

“Thinking Thanks-filled Thoughts for a Thanks-giving Life” – that’s a mouth-full, which is what all of us will have a few days from now – but what I’m thinking about is more than a mouth full, but how our life as Christians is meant to be a life full of thanksgiving!

We are thankful for God’s redemption in Christ – we cannot earn God’s grace and favor: God comes to us first and asks us to respond to that grace in our lives – a thanks-giving life!

I’d like us to think today, then, about gratitude and thanksgiving. I’d like us to think about ‘thinking thanks-filled thoughts,’ whether we feel like thinking those thank-filled thoughts or not.

Deborah Norville wrote a book several years ago titled ‘Thank You Power’ on the importance of gratitude, the power of giving thanks.

She wrote about of a couple of professors, who spent a number of years studying people who deliberately chose to remember to think thank-filled thoughts, who were asked to do it whether they were grateful or not.

What they found was that people who worked on remembering to think thank-filled thoughts

- felt better about their lives,
- were more optimistic,
- were more energetic,
- were more enthusiastic,
- were more determined,
- were more interested,
- were more joyful,
- exercised more,
- had fewer illnesses,
- got more sleep, and
- were more likely to have helped someone else.

And this tied in with some other studies that she pointed to that showed that deliberately thinking thanks-filled thoughts can lead to

- clearer thinking,
- better resilience during tough times,
- higher immune response,
- less likelihood of being plagued by stress, longer lives, closer family ties,
- greater religiousness – and then this (this is surely the clincher!) –
- thinner thighs and six-pack abs (which clearly means I’m not as thankful as I ought to be!)

And the impact on your *own* life is just the beginning, they say:. Beyond that, there’s the impact of your life on another . . . which doesn’t take much to realize: Who would you rather be with? Who makes a greater positive impact on your life? Somebody who is always grumbling? Or somebody who’s grateful?

In thinking about someone who is grateful, I don’t mean someone who has lost touch with reality, but somebody who knows that life is hard, but nevertheless, they are grateful – and I can think of some of those people whom God has placed in my life, and the power of those lives!

Life was tough for them, but they chose to be grateful and their impact, even after they’ve been long gone, is still enormous.

We literally can brighten the day and change the life of somebody else by being thankful – a little smile changes things, brightens the day, lifts somebody up.

There are so very many good things in your life right now. Whatever they may be, you always have plenty of great reasons to be exceedingly thankful.

It is not happy people who are thankful; it is thankful people who are happy.

Of course there are problems and challenges and difficulties. And there are some people who have re-written our psalm – they say: “This is the kind of day that I have, so I will complain and be mad in it!”

Instead of complaining about what you don’t have, take our psalm to heart as the energy for our faith – “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Be truly thankful for all the goodness and richness that you do have. Instead of resenting those who have wronged you, remember and rejoice for all those people who have lifted you up.

When you find yourself worrying about what might be coming, stop. When you feel doubt, or fear, or anger, or frustration, know that you can let it go just as surely as you can pull your hand away from a hot stove.

Recall with gratitude that you’ve made it through every challenge, and know with confidence that you can forge success out of whatever comes your way.

Feel how good it is and feel how empowering it is to fill yourself with thanks-filled thought.

It is good to reflect upon thankful thoughts. It is even better to continually put thankfulness into action, to lovingly make your world an even better place.

The way to be truly and fully thankful for what you have is to put it to use. Abundance grows more abundant when it is exercised. Life’s great and wonderful blessings are not for hoarding. They are for living.

What’s important is not how much or how little you have. What’s important is what you do with it.

That’s what Paul is saying here: “Give thanks in all things, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Be genuinely thankful for your good fortune by applying that good fortune in an authentic, purposeful direction. Make good use of life’s goodness, and there is no limit to how valuable it can grow.

Your thoughts do not end when you finish thinking them. They continue to move through your life in ways you may not even realize.

So thinking thanks-filled thoughts for a thanks-giving life – this is the day, yesterday was the day, tomorrow is the day the Lord has made, rejoice and be glad in it!

Keep your life focused on the goodness – as Paul says, “...hold fast to what is good” – for what begins in your mind ends up in your life.

Thinking thanks-filled thoughts for a thanks-giving life – more than a mouth-full, may it be for you a life-full: “Give thanks in all things, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.