

Thanksgiving Special

INTRO

Tired of it yet?

Tired of everything we've lost, everything that seems to have been taken away from us during this time? Everything we can't do?

Maybe your thanksgiving is/was different this year (either b/c of Governors orders, or lost someone, or broken relationship(s))

Weird thing... Almost can't help it.

It's human nature to focus on what we can't do and what we don't have.

Especially 2020...

Are you tired of it yet? Feeling empty, discouraged, unmotivated, sad... just discontent in one way or another.

Cruel twist... life forces us to focus... AND...

It is impossible to be content when we are constantly reminded of what we don't have and can't do.

So why do we keep being reminded?

We can point to some outside person, group, or problem... but whenever you point out someone else's issues you have to remember you've got 3 pointing back at you...

Maybe we should be three times more self-reflective than accusative?

Yes, this is a hard year, no question, we are all feeling it... Each of us has lost something and some of us have lost a lot.

BUT we only make it worse for ourselves (**and others**) when we focus so much on what we don't have and can't do.

Ok/good/healthy to grieve lament... part of the way humans deal with loss, but if we continue in it, continue to focus on what we have lost, what we can't have or do or be... it produces this never ending cycle of anger, sadness, frustration.

There's a better way...

Holiday season... perfect time to find true contentment in life...

And here's a key I'd like to offer... **Gratitude creates contentment.**

GOD

We always have a choice. Will we focus on what we don't have or what we do have?

Will we complain and moan about what is taken away or be thankful for what is given?

Here's why so much of the biblical writings talk about being happy / praising God in all circumstances... **GOD is FOR you.**

JOHN 3:16-17

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

GOSPEL

Will bad happen? Yes. But it is all in the hands of the God who is so for us that chose to die for us.

If someone will die for you they are for you.

If he loves us enough to do that... we can trust that the bad will turn out for good either in this life or the next...

Romans 8:28 **And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.**

So in light of this... do we complain about what God has allowed to be taken away?

Do we complain about what God has allowed to happen or not happen?

Or do we thank him for what we have, what he *has* done FOR us, and that his love will never leave us?

Whether we like it or not, or want to admit it or not, we have a choice.

YOU:

Write down what you are lamenting... (what has been taken, what you have lost, things that are going on that you feel are unfair, people, etc.).. Allow yourself to grieve these...

BUT THEN...

For each lament, write three things for which you are thankful.

WE:

This year has been hard. For a lot of reasons. Will 2021 be better... no idea.

But I know we can find contentment and peace and happiness... b/c God will not stop loving us, caring for us, giving to us, and being FOR us.

The choice is yours...

We can choose to focus on what has been taken away or we can choose to focus on God's goodness.

That is why David (hunted, betrayed, son tried to kill him, public humiliation for all his faults) could write...

Psalm 103:1-5.

Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

Notice David is talking to himself.

This is his internal monologue... Notice the quality of his self-talk.

He's commanding his own soul into gratitude.

What has your self-talk been like lately?

It's our choice- complaints or Contentment... you can't have both.

May we never forget "the good things he has done for us"

No matter what we lose, gratitude creates a contentment that can't be taken away.

Questions

1. How do you usually deal with loss and not being able to do the things you want to do? Has that changed over the past few months?
2. Read all of Psalm 103. David lists many ways in which God is FOR us. What stands out to you? Are there any that seem difficult to believe or trust for you right now?
3. What have you lost? Share this with your group. What are you thankful for? Share this, too. Spend some time in prayer sharing these losses & thanksgivings.