

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

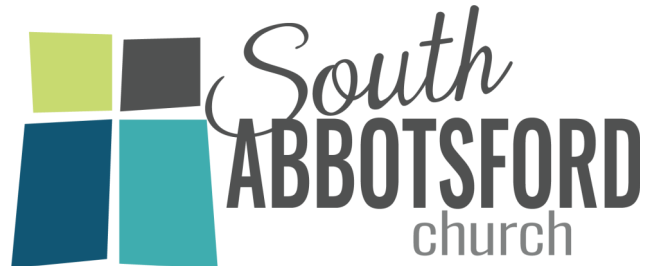
Sermon Series: Vintage Faith

Title: Thankful For the Things We Are Rarely Thankful For

Speaker: Steve Berg

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Date: October 8, 2017



DISCUSSION

WARMUP FOR DISCUSSION:

- At Thanksgiving, you may well have reviewed the events and circumstances of this past year. Without a doubt, all of us have experienced some surprises, things we would never have anticipated. We were not in control of those circumstances:
 - What was the most pleasant, unexpected blessing?
 - What was the least pleasant circumstance that I (we) did not anticipate?
- Were there circumstances in this past year where you were mad at God, or disappointed in God, or questioning God? Why?
- **A word of encouragement:** There may be a lot of challenge as we wrestle with this message and the texts below. For some of us there may be a tendency to hide behind "everything is good" when really, things have been really tough. **Let's risk some transparency** so that we can rally together around these 'thorns' and build each other up through encouragement and prayer.

REVIEW AND EXPLORE the Key Texts:

- As you read the texts, write down one key phrase or word that jumped out at you. Be ready to share one. **Why did this one grab your attention especially?**
 - * 1 Thess. 5: 16-18
 - * Colossians 3:15-17; 4:2
 - * Romans 8:28
 - * James 1:2-4

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REVIEW THE SERMON:

Few of us have the ability to grasp and remember all the ideas and challenges that Pastor Steve put before us. However, the Holy Spirit has a unique way of getting at what's going on in our hearts and minds. **As you check out the main points of the sermon below, be ready to share what became a sticky piece of "Soul Velcro" for you:**

- **Live a Life of Thankfulness:** What was your view of God this past year?
"My life of Thankfulness declares that..."
 - God is stingy/abundant?
 - God is a taker/a giver?
 - The world is a place to get pleasure from the world/give blessing to the world?
 - The treasure is a temporal/eternal treasure?
 - What flows out of my life tends to come out as grumbling/gratitude?
- **With Thanksgiving give Witness to God's Glory. (This section might be the most challenging for us. Giving thanks for the thorns! In all circumstances? Really?!)**
 - In North America, we're often told that the norm for Christians is (because we are living the abundant life; where we expect God to bless us) that we should be free of suffering and pain. It might come as a rude shock to find out that Christians experience pretty much the same problems, troubles, circumstances that everyone else does.
 - What makes the difference for followers of Jesus? Romans 8:28, James 1:2-4

CLOSING STRONG: Praying - from dreams to reality

- Each of you should have received a copy of SAC's 2017/18 **Priority Vision Statements**. As you go to prayer it may be a great idea to review (in concise form) our three dream statements:
 1. Prayer Engagement
 2. Holy Spirit Empowerment
 3. Difference-Making Faith
- With those in the forefront of our thoughts and hearts, we can ask the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray with purpose and power.
 - E.g. **Difference-Making Faith:** Someone in your group has experienced some really difficult health issues this year. However, this person has experienced God as a fortress when all s/he could do was run to Jesus. S/he is now relating to a "not-yet-believer" who is also ill. When given an appropriate opportunity s/he can give testimony to the sustaining power of God in his/her life. "I'm like a beggar looking for bread and I found Jesus as the bread of life."
 - This gives us new opportunity to pray for both parties in their conversations – that God would work in a new way in the "not-yet-believer."