

It's All in Your Head

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Date: 19 November 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Pastor and Catherine's week off. We also give him the day off. And so you have me this morning. Well, happy Thanksgiving to you. Hope I'm the first to wish you a happy Thanksgiving. And as I look around the room, I wonder if those dynamics, those characteristics are true in your life. Are you happy? Are you thankful? And are you in an attitude of giving? You know, as we look at what's going on in our world today and we turn on the news and we see what's happening, it's easy to become discouraged. It's easy to become disappointed, frustrated as we look at things unfolding before our very eyes. And I wonder, you know, as we look at our culture, how many people are at this Thanksgiving season happy, thankful, and in an attitude of giving.

You know, since it's the only time we get is this period between our birth and our death, and since we don't have the ability to see beyond this day and into the future, not knowing how much time we actually have on this earth, and since we don't know what tomorrow will bring, next Thursday will bring, next week will bring, next year will bring, or even the next minute will bring, you would think that we would be thankful and happy and very giving at this very particular point in time that we take our breaths.

But what you know and what I know is that we are surrounded by people who are unhappy, who are not thankful, and who don't give. Why is that? Why in a country like ours when we're surrounded by so much things to make us content and so many things to make us happy that we see unhappiness, unthankfulness, and ungiving attitude flourish. Can I tell you a truth this morning?

And we think, we forget that we know this truth, but we know this truth. Our Heavenly Father wants us to be happy.

Our Heavenly Father wants us to be thankful. And our Heavenly Father wants us to give. And we get it wrong sometimes because here's the deal.

[2 : 3 4] We can get more stuff, but we can't get more time. This is all we get. And since this is all we get, and sometimes we waste what we get, you would think that at least for this period of time, we will be happy and we would be thankful.

So why is it that we're not? Well, the title of my message this morning is Thankful Thinking. And the subtitle to that is, It's All in Your Head. It's All in Your Head.

So the answer to the question is, Why are we always happy? Why are we not always thankful? Why are we not always in a giving attitude? It's all in our head. You may not want to know this this morning, but I'm going to tell you anyway.

You have the responsibility of what you think. So if you just don't feel like being happy, if you don't feel like being thankful, you don't feel like giving, and I want you to know this, it's all in your head.

What you're thinking, what you think about what you're thinking, it's in your head. I've got some good news for you this morning. We're only going to look at one verse. One verse this morning, it's in Philippians chapter 4, verse 8.

[4 : 0 2] That should excite you to some degree that it's just one verse we're going to look at, but it's one verse packed full of a lot of stuff. And it's all stuff on thinking the way we think. Just one verse.

And I wrote this sentence before we read this verse. I thought it was pretty clever, but I'll read it to you. If you're not thinking thankfully, hopefully your thankless thinking will be thwarted, and you can begin to think thankfully after we thoroughly and thoughtfully work our way through this one verse.

I thought I might get a standing ovation. I thought it was pretty clever, but you missed that opportunity. Philippians chapter 4, verse 8. You probably know this verse. You probably have read this verse or heard this verse.

But I'm going to read this verse to you right now. Let's go to the Lord in prayer for just a moment.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for what your word says and for the Apostle Paul and the way that he says it.

[5 : 31] It's fairly and clearly what you would have us to do as we enter this Thanksgiving season to think happily, thankfully, and giving.

So Father, help us with the truth this morning that it's all in our head. In Jesus' name, amen. So from this one verse, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians about eight things, eight ways, eight thoughts that we should be thinking that could help us if we are unhappy, if we are unthankful, and if we are ungrateful.

So the truth is, you do have control over what you think. But a lot of the times, what we think has control over us.

In fact, we find that truth in Proverbs 23, 7, where it says, whatever you think is what you are. Think about that for just a second. Whatever thought is in your mind is who you are.

Whatever you think is who you are, and whatever is in your heart and in your mind and comes out of your mouth gives us a pretty clear understanding of that truth. It doesn't take us long if we hear what comes out of your mouth, it comes from your heart and comes from your mind, what you're thinking and who you are.

[6 : 54] So the first thing to think about in order to think, thankfully, this Thanksgiving is to, number one, think accurately. Think accurately. A verse in Philippians says, whatever is true, whatever is accurate, whatever is true, and here's a truth about the truth I want you to get.

God is always up to something good in your life. God is always up to something good in your life. I don't care what's going on in your life, backache, headache, heartache, heartbreak.

God is still up to something good in your life. Not only is that a truth, but that is a promise. God's character is that He is good, and His character never changes. And here's another truth I want you to get.

God is never up to something bad in your life. Romans 8.28, you know that. God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God. Psalm 106, verse 1.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. Can I tell you a truth this morning that will set you free? We are the ones who label our circumstances good or bad, not God.

[8 : 02] God doesn't look down with something we consider bad at us and say, ooh, that's really bad. Can you think of a verse in Scripture that says, God is a bad God?

We sing a song called, Our God is an Awesome God, not Our God is an Awful God. But we think that way sometimes.

We think God is ready with a big stick to knock us in the head, you know, when things aren't going right. Well, it is all in your head. Think accurately.

The second thing that Paul wants us to think about in this verse in Philippians is, number two, think honorably. Think honorably. We've got a couple of big screen TVs up here that we say our words for our songs that we sing in our worship time, our music worship time.

What if we walked around with a big screen TV over our heads that showed all the thoughts that we have, and everybody could see what we're thinking? Imagine that.

[9 : 06] What if we could just look at Miss Ura and see this big screen over her head and know exactly what Miss Ura is thinking. Would we be startled to see what you're thinking?

Here's the deal. If you're thinking honorably, it wouldn't matter if we saw what you were thinking or not. The literal interpretation is that you would be thinking respectfully.

But the truth is, we don't have a big screen TV over our heads that lets everybody know what we're thinking, and maybe that's a good thing. I don't know what you're thinking.

You don't know what I'm thinking. And maybe we don't want to know. But here's the truth. God does. God knows what our thoughts are. Job 21.7, Behold, I know your thoughts.

God knows our thoughts. So it shouldn't matter if we know what you're thinking or you know what I'm thinking. God does. If you can't be thankful, if you can't seem to be thankful, or if you're unhappy, this Thanksgiving, it's all in your head.

[10 : 14] Think accurately. Think honorably. Think rightly. To think rightly means an innocent until proven guilty attitude about people you come in contact with.

It means you don't sum up the way you feel about someone based on limited information you have about their lives. How would you like it if you were charged with a crime and you walked into the courtroom with your attorney, the judge takes one look at you and says, guilty, without hearing any evidence against you.

But we do that sometimes by just looking at people not knowing the back story to their lives. Guilty. I don't like you. Well, why? Well, I just don't like the way you look.

There's something about you I don't like. That would be thinking wrongly, not rightly. But we do that sometimes. We pass judgment in our minds based on what we have in our mind so it's all in our head.

Think thankfully. Think accurately. Think honorably. Think rightly. Number four, think purely. Can I tell you another truth this morning that will set you free?

[11 : 29] An impure action starts with an impure thought. In other words, you have to think it before you do it. Entertaining an impure thought serves no benefit whatsoever.

I'm just thinking about it. No, it's just a thought. If it's just a thought, it could lead to just an action.

In his letter to the early church, James said that. He said, it starts up here. It works its way down here. It works its way out into an action. And if it's an impure thought that leads to an impure action, James sums it up by saying it will destroy you.

It's all in your head. Think accurately. Think honorably. Think rightly. Think purely. Number five of our eight thoughts, think lovely. Think lovely.

To think lovely literally means that you think friendly thoughts when you think about someone else. You accept them as they are. Did you know that when God looks at us, imperfections and all, he thinks we're beautiful?

[12 : 49] A child of God is beautiful. He doesn't think any of you are not lovely. Why do we do that? Why don't we accept people as they are?

Three verses before this one, Paul wrote in verse five, to have a forbearing spirit. How does that look? What does that mean to have a forbearing spirit?

It means you put up with people exactly the way they are. I put up with Nathan just the way he is. Congratulations. Megan has been doing that for how many years?

Long time. But fortunately, look at Nathan. He's perfect. In the eyes of God. Why is he not perfect in our eyes too? It means we put up with people just the way they are.

We don't try to change. I don't want to change Nathan. Shouldn't want to manipulate him to do things that I want him to do to find him acceptable in my eyes. Do what I think you should do, Nathan, and I will like you much more.

[13 : 51] It's not a valid point for a child of God. I can't change you. You can't change me. It would be good if we could just have lovely thoughts about each other.

Here's some words from Paul. To do nothing from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Now, that doesn't mean that you don't have to look out for your own interests, but leave some room for looking out for the interests of others too.

Sometimes we get that wrong and just say, well, we're supposed to be so self-sacrificial that we just pay attention to everybody. No, take care of your own needs, but also leave room to take care of needs of others.

Think accurately. Think honorably. Think rightly. Think purely. Think lovely. We're getting close. Think repudably. Back to that big screen.

[15 : 00] Basically, reputable thinking means that if we could see your thoughts, we would think well of you, because you're always thinking reputably. Can I tell you that as ambassadors of Christ, in other words, as Christians, as children of God, you have an obligation to have a good reputation if you carry the Christian banner?

Do you know that one of the qualifications for leaders of the church is that they have a good reputation in the community and also in the church? It should be a qualification for us as well, whether we're a leader or not.

If we're Christians, we're wearing that label, ambassadors of Christ, children of God, that we're seen as reputable people with a good reputation. Well thought of.

I think some of us would be shocked to find out what some of the people really think about us because of the way we act sometimes. Here's another truth.

We don't see ourselves as other people do because we justify and rationalize the way we are. Well, that's just the way I'm wired. That's who I am. I mean, if we have a job and if we're still in school or we're driving up and down the road, there are certain laws and rules we have to follow.

[16 : 18] How come we don't adopt that into the Christian way of life? There's a book full of ways we should act towards each other.

As His children, God wants us to act certain ways so we don't bring dishonor to Him. Remember that verse in Scripture that says, Honor your father and your mother so that your days will be long on the earth?

It doesn't mean that you show up for their birthday and bring them a cake or you send them a card on Father's Day or a card on Mother's Day. What that means is you live your life in a way that you don't bring disrespect to them.

Whether they were good parents or not, that doesn't matter. That's not your responsibility. You had no responsibility on whether or not they were a good parent to you or not. You do have a responsibility as their children to act honorably towards them because they did give birth to you.

That's just the way I am. It's all in your head. Think accurately. Think honorably. Think rightly. Think purely. Think lovely. Think repudably. Number seven, think excellently.

[17 : 31] Think What that means is to be a man or a woman of valor. Be a man or a woman of valor. Courageous.

We need a few good men and women. I'm so afraid we're becoming a culture of whiny, wimpy people.

Wimpy whining is in style. Complaining is in style. We live in the greatest country in the world.

And we're watching a generation of selfish, ungrateful people walking around thinking that that's normal and trying to impose that lifestyle on the rest of us who are trying to live happy, thankful, giving lives.

And a whiny, wimpy lifestyle robs us of a happy life. And the last way of thinking that will help you and me be thankful and have a happy thanksgiving is to think commendably.

[18 : 40] Think commendably. I'm not sure that's a word, but it fits. What that means is commendable.

Having praise always on our lips. Praise God for what he's doing. Praise God for who he is. Praise God for what he's doing in your neighbor.

Your church neighbor. Let them know that you're praising God for who they are. You know, I'm surrounded by folks up here on this platform on Sunday mornings who I'm amazed how this church is blessed by such great musicians.

A small church here on Tom Hebert Road, and I look and see that almost half are people who stand on this platform and sing praises to God.

You know, Mark and Barbara and Jessica and Nathan, Carrie and Kimberly and a couple who aren't here today, Jeremy. I praise God for them.

[19 : 48] And I praise God for the fact that I get to play with them. I praise God that they let me play with them. God is worthy of our praise, no matter what we're going through.

Can I tell you that praise is a great prescription for unhappiness? Can I tell you that praise is a great prescription for being unthankful?

Praise is a great prescription for being ungriving. If you're unhappy, praise God. Not for being unhappy, but just praise God.

So as I bring this to a close, I want to leave you with this. What if you woke up tomorrow morning and the only thing that you had left were the things that you were thankful for today? We don't have to wait until Thursday to begin being thankful.

Why do we set aside one day to be thankful? Why can't we be happy and thankful and giving 364 other days of the year? This is it.

[20 : 57] This is all we get. Go buy more stuff. It's okay. You can't buy more time. Your life this day is a gift from God.

What are you doing with it? He's going to give you everything you need for this day. He doesn't promise you what He's going to give you tomorrow because tomorrow's not here. There are two days that you can't do anything.

Yesterday and tomorrow. The only day you can do something is right now, today. Don't ever think that God doesn't give you more than you need because He does.

This world is fading away. And soon this world will be over.

And life as we know it on this earth, this age will be over. But there is an age to come where everything will be perfect. Life will be perfect. But this is not it.

[22 : 04] And you don't have the right to think that other people should be everything you want them to be before you can be happy, thankful, or giving. Paul ends this verse with this imperative.

And I'll read the verse in its entirety. And close with the imperative or command statement from Paul. It's the recipe for peace.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.

And here it is. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do this. And the God of peace will be with you.

It's all in your head. It's all in your head. Think accurately. Think honorably. Think rightly, purely, lovely, reputably, excellently, commendably.

[23 : 17] And we see the result in verse 9. You have peace. Happy Thanksgiving. Father, thank you so much for your word again.

Thank you for the truths that are there. Father, as this Thanksgiving week unfolds, I pray that we're reminded that you are the God who is worthy of our praise.

You give us all we need. And for that, we can be thankful. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.