

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

www.ffbic.org

SERMON: *Expressing Thanks*
SERIES: *The Art of Contentment*
SCRIPTURES: *Luke 17:11-19*
SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*
DATE: *11 - 11 - 2018*

**Credit to Rick Brown, John Ortberg*

ETRADE COMMERCIAL as offering ends...

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you. I promise you no Etrade commercials next week.

Announcements: Christmas Dinners

Last week we started this series called the Art of contentment (**SERIES TITLE SLIDE**). Many of us are seeking contentment in life, thinking that “if I just had a little more” then I’d be happy. But more is never enough, is it? And it’s because as we talked about last week, contentment is not about what you have or don’t have. Rather contentment is the result of a life-style that you learn to live. It is an art-form...creatively and intentionally re-focusing your life, not on stuff, but on living like Jesus.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Philippi. He said, **“I’ve learned the secret of the being content.**

And we want to be a church here at Five Forks, learning and practicing like Paul. I asked you to join me in some really practical challenges this past week. Rice and beans, bucket bath...and wow, thank you for participating with me.

This morning, we're gonna continue learning the art of contentment.

Are you good at saying “thank you?” A few weeks ago we had some family over in the evening and Jenny's cousin has a two year old son. His name is Max (**PIC OF MAX**). He's adorable. He's one of the cutest little two year-olds you'll ever meet. And you kind know this with kids...you have to teach them how to say thank you. That's because thank you does not come naturally to the human psyche. Kids have no problem saying, “Mine.” Or “No” or one my favorites was always “Uh-oh”. It's like the universal symbol for kids when they have done something they know they shouldn't do. Every parent has had this happen, you're sitting in the living room enjoying a quiet evening and all of a sudden it dawns on you that you have a two-year old and you shouldn't be sitting enjoying a quiet evening and all of a sudden, from the back the hallway you hear “Uh-oh”.

But thank you, that's a whole different word. Doesn't come naturally. And so Max he's just learning how to say thank you. And so he says thank you to everything. You get him drink “tank you...”. You help him put his coat on “tank you.” In fact, he's gotten so good at this word, they took him to the doctor to get a shot. And you know how well two year olds like getting shots. So they were keeping him distracted and laughing and talking, poor little guy goes in sits down oblivious to what is about to happen. Nurse quickly jabs his arm before he realizes what's happening, all of a sudden the expression on his cute little face changes as he crumbles under the pain of the needle. But no joke, he turned and looked up at that nurse and in the midst of his pitiful sobs, said “tank you.”

So this morning as we get closer and closer to the Thanksgiving Holiday, I'd like to talk a little bit about how learning to express thankfulness can have an impact on your contentment. One of best ways to learn the content life is to express thankfulness. Because in thankfulness you stop thinking and focusing on what you don't have and instead you appreciate what you do have.

It's kind of interesting actually, Paul, the guy who learned the secret of contentment, also writes a lot about the importance of expressing thankfulness to the early church.

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.

Ephesians 5:19-20 – 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.

Be a little community of thankfulness. Even things like shots from the nasty nurse.

Colossians 4:2 – Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Contentment and expressing thanks go hand in hand. If you are finding contentment illusive, it may be because you have not learned the art of expressing thanks.

There's a pretty fascinating story in **Luke 17:11-19**. Jesus is

¹¹ ...on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy^[b] met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

Now in that day, as many of you know, lepers were segregated from the rest of society. Leprosy was a contagious, deadly disease. Anyone who had it was kicked out of society. In religious circles, it carried this stigma that you may have offended God and so he was punishing you. In fact, many rabbi's used lepers as object lessons about sinfulness. Notice they stood at a distance and yelled to Jesus. They know their place in society and so they stand back and yell that Jesus might have mercy on them.

Jesus response is kind of interesting. He doesn't go over and lay hands on them. He doesn't pray for their healing. He doesn't spit in mud and rub it on them. Things he has done at other times. Instead...

14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”

Basically Jesus tells them to do what the OT law required, when a person with some skin disease, who has been segregated from society, is already healed. You have a skin disease, separated from society, skin disease clears up... go show yourself to the priest. And then the priest gives you permission to go back into “society”.

In other words, Jesus is telling them, to act in faith as if they are already healed. Go show yourself to the priest, as if you are cleansed. And all 10 obey Jesus' instructions.

And as they went, they were cleansed.

Can you picture this scene...one minute leaning on crutches, wrapped in bandages, limping and hobbling down the road and one after another they begin to discover “*I am healed. The sores are gone. The flesh restored.*” You can see the excitement on their faces, as they begin to run to the priest, they will be able to rejoin society.

But then there is 1. One out of 10. Who stops.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him...

“That rabbi, healed me. I've got to go back and thank him.”

And then Luke adds this little phrase...it almost sounds derogatory.

—and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Luke goes to great lengths to clarify that the one who came back to thank Jesus was a Samaritan and a foreigner.

You know what it probably means about the other 9? They were Jews. Why does that matter? Well, something really important Jesus is highlighting about the nature of thankfulness, who expresses it and why.

Where are the other 9? We don't know exactly...but some scholars believe it has something to do with this word

1. “ENTITLEMENT”.

This is when we believe we have earned or we are owed something.

“Jesus is a Jewish rabbi. We're Jews. We speak the right language. We have the right faith. We have the right skin color. We deserve this. Besides we obeyed his orders. We were on our way to the priest, just like he told us. Not only are we Jews, we're good, obedient Jews. In fact, it wasn't a gift that Jesus healed us...we earned it. He practically had to heal us.”

Can't believe those 9. Before you get so critical of those, nine it might be worth asking about how that word/attitude shows up in your life. It's so easy to notice in someone else, but it is just so subtle in our lives. It happens in such small ways, I would bet we don't often recognize the entitlement in our lives.

Have you ever been in a hurry, going through Chambersburg, you left a little late, you're trying to get somewhere and you start hitting all the red lights? What goes through your mind in those moments? Who put all of these red lights in

Chambersburg? Why aren't they on a better timing system? Why do I have to stop? Now I'm gonna be late. I have places to go. I have a right to green lights. And as soon as you get through the green light, a train comes...

Did you ever stop at the grocery store and they are sold out of what you came for. Jenny came home the other day, she had medium roast coffee. And I said, did you grab the wrong. I only drink dark roast. She said they didn't have any. They didn't have any dark roast. How can wal-mart run out of dark roast? As if somehow, that store, owes me.

How about with the way people spell or pronounce your name? My name is Shaun. Spelled S-H-A-U-N. The right way to spell. All the time people misspell my name, they confuse it with one of those other, wrong to spell it, like SHAWN or SEAN.

See how subtle that is. As if the spelling of my name is really that big of a deal. Does entitlement show up in your life? (special dates, parking spaces, holidays, black Friday shopping, entitlement)

Have you considered how we do this as a church? What are the things we walk into this building and feel like we are owed this? I mean just think, if we came next week and all of our nice comfy chairs were replaced with hard metal chairs. How do you think we would respond as a church?

We do this as individuals, we do this as churches and my fear is we do this as a country as well. We have such a sense of entitlement. I'm Jew. I'm good jew. We earned it.

And see the problem is that entitlement never leads to thanksgiving. The bigger our sense of entitlement the smaller our sense of gratitude.

In fact entitlement often leads to another form of expression...

2. Grumbling.

When we don't get what we think we are owed, we end grumbling. The Bible talks a lot about this ...just turn back to the book of Exodus with me for just a moment, I'll give you one example...

Exodus 15 - ²² Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea (God has just preformed one of the most epic miracles in the history of humanity, parting the Red Sea and in the process saved the nation. Wow the thanksgiving for that moment, must be enough for a lifetime, right...look what happens... **and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water...²⁴ So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"**

A few verses later 16:2 "so the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron."

Few verses, no joke, just look at how often that word shows up...

...in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"

⁸ Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

See what happens when entitlement gets inside of us. It comes out, it expresses itself in grumbling. Did you ever know a group of people who were grumblers? Grumbling is just all over our world, isn't it?

And it's contagious. And the worst part is, it happens to God's people, the church. It's just so easy to become a community of grumblers. Paul writes to the church in Corinth...

“And do not grumble, as some of them did...”

Even church people, we can be grumblers and it's a pretty big deal to God. It's serious enough that look what Paul says,

—and were killed by the destroying angel.”

God sent in the destroying angel because of it. Grumbling destroys churches, communities, families...

Have you ever grumbled? How many of you are a little worried that God might thinking about sending in his destroying angel? How many of you are Googling the reference of that verse right now to see if it's actually in the Bible?

I was thinking about how easy grumbling happens in my life. The other morning my alarm went off. And this is just how easy it is for me. My first thought was, I don't like it when my alarm goes off. And then I thought, you know, I hate clocks. I hate time. I hate that noise my alarm makes when it goes off. I hate waking up. In fact, I'm convinced there are two kinds of people in this world. People who love waking up in the morning. People who hate people who love waking up in the morning.

See how that attitude of grumbling gets in there. And just messes us all up.

The point is grumbling is a pretty big deal to God. Grumbling is what happens to people when we don't learn how to say “thank you”. Grumbling is what happens when people forget the good things God has done. That my life is a gift.

Did you notice who came back to thank Jesus? The foreigner. The Samaritan. Why? He knew, he knew his healing was a gift. He hadn't earned it, he didn't deserve it. He was a leper, he had the wrong skin color, he spoke the wrong language. Jesus didn't owe him anything. He knew this is a gift...and so he returned to thank that Master.

3. Give Thanks

Thankfulness happens when you begin to recognize your life, for what it is, a gift from God.

Psalm 24 – “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”

Paul told the church in Corinth - **19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price.**

The art of contentment starts when you begin to see your life is a gift from God.

When you start to see life that way, I believe it starts to express itself, not in grumbling, but in thankfulness. Your life becomes a daily expression of thanks to the Creator.

CS Lewis wrote, **“Our delight in what we enjoy is incomplete until it is expressed.”**

So I'd like you to try something this week. I'd like us to try something this week. How do we creatively and intentionally practice expressing thanks?

4. Do you pray?

I mean seriously do you ever pray?

I'm not sure what exactly it is, but there seems to be a correlation between your prayer life and your level of thankfulness.

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.

Colossians 4:2 – Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

In fact, every devout Jew practices the discipline of prayer. 3 times every day, Jews pray something known as **the 18 benedictions**.

Benediction simply means “good words” or “expressing thanks.” We talk about the benediction to end our church service, that's because when the service is over and you know pastor is saying his final words, you are “thankful”. I'm just kidding, the benediction is kind of like a blessing or encouragement as you leave the service.

And so the Jews pray the 18 benedictions 3 times a day in order to remember that life, everything in life is a gift from the creator. You are too likely to forget. You are too likely to start thinking your life is your life and you're entitled to it. And then it's too easy to start grumbling and complaining. So instead God says, learn the art of expressing thanks through prayer.

Morning prayers “Blessed are you God. Thank you for you all you give. Thank you for the warm bed I get to sleep in all night long.” Afternoon prayer “Blessed are you God. Thank you for all you give. The work that my hands have to do.” Evening prayer. Same thing.

In fact, Jesus is always a great example of these kinds of things. Jesus teaches his disciples The Lord's Prayer. Some scholars believe Jesus is teaching his disciples an abbreviated version of the 18 benedictions.

"Our Father in Heaven hallowed (or blessed) be your name"

And so I'd like us to try that this week as a church. This week we will be the church of the 18 benedictions. The church practicing the art of expressing thanksgiving. You're going to intentionally pray with me, prayers of thanksgiving this week. Every day. Multiple times a day.

Here in this community we are going to replace our entitlement with gratitude. We will be replacing our grumbling with words of thankfulness. When your co-workers and friends and family are around you this week, they are just gonna hear words of thankfulness.

A. Start small.

Thank God for the small things in your life.

Jesus said in his prayer..."Give us today our daily bread."

See how simple and small that is. Our tradition of prayer before meal time, comes from this idea. Thank you God for the food you give. But let's slow down and say it with intention and purpose this week. I'm not talking about the often insincere, quick, hurried prayers we often give for our food with the TV on, right before we eat so that we can get it out of the way.

"Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who eats the fastest get's the most. Amen!"

Does that sound sacrilegious to you? There is no sincerity or intent in that prayer.

This week, every meal becomes an opportunity to express thanks to God for the gift of food and your taste buds.

And then

B. Be specific

You remember the meal on the night Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, and did what? He blessed it and gave thanks for it!

A little later in the meal, he took the cup he blessed and gave thanks for that.

One Jewish Rabbi writes, “A man must not taste anything until he has blessed it.” Anything you eat this week, just say a prayer of thanks to God for it.

Thank you for pizza. Thank you God for pepperonis and sausage, and the true evidence of God’s existence...bacon. Thank you for ooey gooey cheese that stretches from the pizza box to my plate.

Small and specific...

I love this, in the 18 benedictions they had a prayer of thanks for the lamps. Thank you God for giving us the gift of light. I mean have you ever done that? Have you ever thought about that? Thank you for the light switch on my wall. That we don’t live in a dark world. God could have made a world without light and color and texture. But instead thank you God for all of things that your light allows us to see. All of the colors that we get to enjoy. Thank you for the way some people put those colors together into incredible images that inspire us (**church logo...49ers logo**). Sorry that some people use those colors and put them together in ways that dishonor you (image of **steelers/eagles/ravens** football logo’s)

I bet if you start in one room in your home or you start with one person in your life, replace your grumbling in that room or about that person to prayers of thanks it will start to have an impact on you.

Ok, other thing I'd love for you to try this week. **Write a letter** to someone expressing thanks to that person for some way they have influenced or inspired you. A co-worker, a family member, a friend. You could actually sit down and write a prayer of thanks to God. But seriously sit down, one page, just write specifically how that person has impacted you.

Thank you for Landon. Thank you for the brain you have given that boy. Thank you for his creativity. Thank you for his smile. Thank you for his generous little heart. Thank you that he cares more about people than stuff. I mean he's the kid in our house who will give up just about anything to make his brother or sister happy and he's 9 years old. Now that is a compassionate heart.

Give that person that letter this week as an expression of thankfulness.

I was reading about one person who did this. They wrote a letter of expressing thanks, and then they scheduled a time to meet with that person over lunch. And then, instead of giving the other person the letter, they pulled out their letter and they read that letter to that person. Absolutely shared a transformational moment of thanksgiving. Isn't that awesome?

Final thing I want to encourage you regarding your expression of thanksgiving and how it can really become just a way of life.

C. Do it with others.

Book of Acts 3...Peter and John are on their way to the temple at 3pm in the afternoon...why? Because its time for the afternoon benedictions and the temple is

the place that signifies God's presence and there are going to be others there doing the same thing.

I just want to encourage you, we are part of a community of giving thanks. We do it together. We try to do that every Sunday morning in here. It's easy for this (and maybe other groups you're part of) to become a place of grumbling and complaining. The Jews weren't instructed to practice grumbling. Jesus didn't encourage his followers to get together at the temple to grumble. When the church does that, God sends in the destroying angel. We're not interested in the destroying angel.

Instead he says, my people, my community, those who are discovering the art of the content life, they get together and practice being thankful together. We want this church, our church, every Sunday to be a place of expressing thanks. A community of benedictions.

In fact, I'll just tell you this, did you know we have a "Thanksgiving service"? Next Sunday night. We only do this once a year. We have this special service, where God's people come together and just say thank you. We'll have an opportunity that night to share and express thanks as a community with one another.

When you walk out of the auditorium, in the foyer you'll notice risers set up with food items. Those are gifts of food that we are giving to other families in our church community. The deacons are gonna take all that food hand out to families in our church who can use it. We're celebrating that next Sunday night. Isn't that awesome?

This week as we learn the art of contentment we want to be the church of the benedictions.

Pray