

This Sunday's Sermon: The Difficulty of Being Thankful

Colossians 3:12-17

Thanksgiving Day brings to mind food, family and football. The American holiday originated when the nation was an agricultural economy and harvest time was a natural opportunity to give thanks for a good year. Currently, the day associated with overconsumption of food is in danger of being eclipsed by early Black Friday sales and overconsumption of things nobody needs. The day means many things, but what should it mean to Christians?

The Apostle Paul was familiar with state-sponsored holidays, feast days and commercialism, although all of those things were associated with the Greek and Roman gods of his day. I feel his response to a day of thanksgiving would be puzzlement over why a Christian would need a special day to be thankful to God? For Paul, thanksgiving was a way of life rather than a holiday.

In his letter to the Colossians, a church he has not met in person, he offers general instructions on the Christian life. At the end of a sizable list of behaviors a Christian should demonstrate, he concludes with the words "and be thankful." Thanksgiving is foundational for all other Christian deeds. He declares, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Living thankful lives is difficult. There is a good reason a holiday called Thanksgiving Day involves almost everything but actually being thankful. Fighting with family members, watching parades and football, shopping for deals and eating too much food are all much easier than practicing thanksgiving. Scientific studies repeatedly show that people who make gratitude an intentional part of their lives are healthier and happier, but like so many things that are good for us, most of us don't do it. The world is

full of bad news and struggles of all kinds, so it can be difficult to be thankful. The Apostle Paul says that being thankful is what we were created to do, and gratitude is the best way to overcome the trials of this life.

Grace and Peace, Rev. Chase Peeples