

I invite you to open your bibles this morning, to today's scripture text, which can be found in the book of Deuteronomy, the 8th chapter, verses 10-18. Which can be found on page ____ in your pew bibles. We begin a new series titled "Taking care of God's gifts" Today's scripture reveals a lesson of remembrance and thanksgiving.

Dt 8:10-18

10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16 He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

(from Thomas a Kempis: The Imitation of Christ, chapter 21.)

ABOVE all things and in all things, O my soul, rest always in God, for He is the everlasting rest of the saints.

Grant, most sweet and loving Jesus, that I may ***seek my repose in You*** above every creature; above all health and beauty; above every honor and glory; every power and dignity; above all knowledge and cleverness, all riches and arts, all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise, all sweetness and consolation; above every hope and promise, every merit and desire; above all the *gifts and favors* that You can give or pour down upon me; above all the joy and exultation that the mind can receive and feel; and finally, above the angels and archangels and all the heavenly host; above all things visible and invisible; and may I *seek my repose in You* above everything that is *not You*, my God.

For You, O Lord my God, are above all things the best. You alone are most high, You alone most powerful. You alone are most sufficient and most satisfying, You alone most sweet and consoling. You alone are most beautiful and loving, You alone most noble and glorious *above all things*. In You is every perfection that has been or ever will be. Therefore, whatever You give me besides Yourself, whatever You reveal to me concerning Yourself, and whatever You promise, is too small and insufficient when I do not see and fully enjoy You alone. For my heart cannot rest or be fully content until, rising above all gifts and every created thing, it rests in You.

Today's scripture deals with the children of Israel being given instruction about how they were to enter into the promised land. They knew that God had promised them a land which flowed with milk and honey. They knew that their future was bright, because of the gifts God had promised them. They spent a lot of time wandering in the wilderness. The wilderness was a punishment. He disciplined them so that they would be prepared to enter and receive the good land. It was a punishment because they had disobeyed the Lord, they demonstrated that they didn't trust Him to take on the people of the land of Canaan, and so they drew back in fear and so God punished them with 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

The wilderness was a place to test and humble Israel. To see if they would continue to follow the Lord, obey the covenant, and to prepare them for a day in which he was going to take them into the land of Canaan. So, God, with a mighty hand, worked among them many times miracles while they were in the wilderness. Not the least of which was the times he supernaturally provided bread, they called it manna. It was everything they needed to sustain them. He did this to provide what their physical bodies needed, but to also emphasize that man does not live by bread alone, but also by spiritual food. Not only did He provide them bread, He provided them clothing, and shoes that did not wear out, even though they were walking on hot, rough terrain. God, over and over again would lead them. He would lead them by a cloud, He would lead them by a fire. God parted the Red Sea as they fled the Egyptians. He provided water from a rock! Over and over again God proved Himself to be faithful during this time of punishment, during this time when they were discouraged, during this time when they were in despair, in poverty.

These people were suffering, they were nomadic people, they were poor people. But they knew that there was a city that God had prepared for them. They knew that there was a land that God had promised to their fathers; to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob. They knew that there was going to be a day when they would arrive.

The book of Deuteronomy, which means *a second telling*. A second telling of the Law, where Moses was reminding the new generation of what was to come. He said that they were a people that was impoverished and that they were a people that will become very wealthy. Telling them that they were going to be enjoying the things from the land, and things were going to be very good for them. He gives them a warning here, he says when you have eaten, and when you are full, then you will need to bless the Lord, for the good land that He has given you.

We have been full, for a long time. We hear stories of history, of men that sacrificed so much of life and of livelihood in order for us to be able to enjoy the things that we enjoy every day. We don't know what it is to live in poverty for the most part. Whenever we need something we have access to some means of enabling us to get it. But there are some people that have lived before us, that even to eat was a delicacy. So, we have been full, and we have been blessed.

God has blessed us beyond measure. We look around, and God has been so good to us. He has provided for our every need, and even many of our wants. God has poured out his blessings upon us. Not only materially, but physically, and spiritually! God has been so good to us to put us in a place where we have heard the truth, His word. Amidst the world, where there are so many places that they don't hear the Gospel that we hear, and know about a real salvation that changes your soul, and comes into your life, gives you a new life, gives you a Savior, Jesus

Christ who is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings. We have heard the Gospel, the good news, God has been very good to us! We have eaten, even to the full.

But we must realize that there are inherent problems, and challenges that come with being full. In the times that we are full, we are posed with a particular challenge. The challenge is a false sense of security in the things that we have. So, the message that was given to the children of Israel is an important one; one that is very relevant to us, today. We have a tendency to move toward being self-secure, and self-reliant instead of trusting in the Lord. Sometimes God just wants us to step back and remember where our good things have come from.

The children of Israel were used to being poor, used to being nomadic, and when they got full, there was a temptation for them to begin thinking that they had done this themselves. So, when we talk about times of being full we are well acquainted with those times, because we are in them now. We might not always be so fortunate. We don't know what tomorrow holds, we don't know if tomorrow might be a time of need. But today, we are in a time of blessing.

I get ahead of myself sometimes, I look forward to what's next. Sometimes God in a still, quiet voice reaches down into my heart, and says I just want you to be thankful, for what is here, today. We are entering into a time when we celebrate Thanksgiving next month, and we have a lot to thank God for. It would be good for us, after we consider all that we've taken in, all that we have eaten, eaten to the full, that we step back and we just begin to thank God, and bless Him for all the things that *He has done*.

The word blessed in this scripture means to kneel in adoration towards God, to worship Him, and to praise Him. You would think that in our culture today, in the nation that we live in, as prosperous as we have been, with so many blessings from God, you would see people all around kneeling and worshiping God.

That the most common words that you would hear would be words of adoration towards the Lord. But it's not so because so many people have forgotten where the good things we have come from. That Gods blessings have come from heaven. We should pray this often, "Lord help me to remember that all good things come from Heaven, that every good thing comes from God." Because there's not a single thing that we have that hasn't been given to us by our Heavenly Father that he has bestowed upon us so wonderfully. We must remember where our blessings come from, and to bless the Lord is to kneel down, is to humble ourselves, is to adore Him, is to worship Him.

Sometimes God brings us to our knees through times of adversity. God would prefer us when we are not in the times of adversity to kneel down before Him anyway and to bless Him in our times of being full. Abraham Lincoln said that he was driven to his knees because he had nowhere else to go.

We as Gods people know that even whenever we are full that we should bless the Lord. We are given certain commands in the scripture to do this.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100) (Col 1:12) 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

(1 Th 5:18) 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Have you ever wondered what God's will is for your life? People ask that all the time. What does God desire of me? What is His will for my life? As if they are searching for something that is unknowable. Here in Thessalonians 5:18 it says, "this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Give thanks, in *all* circumstances ". We must be grateful in our heart while we are full, we must remember to count our blessings, and lift up our blessings to our Heavenly Father.

There are certain obstacles that get in our way whenever we are full. Whenever we have everything that we need there are certain things that come and get in the way of us praising God, and thanking God, and they are mentioned here in Deuteronomy chapter 8. He warns them before they ever get into the promised land that you are going to come into a temptation when God really blesses you, and things are going to get into you way and keep you from blessing God. See if these things are relevant today.

The first thing he said was that in the midst of your blessings you are going to forget the Lord. Verse 11 says *Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.* We don't ever truly forget God. But sometimes we forget *about* God. He says to beware that in the midst of your prosperity that you forget about the Lord and neglect His worship, and neglect the things that He has called you to do. Do you see any of this neglect around us today? Have we experienced any neglect in our generation because we have had things too good? Why is it that Church houses aren't so full every Sunday morning?

There are churches of every denomination currently that are struggling to get people to come and worship God. Is it because God hasn't been faithful? Is it because God hasn't been good? I would say it's safe to say that we are more blessed than any other generation that's ever lived in terms of being poured out upon by the hand of God. Yet, he says beware that you do not forget the Lord thy God by failing to do the commandments that he has commanded.

That what it means to forget, not so much that you say I know the Lord God is there, God's there, he knows my heart, but he says that you have forgotten to obey the Lord. Becoming neglectful of the things of God and forgetting that the Lord is still actively providing.

One of the primary reasons we are seeing so much neglect in the terms of the things of God is because there are so many options, because of our prosperity. There used to be a time when Sunday came there was nowhere else to go except to Church. All there was to do on Sunday was to go to the house of the Lord and worship Him. But now we are so blessed that we have so many other options of things to do, and we can always think of something else to do that's more appealing to us than to go sit in a church and worship God.

There's another obstacle when we get full, in our hearts, we mess it up with pride. In verse 14 when Moses was speaking to the children he said 14 "then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery". Whenever we are prosperous, often times, we think too much of ourselves, becoming high minded in our thinking.

Beginning to think more of ourselves than we really are, and forgetting the fact that whenever we approach God, we approached him as beggars, and He bestowed upon us all the things that we have.

Another obstacle to thanksgiving, is self-confidence. Thinking that its by our own strength that we have achieved the things that we have. Look at verse 17, "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' " In laymen's terms, he basically says, if you forget the Lord, that somehow you begin to believe that somehow you accumulated this prosperity by your own strength.

Forgetting every morning, that we were sustained through the night by the grace of God. I never thought about keeping my heart going, I never thought about taking in breath, but God allowed my body to be able do that while I was asleep. Then when I wake up in the morning and have some semblance of rational thought. I've got the strength to take my legs and put them over the side of my bed, put my feet upon the floor. Stand myself up, clean myself up, go out into the world. The ability to process things, to be able to provide benefit or some contribution to society, then sometimes we say, "Look what I have done."

All that we have done is because of the hand of the Lord. All that we have done is because of the grace of God, and how he has been so good to us. He could collapse our economy and there would be no jobs. He could make it to where we didn't have the ability to perform our jobs. But he doesn't because He's good to us. He allows us to continue, and all he really desires from us is obedience and thanksgiving. We just say, "God, we are so thankful for the things that have given!" But many time's self-confidence keeps us from blessing the Lord.

These are the things that are common to us, in America, the wealthiest country in the world, that gets in our way of truly being thankful for the things that we have. Sometimes we are just too full. Being too full is not the problem. Moses told them, God is going to make you full. God's going to bless you, and he's going to bless you so much you can't contain it all, and that is from the hand of God.

We shouldn't feel guilty about the blessings that we have received. We often do that. We either get lost in the midst of them, or we feel guilty about them, and neither is the right approach. What we should do is take inventory, and say God we are so grateful for everything that you have put into our life, and beyond all things, what we are so grateful for, is **YOU!** If we don't have God, we don't have anything else. If we don't have the Lord, nothing else matters. You can be a lost person, in the midst of a lot of prosperity, and have still not gained anything.

It's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance, the bible says, and we presume against God. The bible says, that Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount and said that he allows it to rain on the just and the unjust. We think of that in the wrong context, thinking rain is a bad thing. No, he means that God continues to provide with sustenance for the field of the righteous man and for the sinner. Then we say, he's wicked and he got rain on his field, I'm serving the Lord, I got rain on my field, and he got a 10th more than I did. It says that God wanted to show that God loved him too.

Instead of forgetting the Lord, we should make a practice of remembering the Lord in our life, by purposefully obeying Him. We so often want to passively serve the Lord, but we have to remember every day, that today is Gods day. That today I want to seek the will of God, and once I know it, to do it.

God wants us every day, to seek His will and at least acknowledge that our life is not our own. What we need is for Him to lead us, and whatever His will is for us for the day, that we would do it. When we know what is the right thing to do, that we will obey the Lord.

The temptation of the Israelites was to forget the Lord, so we have to remember the Lord on a daily basis. Not only remember who he is, but to remember that He is the Lord. That our day today is not our plans, our day today is to do His will. We have to remind ourselves, like the apostle Paul said, every single day, that we die daily. We have to make a decision every day that we are going to let Him be Lord, and King of our life, and to seek his will, and to do it. We should all be thankful for God's word. Because it's there in His Word that we are reminded that He's still in control, and we are his servants.

The second thing that we can do to bring more thanksgiving into our lives is to purposefully humble our heart. If you are not in the practice of bowing your knees to God in prayer, I would advise that you put your posture in a place where you want your heart to be. Sure, you can pray wherever you are. Sometimes we need to get down on our knees, before God, put our face on the ground, and say, "I am but dust o Lord, you are God. I'm going to humble my heart, and if I can't get my heart humble, I'm going to get my body humble, and say that's where I want my heart to be. We must fight against being high minded, thinking that we are more than we are.

He doesn't say get rid of the prosperity that God gives you, He says when you are full, when you are in the midst of it, get on your knees, and praise God, bless God, adore God. Humble your heart before God.

Here's one Satan's tricks, he says "God knows your heart, He doesn't need anything else." I know because he plays on me that way, I'll want to pray, and he says God already knows all that so there's no need to say it. Yes, there is! Why would we pray if God already knows? Because he has told us to pray. Prayer is as much about us getting into the will of God as it is anything else. We have to trust in the Lord, instead of trusting in ourselves. We need every day, to ask Him for our daily bread. Asking God to provide for something we feel like we know is already going to be there, yet we don't have any promise that it will be there tomorrow. Every day we need to pray and ask God for His provision, and to give us those things we need. Then when we receive them, no matter how routine it is, we thank Him for giving it, and answering prayer.

In the morning, I do this, and I'm sure most of you do the same thing; I get up in the morning and thank God for providing all the things that I'm going to need, and even the things I don't know that I'm going to need. God is providing for everything that we need, God is blessing us. Sometimes when we will have to have the right word, or the strength to do a job, and all of a sudden it just comes to us. Do you think that just comes to us? No, God is providing for our every need that we have, and God is blessing us with answering prayer. SO, learning purposefully to trust in God, having faith in God, by asking for those things that you need, and thanking him when they are delivered. Because we know that God owns it all.

As God is pouring out His blessings upon us, we should enjoy the blessings, but we should make it a purpose never to forget God in the midst of them. There is such a peace about being able to walk through this journey of life, knowing that all the blessings are nice, but what your heart loves the most is God, the blesser.

Think back on your life, and how good he has been to you. He has been good to you with the intention that you come to know Him. God is so good, he is good all the time. As we enter into this thanksgiving season, let's continue to be the lights of the world God intends us to be to a darkened world, by being thankful. Be thankful for what we have, always giving Him the praise, always giving Him the service, and saying Lord I'm willing to serve you in the way that you would have me to do.

Deuteronomy was a long time ago, but they are not different than us, in fact they are pretty much the same as us. I just pray that we can have grateful hearts, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus concerning us, that we will be thankful for everything that we have in all things.

Heavenly Father,

We lift up our hearts to you in adoration for what you continue to give us,

To provide for our lives and our needs in every way.

We thank you for providing us with our Savior Jesus Christ,

and the promise of an eternity in heaven with you because of Him.

Thank you Lord for revealing to us a way to live a life of blessings in your

favor by remaining a good steward of your grace, and the gifts you bestow upon us each and every day.

Forgive us Father when we fail to remember that it is you, and you alone,

That is the source of everything that we have in our lives.

Help us to remember to give you praise, adoration, and thanks

for these provisions.

So that we will be the light that you asked us to be,

as a witness to a dark and fallen world that needs you in their lives

to find true satisfaction, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

We pray this, in the precious, and heavenly name of Jesus.

Amen.