks about using your business card and writing a little note saying good job, way to go, thanks for all you do to make the rest of us look good.

Give tickets to musicals, sporting events, cultural events. Wash their car in the parking lot. Give them a special parking place for a month. One I really liked-- rent them a sports car for a week. If we who are made in the image of God like to be thanked what about the Creator? God delights in gratitude. I Thessalonians 5:18. "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Jesus came to show us the will of God. In the first Lord's Supper or communion Jesus took bread and gave thanks. Then he took the cup and gave thanks. Twice in one meal and over very small portions He gave thanks.

When I was in high school our youth group had a 35c rule (if a person ordered anything above 35c we prayed. Inflation may have raised that to \$1.00 at McDonalds, but I still don't like to attack my food like an anxious dog. It just seems right to say, Thank you Lord.

Tell the story of the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19) (15) One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him. "Jesus asked, were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" I hope that Thanksgiving will be genuine in the hearts of more than 10% of Americans.

Our approach to public worship is described in Psalm 100: 4 "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, give thanks to Him and praise His name."

I like the paraphrased version of that verse. Enter with the password: Thank you! Make yourself at home, talking praise. Thank Him. Worship Him.

For the communicator: You might want to have a nice graphic card made up with the words, "My thanks to God." At the close of the service the people will bring them and place them on the platform as an offering to the Lord. They do not sign their names.

Spirit-filled people are intoxicated by thanksgiving. Paul told the people to avoid being controlled by other intoxicants, but to allow God's Spirit to fill them and one evidence of that would be a thankful heart. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery; instead be filled with the Spirit. Spirit filled people will display themselves as MUSIC BOXES. V. 19

My father was truly a thankful person. He had a custom of calling his seven children at least twice a month. Generally on Saturdays at 6 or 7 in the morning and the conversation would begin with him singing. I'm looking over a four-leaf clover; It is no secret what God can do; Sing them over again to me wonderful words of life; Victory in Jesus; I'll fly away; This world is not my home; Kneel at the cross. I wasn't always ready to appreciate his cheerful spirit. The book of Proverbs admonishes, "If you shout a pleasant greeting to your neighbor too early in the morning, will be counted as a curse" (but I wouldn't mind hearing him now. It's one of those things I miss since his passing.) Observe Paul and Silas as they were arrested, beaten and thrown in jail. They sang hymns and prayed at midnight. Acts 16: 25

- Spirit intoxicated people will be living "Thank you cards."
- Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In the best of times.
- In the regular times.
- In the worst of times.

The communicator will find a super example where Corrie Ten Boon and her sister thanked God for the lice infected sleeping quarters which kept the guards from molesting them. Thank you in the Hebrew culture was a public testimony. It is not just a thought. Joyce I want to thank you for the good pumpkin pie you made for me. It is a shout, Wow! Thank you for that delicious pie publicly. Paul wrote a twenty minute thank you letter to the church at Philippi 4:18 for the gift you sent. They are a fragrant offering "an acceptable sacrifice" "pleasing to God."

A thankful person produces antibodies that serve as antidotes to ward off poisons in our spirit. (Thanks to God neutralizes and creates immunity to toxins.) There is a story from Europe of a man going into a barn. In that barn were numerous bags full of seeds. There were labels on each bag, selfishness, covetousness, malice, revenge. As he examined the many bags the Devil walked in and said these are the seeds that I plant in the soil of people' hearts. The visitor asked are there any hearts in which these seeds do not grow. The devil bowed his head in disappointment and replied "yes, they don't grow in the thankful heart."

Bishop Martin Rinkart was one of those hearts. (Read the story behind, We Thank You Our God.) A song that once was common in churches has the right message. When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged thinking all is lost. Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. Count Your blessings, name them one by one, Count your many blessings. See what God has done.

I HOPE AT THE TOP OF YOUR LIST WILL BE THE GIFT OF SALVATION. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. The gift of God is eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. It would be sad if you realized that you have been blessed over and over again, but didn't have anyone to direct those words of gratitude. When God becomes your Heavenly Father through faith in the death and resurrection of his son then you can say, Thank you Father.

This day you have been provided a thank you note to God. I want to you to take a moment to write at least one thing that you are immensely grateful for. You do not need to sign your name. When you have completed your thank you card you can give it as an offering to God. You may want to place it in your Bible. You may want to share your thanks with a brother or sister in Christ during our fellowship time. Or you may want to bring it and place it on the communion table as a private offering to God. We will treat it with respect and I will pray over them in my quiet time and rejoice with you. This is a visible way to say to say, I want to thank you in the assembly of your people.

Verses to help me in preparing to preach: Heb. 13:15. Stories that could be used. Corrie Ten Boom when she and her sister Katie were placed in lice infested room.

A teller at a drive in window of a bank was having difficulty with the glaring sun. He lowered the shade. Behind the shade, he could see customers as they drove up, but they couldn't see him. As one woman drove in, he punched the button. The money drawer opened just as the woman came to a stop. She put her check in the drawer and it withdrew. Seconds later the drawer rolled out again with her money in it. She took the money and stared at the window. She couldn't see anybody. I know you are completely automated, she said, but I want to thank you any way. How sad to have a feeling of gratitude and have no one to thank. Some people are in that boat. They view ours as an automated universe.