

“Give Thanks in All Circumstances”: The Secret to Gritty Gratitude (Part 2)

Introduction

The Text

“[G]ive thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess. 5:18)

From Part 1 to Part 2

- A. This is now the second sermon on this subject of Christian gratitude and thanksgiving, and we’ll be pressing into new material here shortly. But first let me quickly remind you what we took on last week . . .
- B. We made our way through this verse bit-by-bit, looking at the What, the When, and the How.
 1. For the What we just made note of the fact that all through Scripture God is clear that he’s created and redeemed us to be a thankful people.
 - a. Christians, as I put it, are to be famous for their glad-hearted gratitude in God.
 2. Regarding the When, well that’s what comes out there with that stunning (and devastating!) little prepositional phrase: “in all circumstances”
 - a. There’s no exception to this. God doesn’t permit us to excuse our grumbling and discontent to dire circumstances or a hard season. No.
 - b. We are to be famous for our gratitude, whatever the circumstance, in and out of season.
 3. And then, of course, we had to ask the question How? How in the world are we supposed to become a people like this?
 - a. By our own strength and sweat? No.
 - b. Paul goes on: “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
 - i. And there now, with this second prepositional phrase, we’re given the key that unlocks it all. It’s not in me. It’s “in Christ Jesus.”
 4. And I said that this is Paul’s way of linking us out to what he’s said elsewhere in this little epistle about Jesus and what he’s accomplished for us in the gospel. And we made note of all this grace that’s now coming to us from every angle in him—past, future, present. We’re just deluged with it.
 - a. And it all combines to make us a most grateful people.

- i. At least it should.
- ii. But, if we're honest, often we're not, right?

Why Not?

- A. And, in some sense, I guess you could say that's what this second sermon is about.
 1. I just want to ask the question: Why not? What goes wrong? How does this ever-present, glad-hearted, gritty gratitude that we're called to break down in our own heart and experience? Why aren't we famous for this? Why are we so often known instead for our crusty nature and the way we're always looking down our nose and condemning and critiquing things.
- B. Well, for this, I want to spend our time this morning looking at what I'd consider to be five of the most common jammers of Christian gratitude.
 1. You say "jammer" what's a jammer?
 - a. Are we talking about music—as the cool kids say: "That's my jam!"—or something? No.
 - b. A jammer is a transmitter used for jamming signals—you might use one to jam a radio so people can't communicate or to jam radar so that you can move through undetected, that sort of thing.
- C. And so I'm talking here about the sorts of things that jam up your gratitude. They break down the signal between you and God and his grace, so to speak, and that connection is lost.
 1. And, of course, as we talk about these jammers, we'll also see more clearly the things we can do to reconnect, to get that signal back up and running—to get gratitude flowing again.

How Was Your Week?

- A. Before I get going in this, if you were here last week, you'll recall I asked you to make note this past week of the sorts of things that got in the way of your gratitude.
 1. I wonder if you did that? I wonder, when you found yourself grumbling, or at least tempted to stop short of giving thanks in all circumstances, what was the reason? What was going on around you? What was going on inside you?
- B. I know for me, it sounds kind of ridiculous, but I'd say the time I was most tempted to grumble was when I was untangling all the Christmas lights out in my front yard.
 1. Now, don't get me wrong, I love Christmas. It's by far my favorite holiday.
 2. But it's like somehow, through the course of the year, it's just enough time for me to forget how frustrating some aspects of it all can be.

C. I love putting up lights on the house and things, at least I like it when it's done, but the process is sometimes a bit maddening, right? At least if you use the old-school incandescent strands that I use (sorry, I'm just not a fan of the new LED ones—they look too cold to me).

1. So I'm out there in the front yard. It's dark. Kids are running around. We've got hot chocolate and candy canes. I've got Christmas music playing from a little Bluetooth speaker. "It's the most the wonderful time of the year." It's great.
2. And then I go to get these lights. And first, they're like a jumbled up rat's nest. No matter what I do. I try to spool the things, separate them nicely. Nope. Rat's nest.
3. So it takes me like fifteen minutes just to get a couple strands loose.
4. Then, in a moment of anticipation, I go to plug in the first strand of Christmas, expecting the angels to descend from their heavenly heights and fill the night with song . . . and nothing happens. They don't even light up. Or if they do, God only knows why, only half the strand lights up. I don't even think Einstein himself could figure these things out.
5. So I'm doing my best to stay jolly, but it's a little questionable now. The next step is to move through and twist every individual bulb, looking for any sign of damage.
6. So I take five minutes to engage in that wonderful holiday tradition. And still nothing.
7. So you throw that one aside, you grab the next one. Same thing happens. Okay. Not a big deal. Moving on. Same thing happens.
8. Johnny Mathis is still singing. At this point I'm ready to go shut him up. "There's nothing 'wonderful' about this, Johnny. Keep all that 'hap-happiest season of all' nonsense to yourself."
9. I feel like Clark Griswold, ready to stomp on these things, but I'm a pastor. I'm preaching on giving thanks in all circumstances. Come on!
10. And then finally I find some that work. Praise God!
11. So I go to put them up around one of our windows, and I kid you not—I won't tell you how, I'm not sure I even know how—but, as I'm moving through the shrubs and things, I manage to get all these leaves and twigs and dirt down my shirt and even in my pants, alright.
12. At this point, I'm done.
13. I just imagine all the neighbors looking out from their windows witnessing this Christmas spectacle. Look at the neighborhood jester, right? "Honey, go get some popcorn. This is better than anything else that may be on TV tonight, trust me. It's been an hour and the guy still only has a couple strands up. And now it looks like he's shaking leaves out or something from under his clothes. You're not going to want to miss this!"

D. So I'm not feeling thankful, I'm tempted to grumble. Stuff's not working right, it's not going to plan. Obviously, I'm exaggerating a bit, but you get the point.

1. It sounds mundane, even silly, and it is. But, at the same time, a lot of our life is lived in the mundane, and God does some of his most important work on our hearts in those little moments. We get ready for the big moments by walking faithfully with him in the little ones.
 - a. So it's not insignificant. It matters. And God wants us to be grateful even in that stuff . . . "in all circumstances . . ."

E. So what's it been for you? Be thinking of it as we go along. Ask God to help!

F. So let's consider those five jammers now . . .

Jammer #1: Amnesia

A. One of the things that can really kill our contentment and gut our gratitude is what I'm calling Amnesia. And what I mean is we forget how good God has been to us to this point.

1. We tend to get so caught up in the present moment—whether we're wrestling with rogue Christmas lights or struggling with something much more significant—whatever it is, it feels like it's the only thing that matters.

a. We notice the squeaky wheel in our lives and it gets all our attention. And we set aside all the answered prayers and ways God has been there for us prior to this. "Who cares about yesterday, I'm hurting today."

i. And we want to grumble to God about it. "Where are you? Why aren't you fixing this?"

B. Of course, I thought immediately of Israel in the wilderness for this.

1. You remember, days before, they'd just been miraculously redeemed from the house of slavery there in Egypt. God parted the waters of the Red Sea and they walked through on dry ground. All because of YHWH and his grace.

2. But the moment things get uncomfortable—we're in a desert, we don't have food, we don't have water—they grumble and complain and ask even to be taken back to Egypt.

a. They forgot God's past grace and so they found no place for gratitude in their present struggle.

C. One of things I'll try to do with each of these jammers, is show you where I think they make an appearance even in the letter the Thessalonians here.

1. I think Paul is able to say "give thanks in all circumstances" at the end of his letter, because he's been kind of building to it all throughout. He's been addressing these jammers along the way in one way or another.

D. Now, remember, as we said last week, the Thessalonians were dealing with a devastating level of persecution at the time.

1. Paul had come through there with the gospel, and the Jews there and the Gentile authorities, drove him out and they began to target those new Christians who remained, charging them with sedition against Caesar and things like this. "If you're going to say Jesus is your king, then clearly Caesar no longer is, and we won't stand for it."

a. So this was hard stuff. This is more than just a squeaky wheel. This is like the whole car is falling apart and the engine's smoking. People are being killed. Your own

compatriots, maybe even your own family and friends, are turning against you. Because of Jesus.

- i. Now, of course then, they're tempted to forego gratitude and give into grumbling and frustration and, even anger at God.

E. So what does Paul do?

1. Well, interestingly enough, he leads them back to the beginning. He gives thanks for how God saved them—the miracle of it all. He doesn't want them, in the midst of present crisis, to forget God's past faithfulness.
 - a. Paul actually begins this letter by recounting their testimony, as it were. Listen, [1 Thess. 1:2-6](#): “²We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. . . .⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit” He says: “I know it's hard now, but don't forget the way God has been with you to this point.”
 - i. It's as he says to the Philippians in [Phil. 1:6](#): “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

(1) If he's begun it, he'll complete. If he's been with you from the start, he's not going to abandon you now. Remember!

F. So that's the encouragement to you. Are you struggling? Are you tempted to grumble and be discontent in the present? Remember what God has done in the past. That will stoke the fire of your gratitude.

1. This is why God built into Israel's calendar even all the festivals and things. They were designed to help them remember God's faithfulness to them—in the exodus, in the wilderness wandering, in the harvest and things.
2. And we can do similar.
 - a. For example, that's why we celebrate Christmas. We remember the God who entered into history to save sinners like us.
 - b. It's why we take communion month after month. Jesus says what, do you recall? “[This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me](#)” ([Luke 22:19](#)). “You're going to be prone to forget the cross—my forgiveness, my welcome, my love. Don't forget. Remember! Feast on that memory.”

G. But you know you can also do what Paul guides these Thessalonians into here as well. You can remember and rehearse your own story—how God saved you.

1. Listen to how C.J. Mahaney encourages us to this in his little book *The Cross Centered Life*: “Many people today want to forget the past. The mistakes they’ve made and the sins they’ve committed aren’t subjects they like to revisit. But for Christians, one of the best ways we can draw near the blazing fire of the cross is to remember our past, and allow it to remind us of how marvelous God’s salvation really is.

The apostle Paul was committed to remembering what he once was because that memory magnified God’s grace. [In 1 Timothy 1:13, we see that Paul had] remembrance of being ‘a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent’ of God . . . [, but then come] his grateful words, ‘But I received mercy’ Though written some thirty years after he came to faith in Christ, Paul remembered vividly and specifically his many sins prior to conversion. Knox Chamblin writes, ‘Vital to Paul’s effectiveness as an apostle is that he never forgets his day as a persecutor’

You and I as well must not forget. We need to follow Paul’s example. We can all say, ‘I was once a _____’—and fill in the blank with an accurate description of our sinful past. And we don’t need a dramatic testimony to do so. Every conversion is still a miracle of God’s grace. You didn’t write that story by yourself; God intervened to change your heart and save you from His wrath.

Take time to think about all this. Reflect on it daily. I also encourage you to write out your testimony in a page or two. And don’t just write ‘I asked Jesus into my heart,’ but really spell out the heart of the gospel and how the blood of Christ, shed for the sins of the world, came to apply to you personally. Be specific about the fact that God is holy and you were an object of His wrath. Identify the sin in which you were lost. Explain how God saved you and changed your life for His glory.

This will edify and encourage you and prepare you to share both your personal testimony and the truth of the gospel with others” (140-42).

- a. And do you know what else it will do? It will make you thankful. It will give you a gritty gratitude that isn’t easily jammed up the moment stuff in the present goes awry.
 - i. Because you remember his grace to you in the past. And you’re sure it’s here somewhere in the present, even if it’s a bit harder to detect in the moment.

H. And this leads to the second jammer . . .

Jammer #2: Myopia

A. Myopia is just a fancy word that means nearsightedness.

1. This jammer is similar to the first, but it’s the other side of the coin. If amnesia means I get so caught up in present struggle that I forget God’s grace to me in the past, myopia means I get so caught up in the present struggle that I forget God’s grace coming to me in the future.

- a. I forget the larger story I'm a part of. I forget the fact that God is always at work and able to take whatever I'm dealing with now and turn it for good in the end. I get so caught up with the hardship I forget his purpose and promise.
 - i. So I'm tempted to forego gratitude and grumble, because I don't see how anything good could come out of this, and I just wish it would stop.
- B. You got any of that?
- C. For this I thought of the story of Lazarus. You recall it perhaps.
 - 1. Lazarus had fallen ill and so his sisters, Mary and Martha, send word to Jesus, who at this point was already their close friend. And they ask him to come and help.
 - 2. And so what does Jesus do? He waits. He takes his sweet time.
 - 3. A couple days go by. Lazarus dies. And then he decides to roll into town.
 - 4. And the sisters, understandably, they're upset. "Where were you? Why didn't you come when we asked? If you had been here, our brother wouldn't be dead." They're not grateful that he's arrived, expectant of something good . . . they're grumbling.
 - 5. And how does Jesus respond? " ²⁵ I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25–26).
- D. In other words, as Jesus had said to his disciples as they were journeying towards Bethany: " ¹⁴ Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe" (vv. 14–15).
 - 1. He let Lazarus die not because he didn't care, but precisely because he did and he was doing something more than they could imagine.
 - a. To help Lazarus get better from sickness is one thing.
 - b. To raise from the dead is quite another! And he wants his disciples and those around to see and believe: he is the resurrection and the life; he is our hope beyond the grave; he is our Savior and our Lord. He is working for our good even when it seems he is absent. Don't lose hope. Don't lose gratitude.
- E. If I could put it in a catch-phrase for us: Grumbling gives way to gratitude when we finally get where God is going!
- F. You know, for the Thessalonians, we talked last week about how people were dying among them, likely from persecution, and they were grieving and struggling with this. It seemed they also thought that if you died before the second coming of Jesus, you wouldn't participate in the blessing of it in some way.
 - 1. So here's what Paul says, 1 Thess. 4:13–18: " ¹³ [W]e do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from

the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

- a. Paul meets them in their present struggle, with fear and loss and letdown, and he lifts their drooping head, sets their gaze off towards the horizon, and reminds them of the future God has in store for them at the second coming in the resurrection and the new heavens and new earth.
- G. One commentator makes the case, appropriately I think, that the second coming of Jesus is the most prominent theme in this book.
1. After all, it’s explicitly referred to in every single chapter (cf. 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23-24) (ESVSB). He’s constantly keeping this in front of them.
 - a. Again, because grumbling gives way to gratitude when we finally get where God is going! You’re not so worked up about the bumps along the track if you realize this train lets out in glory!
- H. So I wonder: when’s the last time you really thought about the second coming of Christ and the inheritance that’s yours in him?
1. I’ve always been struck (and not a little troubled) by Peter’s exhortation to us in 1 Pet. 1:13 where he calls us to “set [our] hope fully on the grace that will be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
 - a. It’s that word “fully” that gets me—*teleiōs* in the Greek. It means completely, perfectly, fully.
 - i. I can set my hope “partially” there, perhaps . . .
 - ii. But all the way, pushing all my chips in on that?
 - (1) He says we’re to live in light of eternity, in light of the future glory that is ours. And we let that light stream back into the present and reinterpret all our struggles, and even our joys.
- I. So, again, I wonder: where’s your hope these days? Do you believe God is taking you somewhere good even through the hard? If you do, you can give thanks. If you don’t, you won’t.
- J. And this discussion really leads us to the third jammer now . . .

Jammer #3: Idolatry

- A. When we struggle to put our hope fully on Jesus and his return, it means we're putting that hope, at least partially, somewhere else.
1. Idolatry is ultimately just looking for some aspect of creation, of this world, to do for us what only God the Creator can.
 - a. And the bottom line is this: when we attach our God-sized hope to that which is not God, we set ourselves up for letdown and discontentment and grumbling. Because it won't be able to deliver anything remotely commensurate with our expectations.
- B. So when I'm there fumbling around with the Christmas lights, perhaps something like this is in play.
1. I have memories of Christmas time, all gloss-coated and shiny, the world as it should be (at least that's how it's presented, and I kind of buy in). And you can think: this will be great fun, this will fill my cup.
 - a. And you forget, we're still living in a fallen world. Stuff breaks. It doesn't work right. It can't sustain your hope. It won't meet your expectations. It will most certainly gut your gratitude and leave you grumbling.
- C. I thought at this point of Paul's warning to us in 1 Tim. 6:6-10: "⁶ [G]odliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."
1. Did you hear that? We go after money because we think it will bring us much joy. But he says, watch out, it will pierce your heart through with sorrow.
 - a. Why? How?
 - i. Because it doesn't last. Because it's up and down. Because moth, rust, and thief can get at it. So you'll always feel vulnerable, stressed, jealous.
 - ii. Because it's not God and it can't fill you or keep you or care for you. It doesn't love you. It doesn't give it's life for you. It's just stuff. You were made for him, not these idols.
- D. I'd put it like this: When you're satisfied in Christ, you can be satisfied with everything; but when you're not satisfied in Christ, you will be satisfied with nothing.
1. Do you have any idols? Could be stuff, could be people, could be a job, a vacation, whatever. Beware. Whatever it is, it will jam up your gratitude.
- E. For these Thessalonians, as we've said, they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9).
1. What a marvelous thing. They awoke to the reality of God, as many of us have.

2. But also, like many of us, they're still tempted to turn back.
 - a. So Paul, aware that this turning of theirs brought them great persecution, was worried about them.
 - i. You see, as you well know, idols can look particularly promising in times of desperation. I'm just trying to grab hold of some lifeline that will keep me afloat, get me out of these rough waters.

- F. That's why Paul writes this in 1 Thess. 3:1-5: "¹Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,³ that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.⁴ For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.⁵ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain."

1. Satan always puts something on his hook—call it an idol.
2. And this idol always promises a more immediate sense of satisfaction and pleasure. "Why hang onto Jesus, if it's just bringing you hurt? Go get this or that, attach your hope to this or that, and you'll get on your way just fine. Things will get better."
 - a. But they never do. Maybe momentarily, but you come to find you've sabotaged your satisfaction, and joy, and gratitude in the long run.

- G. So do you want to gratitude to flow again in your life? Surrender, everything, to him. Lay it down. Let him and him alone be your God and your hope. He can handle it. He'll be enough.

- H. Related to this is the fourth jammer I'd now like to discuss . . .

Jammer #4: Comparison

- A. Nothing kills your joy and gratitude quite like comparing yourself to another. However things measure out for you, it's always a deadly game.
 1. Either you come out feeling better than the other person—in which case you get smug and self-righteous. You're not grateful to God for his grace. You think you're awesome.
 2. Or you come out feeling worse—in which case you envy the person, maybe secretly despise the person, and then you start to grumble against God: "Why are blessing them and not me? What did I do to deserve this?"
 - a. You see. It's always a mess-maker, a gratitude-jammer.

- B. For these Thessalonians, surely we can imagine the scenario where these new Christians—in view of the great persecution they are suffering at the hands of their compatriots and the Jews for that matter—they start to look around at other Christians in other places that perhaps aren't dealing with the same degree of hardship and opposition, and they start to compare themselves and think:

“Why us? Why me? God, you can save this or that person from the fire, but I just get thrown in. It’s not fair. It’s not right.”

- C. This was the whole issue with Peter after Jesus’ resurrection, just before the ascension. Do you remember the conversation there on the shores of the Sea of Galilee?
1. Jesus is telling Peter that he’s going to end up dying for the cause. He’s going to be killed for the gospel.
 2. And I love this, do you remember how Peter responds? He sees John walking by and he says: “[Lord, what about this man?](#)” (John 21:21). In other words, he compares himself to John and he says: “Okay, if It’s going to go bad for me, it better go bad for these other guys too right? Are you just singling me out? Are you going to bless him and curse me? What is this?”
 3. And how does Jesus answer him? It’s brilliant. It’s one of the best non-answers I’ve ever seen. Politicians could learn a thing or two from our Lord. He says this: “[If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!](#)” (v. 22).
- D. Do you see what he just did there? He cut off this comparison thing before it ever even got out of the gate.
1. He didn’t capitulate to this way of thinking: “Well, I’ll give you some blessings and him some blessings, it’ll even out in the end.”
 2. He said: “No Peter. That’s the wrong way of thinking entirely. The way to joy and gratitude is not going to come by comparison. That will kill it. Do you want to know the solution? Follow me! If you get that, everything else falls into place.”
- E. Oh Christian, stop looking at the world around you and start looking at Jesus. Let him write your story. It’s not going to be the same as another’s, to be sure, but it’s going to be a good one. Trust him. Follow him. Give thanks to him.

Jammer #5: Busyness

- A. This just seemed a fitting place to end, given the season we’re in now. I know the holidays, while fun perhaps, they’re often the busiest time of the year for us. There’s so much going on, so much out of the norm.
1. And you know what can happen is it jams up our gratitude.
 - a. Why? Because we get so caught up in what we have to do that we miss fellowship with Jesus in his Word and in prayer. We cut ourselves off from the very means of grace that have been given to stoke our joy and gratitude.
- B. Think about it. Everything we’ve talked about to this point presupposes that you’re going to take time to commune or abide with God in his Word and in prayer.

1. How do you push back on amnesia? Well, you spend time in the Scriptures and in prayer—reminding yourself of who God is and what he’s done in history and in your life.
 2. How do you push back on myopia? Well, you spend time in the Scriptures and in prayer—paying particular attention to the promises of God and the future he has planned for you in Jesus.
 3. How do you forsake the idols in your life? Well, how did the Thessalonians do it? They heard the word of God! As Paul says: “⁵ [O]ur gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. ⁶And . . . you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit . . .” (1 Thess. 1:5-6). That’s why they “turned . . . from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9). You get to know him through his Word!
 4. How do you forsake comparison, taking your eyes off others and setting them on Jesus? Well, of course, you spend time in the Scriptures and in prayer. That’s where you see him most clearly!
 - a. This is why Paul says in 1 Thess. 2:13: “[T]he word of God . . . is at work in you believers.” Which, in turn, is why he ends his letter: “I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers” (1 Thess. 5:27). You need the Word.
 - b. And you need prayer. Which is why, right before he calls to “give thanks in all circumstances” there in 1 Thess. 5:18, he first calls us to “pray without ceasing” (v. 17).
- C. If you’re not in the Word and you’re not in prayer, you should not be surprised when you are also not grateful.
1. We need fellowship with Jesus in his Word and in prayer if we’re to maintain such a thing, and busyness, brothers and sisters, will keep us from them. And, in so doing, it will also jam up your gratitude.
- D. I thought of that other famous story with Mary and Martha again from Luke 10. Do you remember this?
1. Jesus is in town and Martha’s all worked up wanting to host the perfect party or whatever. So she’s got no time, ironically, to actually sit with him, be with him.
 2. And she’s getting angsty. She’s getting frustrated. And she’s taking it on her sister, who seems not to be helping, but instead is sitting at Jesus’ feet, listening to his word.
 3. And, in the end, she grumbles even against Jesus: “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me” (v. 40).
 4. But how does he respond? “⁴¹ Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her” (vv. 41–42). This is what will get you through. This is what you prioritize.

- a. We tend to think, I'll get time with Jesus when I finally get done with all my stuff. It's too busy. But we're never done. So, of course, we're grumbling and frustrated.
 - b. We've got to stop, hit pause, and plug in, commune, fellowship with him in his Word and in prayer. That's the piece that holds all this other stuff together.
- E. So how about you? Are you too busy? Listen, if you are too busy to spend time with God, you will be too jammed up to be grateful this season. Don't fall into that trap!

Conclusion

- A. Listen: everybody wants to be more thankful, but only Christianity, only the gospel, supplies you with the resources in Jesus to really pull that off.
- B. The best the world can do is give you some kind of pill to try to tinker with the chemicals in your brain and things—make you more amiable, less on edge. They can give you a few techniques to help alter your perspective a bit, some new habits to form, like keep a gratitude journal, or see the glass as half full not half empty, shift your mindset.
- 1. And these are helpful in their place, but they're superficial. They don't go deep enough and they don't take you high enough.
- C. They don't, they can't, give you the gospel, which changes everything, both inside and out. It's not just tinkering with chemicals and hormones, it's transforming the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not just some technique to shift your mindset in a more positive direction, it's connecting you to the ultimate reality that God, in Christ, is moving history and your story (if you've placed your faith in him) in a positive direction. This is not just changing your mindset, this is changing your destiny. This is connecting you to the redemptive work of almighty God.
- 1. You're not just given a pill to pop or a habit to form. You're given a person, a relationship with the living God. It's not just try your hardest to see the cup as half full—no! Now, in Christ, by the Spirit, your cup is overflowing!
 - a. That's what Jesus stands up and says on the last day of the Feast of Booths there in Jerusalem: "³⁷ If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37–38).
- D. Oh of course, as we've been saying, there's stuff that jams up the flow of it sometimes. But we have all we need to reconnect in Jesus. "[G]ive thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18).