

Sermon Title: **"THANKING/PRAISING GOD IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS!"**

Sermon Text: **1 Thess. 5: 16-18; James 1: 2-4**

Introduction:

GOOD MORNING TO ALL! THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN OUR WORSHIP SERVICE TODAY! AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME ALL YOU WHO ARE JOINING US FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY IN OUR SUNDAY SERVICE CELEBRATION.

AS I WAS PREPARING FOR THIS SERMON, I HAPPEN TO STUMBLE ON THIS SLIDE. SHOW SLIDE!

INDEED, THE TRUE TEST OF GRATITUDE OR THANKFULNESS IS NOT DURING TIMES OF PLENTY OR PROSPERITY BUT DURING TIMES OF ADVERSITY OR WANT.

AS SOMEONE HAS SAID "IT'S THOSE TIMES WE GO WITHOUT THAT GIVE US CAPACITY TO FULLY APPRECIATE WHAT WE HAVE." THE JOY OF FOOD IS GREATLY ENHANCED WHEN WE HAVE MISSED A MEAL. WE DEFINITELY APPRECIATE & LOVE THOSE FIRST SUNNY DAYS OF THIS MONTH, MAY, AFTER A LONG WINTER. IMAGINE THE JOY & GRATEFULNESS OF A PERSON FOR A MOMENT OF HEALTH AFTER FULLY RECOVERING FROM A LONG BOUT WITH COVID-19 VIRUS.

CHURCH/FRIENDS, IT'S HARD TO COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS WHEN YOU HAVE ALWAYS HAD THEM. THE ANGELS WERE CREATED IN PERFECT ENVIRONMENT RECEIVING BLESSING AFTER BLESSING FROM GOD. THEY DID NOT KNOW SUFFERING, PAIN OR DEATH. INSTEAD OF BEING GRATEFUL, A THIRD OF THE ANGELS BECAME RESENTFUL AND REBELLED (ISA. 14:13-14, REV. 12:4). WE CAN SEE THIS SAME PATTERN REPEATED IN HUMANITY. HISTORY SHOWS THAT A GENERATION BORN INTO PROSPERITY USUALLY BECOMES AN UNGRATEFUL GENERATION WITH ENTITLEMENT ISSUES.

INDEED, APPRECIATION OFTEN COMES WHEN WE ARE DEPRIVED OF SOMETHING. IRONICALLY, IT IS THROUGH ADVERSITY THAT CAPACITY FOR JOY & THANKFULNESS IS BUILT.

OUR TEXT TODAY WILL REMIND US AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, THAT THE LORD OUR GOD DESIRES & EXPECTS US TO BE A THANKFUL OR GRATEFUL PEOPLE IN ALL TIMES, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES OR SITUATIONS IN LIFE. IN FACT, THIS IS ONE OF THE KEYS IN OVERCOMING CRISIS OR PROBLEMS IN OUR LIFE - HAVING A THANKFUL OR GRATEFUL HEART! LET US PRAY!!!

OUR TEXT TODAY WILL COME FROM 1 THESS. 5: 18. PAUL IS CONCLUDING HIS LETTER TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS BY MAKING A SERIES OF SHORT BUT POWERFUL EXHORTATIONS & ONE OF THEM IS FOUND VERSE 18. TODAY, I WILL USE THIS VERSE AS A BASIS FOR OUR MESSAGE & END IT W/ AN APPLICATION QUESTION FOR US TO CONSIDER & TAKE HOME.

“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. 5: 16-18)

A. TO WHOM ARE WE TO GIVE THANKS? THE LORD OUR TRINE GOD!

On that day David decreed for the first time that thanks be given to the Lord by Asaph and his relatives: “Give thanks to the Lord; call on his name; proclaim his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him; sing praise to him; tell about all his wondrous works!” (1 Chro. 16: 7-9)

“I will give you thanks with all my heart; I will sing your praise before the heavenly beings. I will bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your constant love and truth. You have exalted your name and your promise above everything else.” (Psalm 138: 1-2)

THEREFORE, WE ARE TO THANK THE LORD & NOT OURSELVES OR SOMEONE ELSE BUT THE LORD ALONE. THIS REMINDED ME OF THE PARABLE OF THE PUBLICAN & THE SINNER WHEN THEY WERE PRAYING IN THE TEMPLE.

B. WHEN ARE WE TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD? IN GOOD OR BAD TIMES OR IN PLENTY OR ADVERSITY!

*“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks **in everything**; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. 5: 16-18)*

*“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks **in all circumstances**; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
(1 Thess. 5:16-18, NIV)*

*His wife said to him, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” “You speak as a foolish woman speaks,” he told her. “**Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?**” Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he said.” (Job 2: 9-10)*

TAKE NOTE THAT PAUL SAYS TO GIVE THANK TO THE LORD IN EVERYTHING OR ALL SITUATIONS WHETHER BAD OR GOOD! PAUL IS TELLING US TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD “FOR” EVERYTHING OR ALL OUR SITUATIONS BUT “IN” ALL SITUATIONS!

C. WHY ARE WE TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD? THIS IS HIS WILL OR DESIRE FOR US AS BELIEVERS/HIS CHILDREN!

THE LORD DELIGHTS IN A THANKFUL & GRATEFUL HEART! REMEMBER THE STORY OF THE TEN LEPERS THAT THE LORD JESUS HEALED OF THEIR LEPROSY. AFTER THEY WERE HEALED, ONLY ONE OF THEM CAME BACK TO JESUS TO THANK HIM & JESUS SAID, “WHERE IS THE OTHERS?”

*But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. He fell facedown at his feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan. **Then Jesus said, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Didn’t any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?”** And he told him, “Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you. (Luke 17: 15-19)*

Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything. (Job 1: 20-22)

TAKE NOTE THAT JESUS DESIRES THAT WE GIVE THANKS TO THE FATHER & TO HIM BECAUSE GIVING THANKS IS **TANTAMOUNT TO GIVING GLORY** TO THEM!

D. **FOR WHAT** ARE WE GIVING THANKS TO THE LORD?

- 1) ***FOR BEING OUR SAVIOR & REDEEMER & SPECIFICALLY FOR THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT HE GAVE US IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST!***

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (2 Cor. 9: 15)

- 2) ***FOR WHO THE LORD OUR GOD IS & FOR HIS MIGHTY & MARVELOUS DEEDS!***

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever...” (Psalm 136)

E. **HOW** ARE WE TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD?

- 1) By worshiping the Lord through songs & praises!
- 2) By giving cheerfully & generously to Him & His gospel work!
- 3) By serving in the Lord’s kingdom!
- 4) By testifying publicly to the Lord’s goodness to us through answered prayers!
- 5) By sharing the Gospel or Jesus to others!

APPLICATIONS:

FOR OUR APPLICATION TODAY, I WANT US TO CONSIDER THIS QUESTION & THE ANSWER TO IT!

THE QUESTION:

“FOR WHAT ARE WE GIVING THANKS TO THE LORD IN THIS PRESENT CRISIS WE ARE FACING TODAY?”

THE ANSWER:

“WE ARE THANKING THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF THIS COVID-19 CRISIS FOR PROVIDING US A “PAUSE” IN OUR CURRENT LIFE! FOR THIS “PAUSE” ALLOWED US TO DO THE FOLLOWING: (1) REFLECT ON LIFE’S REALITIES & LESSONS, (2) REVIEW & EVALUATE OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE OR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, & (3) RESOLVE TO MAKE NECESSARY & IMPORTANT CHANGES IN OUR ATTITUDE & BEHAVIOR THAT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT OUR LIFE IN THE DAYS AHEAD!”

CAN WE SAY THIS TOGETHER – “THANK YOU LORD FOR THIS “PAUSE” IN OUR LIFE!”

WE KNOW IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE THAT A “PAUSE” EVEN THOUGH MINUTE IN A SENTENCE IS IMPORTANT. A “PAUSE” IS A STOP OR BREAK IN SPEAKING OR READING, WHICH CLARIFIES MEANING. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE BOOK OF PSALM, USED THIS WORD/TERM “SELAH” FOR “PAUSE.” THOUGH EVEN UP TO NOW, BIBLE SCHOLARS ARE STILL TRYING TO DISCOVER THE EXACT MEANING OF THIS TERM “SELAH”. THIS TERM “SELAH” IS MOSTLY USED IN THE PSALM (71X IN PSALM & 3X IN HABBAKUK). THERE ARE TWO PROPOSED MEANINGS OF THE TERM. ONE IS “SELAH” IS A MUSICAL TERM MEANING TO “PAUSE/REST” FOR SINGERS OR INSTRUMENTALISTS. THE SECOND IS WHAT WE DERIVE FROM THE BOOK OF HABBAKUK WHICH INDICATES THAT IT MEANS TO “PAUSE TO PRAISE OR LIFT UP THE ONE TO WHOM THE PSALM WAS WRITTEN.” CONSIDERING ALL THIS, I THINK THE AMPLIFIED VERSION GIVES US A GOOD TRANSLATION OF THE TERM IN ENGLISH.

“All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name. Selah.” (Psalm 66: 1-4)

“All the earth shall bow down to You and sing [praises] to You; they shall praise Your name in song. Selah [pause, and calmly think of that]!” (Psalm 66: 4, AMPLIFIED)

I THINK & I AM CONVINCED OF THIS THAT THIS COVID CRISIS IS A “SELAH” FROM THE LORD. IT IS A “REST” OR A “BREAK” OR A

“PAUSE” SO THAT PEOPLE INCLUDING US BELIEVERS COULD HAVE TIME TO “PAUSE” & BE ABLE TO (1) REFLECT ON LIFE’S REALITIES & LESSONS!, (2) REVIEW & EVALUATE OUR WALK WITH THE LORD & (3) RESOLVE TO MAKE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS IN OUR LIFE IN ORDER TO GLORIFY MORE JESUS.

(1) WE GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD IN THIS COVID CRISIS FOR WE WERE FORCED TO REFLECT ON LIFE’S REALITIES & IMPORTANT LESSONS!

I THINK THAT EVEN NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO SEE THE IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM THIS COVID CRISIS. MANY POSTINGS FROM FACEBOOK & OTHER MEDIA CAME OUT & REMINDING PEOPLE OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE. CONSIDER THESE LESSONS FROM COVID:

- **LIFE IS SHORT!**
- **DEATH IS SURE!**
- **JOBS OR WORLDLY RICHES ARE TEMPORARY!**
- **HEALTH IS WEALTH!**
- **TOMORROW IS NOT PROMISED!**
- **ETERNITY IS AT HAND! ARE WE READY TO FACE OUR MAKER?**
- **ONLY THE LORD THROUGH CHRIST CAN SAVE!**

(2) WE GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD IN MIDST OF THIS COVID CRISIS FOR WE WERE FORCED TO REVIEW & EVALUATE OUR LIFE’S PRIORITIES & VALUES!

- **MANY OF US HAVE WORLDLY RATHER THAN GODLY PRIORITIES & VALUES!**

“If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?” (Mark 8: 34-36)

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.” (1 John 2: 15-17)

- **MANY OF US HAVE SELF-CENTERED RATHER THAN CHRIST-CENTERED & GOD-EXALTING PURSUITS & GOALS!**

“Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal.” (Matt. 6: 19-20)

(3) WE GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD IN MIDST OF THIS COVID CRISIS FOR WE ARE ABLE TO RESOLVE TO MAKE NECESSARY & SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO RE-FOCUS OUR LIFE ON WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT & LASTING IN THIS LIFE!

- **I RESOLVE TO PRAY MORE DILIGENTLY & FAITHFULLY FOR MYSELF & FOR FBC MEMBERS & ATTENDERS!**

“Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 9 Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.” (1Pet. 5: 8,9)

“For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God...” (Col. 1: 9, 10)

- I RESOLVE TO **SHARE BOLDLY & UNASHAMEDLY THE GOSPEL OR JESUS CHRIST** TO OTHERS WHEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY!

All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” (1 Pet. 1: 24, 25)

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.”
(Rom. 1:16, 17)*

CHALLENGE:

THEREFORE, WHAT ARE THESE GODLY RESOLUTIONS OR NECESSARY & SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THAT THE LORD ARE IMPRESSING IN OUR HEART TODAY IN ORDER TO RE-FOCUS OUR LIFE ON THE LORD!

IS IT WITH REGARDS WITH YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD JESUS? THAT YOU HAVE NOT REALLY TAKEN SERIOUSLY OR MADE THAT IMPORTANT DECISION TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN HIM OR OBEY HIS COMMANDS?

IS IT ABOUT OUR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (LIKE PRAYER, READING THE WORD, WORSHIP, ETC.) THAT YOU WILL BE MORE DILIGENT & FAITHFUL IN CULTIVATING & USING THEM?

IS IT WITH REGARDS TO YOUR LIFE’S PRIORITIES & VALUES? TO PRIORITIZE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD & FAMILY MORE THAN WORK OR OTHER THINGS?

IS IT WITH REGARD TO YOUR LIFE’S PURSUITS & GOALS? THAT YOU WILL PURSUE MORE THE LORD’S WILL & PURPOSES FOR YOUR LIFE RATHER THAN YOUR PERSONAL AMBITIONS & GOALS?

CLOSING PRAYER:

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, THANK YOU THAT WE HAVE THIS TIME WITH YOU TO DRAW NEAR & COMMUNE W/ YOU IN SPIRIT & TRUTH & BE CONFRONTED WITH THE TRUTHS OF YOUR WORD! FATHER, WE GIVE THANKS TO YOU FOR ALLOWING THIS VERY IMPORTANT "PAUSE" TO HAPPEN IN OUR LIFE TODAY. THANK YOU FOR FORCING US TO REFLECT & THINK ABOUT OUR LIFE & OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU DURING THIS TIME OF CRISIS!

FATHER GOD, CONTINUE TO CONVICT US OF OUR FRAILTY, OUR FINITENESS & TEMPORARINESS AS MEN. CONTINUE TO CONVICT & TEACH US TO OBEY THE PROMPTINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT ARE SOME THINGS IN OUR LIFE THAT NEEDS TO CHANGE OR BE TRANSFORMED AND YOU ALONE CAN MAKE THESE CHANGES IN OUR LIFE. FATHER, GRANT US THE GRACE & POWER TO DO & OBEY THESE IMPRESSIONS THAT YOU ARE PLACING IN OUR HEARTS. LET THESE NOT BECOME EMPTY PROMISES TO YOU BUT GRANT US THE STRONG DETERMINATION TO MAKE THESE CHANGES HAPPEN IN OUR LIFE THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE PERSONS & PEOPLE THAT YOU DESIRE US TO BE – GODLY MEN & WOMEN WHO ARE THE SALT & LIGHTS OF THIS DARK & SINFUL WORLD WE LIVE IN.

FATHER GOD, I ENTRUST YOU THESE THE FAMILIES OF FBC & ALL THOSE WHO HAVE JOINED US THIS MORNING. MAY ALL OF US EXPERIENCE YOUR STRENGTHENING & SANCTIFYING GRACE TODAY. MAY WE RECEIVE THE HOLY ANLOINTING & EMPOWERMENT OF YOUR HOLY SPIRIT FOR TO BE ABLE TO DO & BE THE PEOPLE THAT YOU CALLED US TO BE AS SPOKEN BY PETER - A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR HIS POSSESSION, SO THAT WE MAY PROCLAIM THE PRAISES OF THE ONE WHO CALLED US OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT. AMEN!