

True Thanksgiving, Pt. 2

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Today we're going to continue with the series entitled *True Thanksgiving*, with this being *Part 2*.

As stated in the beginning last Sabbath, we live in a world today where being thankful and expressing it, even having the ability to express it is going more and more by the wayside. It just doesn't exist as much as it used to, and it seems the farther this world goes in the sense of growing in selfishness the worse that becomes. All reflects a deeper selfishness that exists in people. That's the kind of world we live in, especially because of technology.

It seems to be extremely difficult for the human mind to grasp that selfishness, again, robs oneself of a greater fullness, a fulfillment, a satisfaction and a happiness in life. Those things are associated with a mind that is thankful, with grateful. It really is. There are things in this, as we meditate upon them, think about them during the week from one Sabbath to another because of this series that will help us to grasp some of these things in a greater way, truly, of what it takes to be of a right mind toward God.

Because this is about relationships. It's about relationships toward God, toward Christ, and toward one another in how we think toward one another and what we really grasp as far as our calling is concerned.

So, the reality is that the more selfish one is the less thankful they will be. It just goes together. The more selfish one is the less thankful they will be. That means they can't express what they don't feel. So, it's something you have to feel inside. It's something that you have to know inside. It's something that has to be within your mind. It's about the mind; it's about how the mind thinks. The human mind tends to be exceedingly selfish. That's just the way we are. And with technology today the world is moving more and more in that direction and in kind of a vortex of a trap that just sucks life into it and robs people of real happiness, of real fullness.

It's a hideous thing that's taking place, it really is. But the more clearly we can see ourselves, the more we can come to see where we lack, in other words, where we're weak in the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness. It's something, again, to ask God for help to grow in, that we be able to see it, that we be able to grasp that kind of a mind.

Let's turn over to Psalms 26. So, we can all improve, every one of us in this room, every one of us listening today. We can all improve in learning to become more thankful in life. And candidly, it's a great focus to have. It's something that's good for us to do from time to time, to think about these things, to think about a subject like this to help us get our minds focused more upon the need that this becomes stronger in our life.

Psalm 26. This is a Psalm of David. **Verse 1—Judge me, O Eternal; for I have walked in my integrity.** Now, I don't like these translations. Sometimes these translations are so far off the wall. They don't

understand. They don't understand how God works in our lives. They don't know the purpose, the thought behind what's being expressed and the words that are there, whether they be in Hebrew or even in the New Testament in Greek. We are so blessed because we can understand how God works in our life, how His spirit works to change us, to transform the way we think. Sometimes here it's like they're kind of grabbing for straws. But they can't help it.

Judge me, O Eternal. So, this is something we naturally want. We understand that very clear, "Judgment now is upon the house of God." It's not on the world. Now, in one respect we understand because of an end of an age it is coming upon the world because of the way mankind has been for 6,000 years. It just happens to be that this is the time that God is going to exercise judgment in the sense of dealing with, addressing the change that needs to take place. He's allowed mankind to go on for 6,000 years like this, but there's a limit on that that fits into His plan and purpose.

He's allowed things to continue on so in this respect the administration of judgment is going to be meted out in just a short time from now. It's already started. And yet the world doesn't grasp what's taking place around it, but it's going to have a very rude awakening in time here. But it's moving toward it very, very quickly now.

And so, this is a part of what David is addressing here that we all should feel. "Judge me." In other words, we want God to help us to see the things that need to be changed in our lives. That's a part of judgment, that we be able to see it and understand, so that we can make choices. That's why I love things that talks about for Passover, if we would judge ourselves, the process of judging ourselves, the importance of judging ourselves before we come before God and take the Passover.

This is a part of what David is saying. **Judge me, O Eternal; For I have walked in my integrity.** He's not saying that. How many of us can say "my integrity?" "My integrity." Our integrity sucks! What is integrity? Where does it come from? Who determines integrity?

I guess it's good to know the definition of integrity. But again here, it means "having strong moral principles." Strong moral principles. Well, man's, mankind's, what is morality of mankind? "Moral uprightness." Well, true morality, what is truly moral, strong moral principles, have to come from God. God reveals those things. And so, the mind for us who desire God's way of life is that we have integrity, that we strive to have integrity in our lives, strong morals, to live by strong moral principles that come from God! That's what he's talking about.

He's talking about this that God already knows about him as God said, "A man after My own heart," his attitude toward God. That's what we're looking at, our attitude toward God and a willingness to change, a willingness and a desire, candidly, to grow stronger in God's way. That's what it's all about in our thinking.

So this is what David is asking. "This is what I strive to walk in." That's what he's talking about in essence. "I have walked in integrity. Not mine, but that which comes from You," speaking to God.

So again, people don't have integrity unless it's based upon what comes from God. Our morality, mankind can come up with his own morality. He has through the ages. Different religions have different levels of things that they consider to be moral, and it doesn't take a whole lot to come to a point where you can kind of in a carnal way without God's holy spirit come to realize that "I don't like things stolen from me, therefore, it isn't good that we steal. It isn't good that people have the ability to go in and rob others so there should be laws against that." As a whole, nations and peoples and religions think that way.

How about taking someone's life? "It's not good that people can just go in and kill somebody at will and at whim." Again here, things that mankind in part can come to agree with God though God's not in the picture, as a whole, have a certain kind of morality. But it's not God's. God's goes far, far, far beyond to a spirit, to a mindset, to a thinking, of how we're to think toward one another, about loving one another and that the motivation comes from that. Not just to have ridged laws in the sense of do's and don'ts, though it's good that we have them in the world, in nations and so forth.

I thought I'd just read a couple of scriptures here that use this word here about "integrity." One is in Proverbs 10. We'll come back to this. I want to go through Psalms 26 so let's just take a look at this and notice some of this, of how it's used.

Proverbs 10:9—He who walks upright walks surely. Well, the word "upright" is that same word "integrity." So, "He who walks with integrity walks surely." In other words, if the moral principles come from God, if it's God's way of life and you strive to walk that way then you're far more secure in how you're living your life and what you're living.

So again, "walks surely." This word here translated in New King James as "securely," but it simply means "to walk secure." So again, your life is better because of it.

...but he who perverts... So, it's giving a contrast here, **twists his ways shall be known.** So again, beautiful what it's saying here.

On down in **verse 29—The way of the Eternal is strength.** So, we learn that in God's way of life, in God's Church, that the more we can learn of His way of life, of His thinking, of His mind, and being in unity with Him, there is strength in that, there is power in that, and God even gives us more.

The way of the Eternal is strength to the upright – to those who walk in integrity is what it's about, to those who seek to live by integrity, have integrity in their life. **...but destruction**, in other words, **ruin will be to the workers of iniquity.** So, it's just making a contrast here between the two. That's the way of mankind, to live a different way, the way of iniquity, the way of sin because of selfishness. But if we strive to walk God's way there's strength in that, there's power in that, there is true integrity in that.

So, going back to **Psalms 26:1—Judge me, O Eternal**; and what it's saying, **for I have walked in integrity**. What an awesome thing to be able to say before God. "This is the way I want to walk. This is the way I have chosen to walk." God knows how we are. God knows our thinking and our mind and our choices. Sometimes it's good to say those things to God in prayer, "It's my choice. I've chosen You. I want Your way of life; strengthen me in it. Help me to see it more clearly. Help me to see the things that get in the way. Judge me!" That's what we're asking for, isn't it? That's what David is doing here.

I have trusted in the Eternal. That's what we do from the moment we are drawn, sometimes dragged, as the word means, drawn to God's way of life in a calling that He gives to us, and we begin to see certain things and we begin to make choices along the way. It's a beautiful process, it truly is.

"I have trusted in the Eternal." This is what we do when we seek God's way, when we seek to have that mind of moral excellence that only comes from God. God is the source of it, to tell us what it is.

I will not slide. That's why. "I have trusted in the Eternal. I will not slide." In other words, "I will not slip. I will not be shaken." So, that's our strength. There's strength in that so that we don't slide, so that we don't slip and fall down and bang ourselves up like we do. But we're still going to do it from time to time because we still have that carnal human nature. But the more we can walk in God's way of life and in integrity, if you will, beautiful.

Verse 2—Examine me, O Eternal, and prove me. Beautiful! "Try me." "Test me." "Put me to the test." In other words, to bring things to the surface. Sometimes we don't want to go through hardships, we don't want to go through trial, the hard things of life. But the more we grow, the more we learn this is what we need in order for change to take place, lasting change to take place. Because God will work with that, He'll help us. It helps to reveal things. It helps to bring the dross to the surface so we can see what has to be taken off in order to have more of what is pure remaining. Awesome!

Examine me, O Eternal, prove me. "Try me. Test me. Put me to the test," in other words. Not because we know we're perfect or perfected yet. We know that's not going to happen until we're spirit. We have a battle until that time.

"Try." Now, this word here in Hebrew means exactly what I was mentioning there about silver or gold or whatever and the dross coming to the surface. It's a word that means "to refine or to smelt." It's the very word that means that. Just like gold and silver, to heat it up, to get rid of the impurities.

Try my mind and my heart. Why? Because you want to become purer, if you will, you want to be more correct and right before God, living what is right and getting rid of the things that get in the way, that hurt our ability to be like God, to become like God, of one mind with God, in unity and oneness with God.

For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes. Because we grow in ability to see it. We grow in our ability to see how much God loves us. We grow in confidence of that. The longer we're in God's Church, the more

experiences we go through, the more we can come to understand these things like the mercy, the patience that God gives to us. Awesome! That should immediately stir up thankfulness and gratitude within us. Those are the things that help us come to love God more and more. The more we see those things and are thankful the more we will love God. They go together. You can't separate them. They go hand in hand. They fit together.

For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes. What an awesome thing that we can see that. The world, people think they have certain things that they see and grasp, but they don't yet. It's not their time yet. They'll be given that time. Those who think that they have that don't. It's a surface thing. It's something that has to be worked up, in a sense. But to be true, to be true, to be genuine, another matter.

Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. What an awesome thing to be able to say that, to know that. "I have walked in Your truth." So, what does that do? Well, it gives us a confidence, a boldness in life, a unique relationship in our thinking toward God and toward one another within the Body.

"I have walked in Your truth." It's a horrible thing if we don't walk in the truth that God has given to us. I think of all the truths that God has given to us. What an awesome thing to know what we know, to see what we see. I marvel sometimes at all that we are able to see that others can't in the scattered Body. Stopping at a certain number of truths, 21.

Not even able to see that we had an apostasy. Not even able to understand what took place during Laodicea and why. Not able to grasp what we went through in an ability to live a little bit more of what is addressed here in this Psalm, if we could really see and grasp what it is that needs to change. "Refine me. Put me to the test. Help me to see." In other words, "Help me to see what I can't see. Help me to get rid of the things that block my view. And in time, that will come to several thousands – most of it in the Great White Throne.

I have not sat, which is a word that means "to remain, to dwell," **I have not sat/dwelt with vain people**, the way of emptiness, vanity, what these words oftentimes mean then and how people live. In other words, we recognize as soon as God calls us there is a way of what we refer to as "the world." I love the way Herbert Armstrong expressed it: just the way of get, which is the way of selfishness. It is the way we are. God blesses us to choose something different. He helps us to see something different, that there is a different way.

That's why I marvel sometimes when I think about different ones who used to find fault with Herbert Armstrong and used to get so upset and say, "You know, he's not sending the gospel into the world. He's not talking about the Bible. He's not talking about the truths to these world leaders He's going to. How could the gospel be going into the world if he's not talking to them like I would talk to them? Because I would tell them..." It's like, "Okay, let's get together and open up our Bibles," type of thing. Like, yeah, that's going to go a long way with a world leader, you know, somebody especially who doesn't even have

any belief in Christianity whatsoever and you're going to try to reason with them? Especially if maybe they're Muslim because he had different ones he visited with in life.

You can't talk with people like that, so you have to talk to them in terms, which he did, that are about God and God's way of life that don't go into things of scripture and so forth that sound religious as far as Christianity is concerned. I know we see that, but incredible.

I have not sat with vain people. So, we've chosen a different way. We try to get away from things of this world and live differently and associate differently because we realize there are certain things that can pull us away from the truth.

Just addressed that earlier. "I have walked in the truth." If you want to keep doing that you have to be careful who you are with, what could pull you away, what kind of friendships we have. So, within the Body we learn to cherish friendships and a closeness that is unique and different than it is in the world around us, and we're a little more cautious in the world around us and not as trusting.

One of the greatest mistakes I've seen people make through time in this area is starting to trust in others in the world around them, starting to think that because we're able to visit with them or whatever that they're more like us. No, they're not. You've got to be cautious in this world. You've got to be careful. You've got to be wise. I've seen a lot of people make mistakes in this area.

Nor will I go in with hypocrites. In other words, minds, thinking that conceals, that tends to hide what they really are. That's the way of the world. People don't really show the way they actually are, especially today with some of the things that are out there with technology that we have. I don't even know the names of some of these crazy apps. TikTok. I just kind of think of that crocodile and that pirate.

And so, there are these different apps out there and people put on that which is fake, and it makes other people feel bad because their life isn't as good as theirs. But that's not what their life is like. That's one thing I hate about movies and things on TV so often, is that people can get sucked into those things and begin to think this is what life is like. No, it isn't. People see things about marriage and life and so forth on TV so often and relationships. Anyway, it's not real. It's like they're living in this fake type of world, and they put out this fake way that life is.

No, we all have things we have to address in life. We have differences and things happen and you address those things. That's how you grow and become stronger in life. But the truth about relationships is not in the world. It's not in what you see in movies and so forth. It's a lie, as a whole, it really is. But sometimes we get sucked into it and we think our lives have to be that way.

Now, I could go a lot further. I could give a sermon on that, but I'm not going to. Because that has done so much damage to the minds of people so often, even within God's Church, to think that life is like that, and it's not. We should know what life is like. It takes work. It takes work in people's lives. To fight against

this, to fight against selfishness, to have right relationships, whether it be in a family or whether it be within a Church. But they don't show that side of things as a whole in the world.

Especially on some of these crazy things out there that people post and how great their life is and all the scenery that has to be behind them to make sure that everybody sees how good their lives are, and people get sucked into that and it hurts them.

Nor will I go with hypocrites. So, we strive not to get caught up in that kind of, well, you know what I'd like to say. We strive not to get caught up in that kind of a world. That's why a long, long time ago I talked about Facebook. You've got to be careful you don't get sucked up into a particular kind of world because it can do incredible harm to your mind, to the spirit in your mind. There are a lot of people who have gone that route that have hurt their minds and get in these apps, and they hurt their minds. It's going to take a long time working with them in the Millennium or in the Great White Throne to help them come out of that. It really is.

It'd be far better if they didn't have any technology at all. It's going to be far easier to work with people who never had technology at all, in many cases, to help their minds to heal because they think they have to have those things. It's like a drug and they don't understand that. I feel for them, I truly do, and I hope you do.

But we don't want to get caught up with that. Sometimes people get mad at me because I've said things like that: "Don't get involved. Don't get involved in certain things. Be careful what you do. Be careful what you say out there. Be careful what kind of things you become a part of."

That's what it's talking about here. Be careful what you become a part of because it can hurt you. So, if we're tuned in spiritually we're going to hear, if we have the ears to hear. We're going to live in a more cautious way because there are things out here that are exceedingly harmful, especially in the world today.

I have hated the assembly of evil doers. Well, in the sense of being a part of that. We don't want to do that. We want to stay away from certain things. Just like when I first came in the Church I knew I had to leave a college town in order to grow in a different mindset, a different thinking, because I knew that pull would be so strong to pull me back to a way of life that was harmful. To the music, to the music even, to what was in my mind and the thinking that was there and the way that that pulled, and it pulls at people.

There are things you have to do sometimes to get away, to get out of Egypt and don't rub shoulders with Egypt. There are certain environments you have to get out of to change, to grow, to conquer, to overcome because those can be great weaknesses until you have conquered them.

I have hated the assembly of evil doers, in the sense of our part in it, of being around it. We want to stay away. When we grasp what it's like, when we grasp the harm, you don't want to be around it.

Yet we're in the world. Isn't that an amazing thing we're told? We can't be taken out of the world. We're still in the world. What Christ said on that night of Passover. Awesome.

...and will not sit with the wicked. Or we better not, because if we do? In the sense, it doesn't mean, you know, you're sitting in a movie theatre and say, "Are you wicked?" Anyway. But sometimes people have gone too far with things and it's almost that bad.

I will wash my hands in innocence. We want to be clean. That's what it's about. We want to be cleansed. We want God to help us to cleanse this mind. Because it's about the mind. The more we can do that and see it at work in our lives and see the fruit of it, it produces gratitude, it produces thankfulness, it produces love to God. They go together. Gratitude and thankfulness and love, they go together. You cannot separate them. Whether it be in marriage, in family, in the Church, with God, whatever it is, they go together hand in glove. It's a beautiful thing. The richer the gratitude, the richer the thankfulness, the stronger the love that exists.

I will wash my hands in innocence, and so I will compass Your altar, O Eternal. Surround, go around, the word as it's used. "I will compass/encompass Your altar." It's a desire to be close to God, it truly is, in giving ourselves fully to God's way of life and wanting to be a part of what He offers us.

...so that I may—notice what it says here. We want to be close. **So that I may**, not "proclaim" yet, the word is **hear**. The word is "hear." The word is not "proclaim" yet. It leads to that in the sense of what we're able to live, what we're able to see, but it's a matter of what we're able to hear and what we're able to see. **...so that I may hear with the sound of thanksgiving.** There is a lot said there, there really is. "So that I may hear," so that I can see it, so that I can hear it and have it in my life, this mind. So, "help me to hear, help me to see, to learn, to grow, to draw closer to You so that this is in my heart and in my mind, and so that then I can **and tell of all your wondrous works,**" in time as we grow, and that our lives reflect that. That's what tells of God's marvelous works in our life.

It's an incredible thing that God is doing in us, the transformation of the mind. It's God's greatest creation. That's an awesome thing to understand. The greatest thing God is creating, has ever created, will ever create is His Family. That process that we go through in human life because we're human and we have to make choices to be a part of that by our own thoughts and thinking in response to God's mercy, love, kindness has to be wrapped up in gratitude and thankfulness to be able to see it. That's what it's asking for here, the ability to hear it, the ability to see it, the ability to grasp it so that it's reflected in our lives.

Eternal, I have loved the habitation of Your house. That means more to us than any other era of God's Church, any other period, I should say, of God's Church because this is not an era, it's a time of a remnant Church. Awesome to understand that, to grasp what it's talking about. "For I have loved the habitation of Your house, of Your dwelling, of Your dwelling place." Of what we're blessed to become a part of, "In My Father's house," not mansions, "are many places to abide." That's what it's about.

It's about God's Family. It's about what we've been called to become a part of. "I have loved that." We should all be able to say that because the more we see that, you know what? The more thankful we are to God, the more grateful we are because of what we're able to hear, of what we're able to see, and to know our part in it, and just to be ever so incredibly thankful to God Almighty to have something so awesome working in our lives. All by choice.

"I have loved the habitation of Your house." What could be more fulfilling? And you know what? The joy, the fullness, the happiness, I couldn't help thinking about that today as I was thinking about some of this sermon and so forth and realizing it's because of that gratitude, the more grateful you are the more fulfilled you are, the more at peace you are, the more satisfied in life you are, the more joyous, the happier life is inside of you, in the thinking when you think upon those things.

Now, we're not able to hold on to that all the time as human beings because we have drama in life all around us and sometimes we let down in certain things (a lot), but what an awesome thing that when we take that time for prayer and reflection and crying out to God and focusing upon these things we know it's there.

I mean, how great is our calling to be here on the Sabbath, on the Holy Days, sitting in Passover whether it be in our home or in a gathering of whatever, and being able to go through that process and know what it means, of what God is working out in our lives? The more richly blessed you know you are the more you put into it, and this all has to do with where you put your value. So much of real thankfulness comes from this.

Where do we put the greatest value of our lives? The tendency of human beings is in things and events or whatever it might be, and yet that's a part of life but that's a small part in this human life. It really is a very small part. The greater thing is to be able to have that vision of what God has called us to. It's about the life that's going to be forever.

Yeah, I can't grasp that but I long for it, I look for it. I realize that I get a little bit of a taste of it now, more of a taste from time to time, like during Sabbath, Sabbath services, Holy Days and the like, the Feast of Tabernacles. We have that kind of a joy and excitement for that period of time that we wish we could keep all the time, but we can't. But that's where we learn. That's where we grow in deeper thankfulness and gratitude and understanding what God has given to us.

I mean, how much do we really see who we are? If we can't be in awe of that we have a lot of work to do. Because we should be at awe to think of how small we are and have everything that we have in front of us. In many cases, "Like a firebrand plucked out of the fire," like I mentioned last Sabbath. Only because selected calling. Don't know why, just thankful for it, that God called me out of this world. That's all we can look at and say, "Thank you." What an awesome thing that we have opportunity now, and to know or to grow in knowing what that means as a part of God's plan. You're going to be able to do so

much more. Opportunities to serve and give in ways that you can't even begin to grasp yet, can't even begin to grasp.

But what we can grasp it should cause a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness to well up within us that creates joy, happiness, fullness of life. That's why I think about every Feast the beginning of the first sermon, as a whole, should have something in there about what God commands us to do at the Feast – rejoice. If we see, if we grasp, how can we not rejoice? That has everything to do with gratitude, of where we put the greater value, to recognize what an incredible thing that we're able to come together for eight days. But to realize we have this now and to know what it pictures that's almost upon us, and to know we have such an incredible part in it. You talk about riches of life! Awesome! Awesome! Awesome!

That's where joy comes from, being satisfied regardless of what we have physically in life. Those are small things, incredibly small and puny, no matter what we have to experience in hardships and suffering. Just getting older you learn about suffering more and more. You get ill, you learn about suffering more and more. And yet that's not what it's all about. It's about what we can glean, what we can grow in understanding from it as a part of something that's going to become so incredibly great in time, a member of the God Family for all time. Incredible.

Eternal, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where your glory dwells. Do we grasp that God's glory lives here in God's Church? The glory of God? The power, the might of God Almighty? We're all a part of that. We're all a part of a process of our minds being transformed. We're a part of being in God's hands, of being molded and fashioned, of being able to be transformed in our thinking. We have the opportunity now and we are exceedingly blessed because of it. Awesome to know those things. How could we not be thankful to God? How could we not rejoice before God and thank Him over and over and over again for the abundance of what we have?

Not of what we don't have. The human mind can get focused on what it doesn't have sometimes though. We need to see what we have. We are so rich. It's that value again, if we really see it. That's why sometimes I think of different parables that were given that I feel that sometimes have been misused or not given the kind of credibility that really should exist there. But you know, it can't have it except by God's spirit.

"Pearl of great price." What does that mean? It can become just a term that is passed around and used lightly in the sense of, yeah, this the pearl of great price. The world of traditional Christianity uses it that way, and they throw these phrases out and so forth. But to see it, to know it, to know what that means on a spiritual plane, of where you place your value because you hold it up like that and you see it in a way that is so awesome, so incredible because you grasp it?

Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood, in whose hands is wicked device, and whose right hand is full of bribes. The way of the world. We don't want that. So, this is a desire to get rid of those things. We don't want to be in that. We want to come out of it more and more, to be

refined, to see the things that need to change, and yet to understand that's what our carnal nature leans toward. What a contradiction of terms of something so contrary, the way we are as human beings and yet the way we can be because of choices and our thinking and a mind that God gives to us through the power of His spirit.

I think of this thing, "whose right hand is full of bribes." You think of the world, the way the world functions, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." Politics is like that. "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." How do they get certain numbers of people to vote in agreement? Is it just because they all belong to a certain party? Or is it because they know, and sometimes certain ones hold out because you know you'll get a little bit more if you do this. It's evil, the choices that are made.

I think of what we went through in the Apostasy and after the Apostasy, and things that were going on in some of the scattered Body and some of these things of bribes. That's what it was. You know, "You do this, and I'll do that for you, and we'll all be happy. We'll all be united." Well, I got my fill of that as far as human life is concerned, the human mind. That's good and that's what it's about, getting our full of this world so that we loathe what is evil, so that we loathe what is not right.

That's why I love the fact that most of what I've ever been taught and learned in the sense of being a minister is to see what was wrong. And because of that, I loathe it, I detest it. When you detest something you won't have it in your life, you'll see it for what it is, you'll grab hold of what is right and good because that's what you want. You don't want what's wrong, and if it's in you, you want it out of you, and so where you can repent of things when God reveals it to you what a blessing, what an incredible blessing.

But as for me, I will walk in integrity. Not "mine," in God's. That's what we want to do. That's our choice. Can we do it perfectly? No. But that's our goal and that's what we strive for, to be of the same mind with God. I don't know about you, but I love that. To know when certain things in your mind are in agreement with God, there's nothing greater. It's not just a matter of going along with or doing something because of knowledge, it's a matter of what you grow in and a matter of conviction and what you become inside and that mind. So the more we can have that mind, what an awesome thing. How blessed are we that our minds are actually being changed?

Redeem me and be merciful to me. So, how often do we have to go before God and ask for forgiveness? That's a part of the redeeming process. So again, we see ourselves for what we are and we're thankful for the grace, the mercy, the patience of God, the fact that He gave us, and Christ gave of himself to be that Passover so that if several times a day need be we are able to ask God, "Please forgive me. Help me to change. I don't want that kind of thinking. I don't want that kind of mind. I want to fight against selfishness."

We have plenty of opportunities for that because we're carnal. Still as human beings we have selfishness in us, and yet we have God's spirit within us and therein is a battle. It's which one we want the most, that we value the most that we will fight for and work for. It takes work. It doesn't just happen.

God's law and His way is about right relationships. Awesome to understand what that means. It's about love toward others, which means we must be willing to sacrifice. I think of the sacrifices we talked about last week, the peace offering, the sacrifice of the peace offering, the fire, the burnt offering part. It takes a lot. It takes a lot on our part and our choices that we make and what is it we really desire.

See, what we really want is what we value the most. So much in life is a matter of what do we want the most? Now, there are certain things that we can work toward and have on a physical plane, but what we want more than that, and all that should be a means to acquire that which is spiritual in nature. Because that should be the greatest in our thinking, in our minds. Everything else is a means to an end – our jobs, our lives, our home, our clothes, our car, our food, whatever else we have.

So again, about love towards others, a willingness to sacrifice and move farther away from love toward self. Because that's what we have to choose – to move farther away from love toward self, selfishness. So we naturally tend to love ourselves. That's the way we are, to love ourselves far more than others and too often far more than God.

Let's turn over to John 11. So, to live God's way of life we have to come to see where changes need to take place in our life, obviously, because we have to change. The measure of the expression of thankfulness, because we can look at certain things in our life and just ask, "What is the depth of that thankfulness and gratitude toward God or toward others in the Church or toward others in the family? What is the depth of that thankfulness and the expression of that thankfulness? Do we express it?"

You know, you can't just expect to have some kind of osmosis that people can know that you love them, that you care for them, that you're thankful that they're a part. There are things sometimes that have to be expressed. Like in family, there are things that have to be expressed. If they're not expressed how can someone know? "Well, you know I love you." "Oh, I guess I did know that, probably." (Sorry.) It's better to express. Just like to God, it isn't enough that we have something inside that we think and believe or whatever, "Of course I'm thankful to God!" Well, how often do you tell Him that? How often? It's amazing how the human mind works.

So, the measure of the expression of thankfulness in our lives, and especially the lack of it, can be like a great mirror to us. It really can. So, we can look at those things in our life and see ourselves. Where do we stand? Where are we on a spiritual plane?

This example here now is when Joshua, in John 11, when Joshua was praying to God. We can learn a lot from this particular example of what's stated here. It's an account where Christ, again, was travelling down on his way to Jerusalem, about that period of time that we've gone through in the past, where

that last three weeks of his life as he went up closer to Jerusalem and what he was going to accomplish there, and we're coming in on the story where he came down to Mary, Martha, to their home, and Lazarus. So again, it's a story we know well and that's where we're picking up here.

John 11:32—Then when Mary had come to where Joshua was and saw him, she fell down at his feet saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Now, it's an awesome account here in John of what took place at that period of time and what Christ had to say.

Therefore, when Joshua saw her crying, and the Jews who came with her were also crying, he groaned in the spirit. Well, what is this all about? Well, we learn what's taking place here. This deep sense of groaning inside was because of their inability to see him, their inability to grasp what was going on and his longing for their ability to see what he saw.

And so, we go through that in life. We see things that people do, sometimes family, sometimes relatives, sometimes others in the world around us and people perhaps at work, whatever it might be, and we see that they don't have what we have. There's a suffering, there's a pain that can go along with that.

There's something really good in that as well. If we can really see what we have, the more we're going to grasp how much we're able to be a part of something to one day help bring this to them. Even in the Great White Throne in many cases. So, it's an awesome thing that we're given opportunity to be a part of in that, and this is a part of what he is experiencing.

In essence, for what he saw, he's by himself. The disciples and people who were following him didn't see what he saw. They didn't have God's holy spirit. There were things they were being drawn in, but to really see things on a spiritual plane, it wasn't there yet. But they were being taught various things that stuck with them, that when the time would come (Pentecost) it was all going to be an "Ah-ha!" moment. All of a sudden, they were going to see things that would fill in the blanks of everything that Christ had talked about and been sharing with them. All of a sudden, wham, now... I mean, that experience in itself had to be incredible. All of a sudden to see it, to really see it for what it was had to be so awesome.

So here he is, in essence. It wasn't easy. Sometimes we look at his life and we don't grasp what he lived through. He's by himself. He's not by himself. He knows that God is there. He knows his Father is there. He knows everything is, in that respect, concerning what his purpose is, what he's going to do, and yet there is that which can't be given yet. That has an effect on the mind, it has effect upon the heart and the thinking. We have human responses. He had human responses and sometimes it's hard for us to grasp that.

He didn't look forward to go through what he was going to go through. He said, "Father, if there is any other way, but not my will but Yours be done," because he knew what God's will was. But it was so real in his mind that we can't even grasp that. We can't grasp the level of what it was in his mind because of where he was in the sense of the Word of God made flesh and what he could see.

Again, we can read over things like this and just not grasp the depth of some of the things of what took place. But we can relate to it in part because we have those experiences at times where we wish someone else could see it, but we know you can't give this to anyone, you can't save anyone. We learn those things in God's Church. Sometimes we make great error because we do try to "save" someone else, we do try to make sure that they're doing something or try to intervene in their life in such a way that causes them to be a part. You can't do that.

You can't give the Church to anyone. You can't give this way of life to anyone. You can't make anyone want what they don't want, what they can't see. You can't do it. We have to learn that. What an incredible thing. And that should create and produce greater thankfulness inside of us, to realize, "What an awesome thing. I can see it. It's not time yet; it's not their time. I look forward to the time it will be theirs and I want to be there in the God Family or whatever." That means as far as the Millennium is concerned and the beginning of it but the next great resurrection.

So, **he groaned in the spirit and was troubled**. So we have some of those kinds of feelings from time to time, but not to the depth he did. But we do experience it from time to time, which is good. Because if we didn't then we're lacking, we're lacking in a mind of gratitude and thankfulness and seeing or expressing or valuing what we're able to see.

Then he said, Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. And then it says, **Joshua cried**. Now, this word means with tears, in the Greek language. That word comes from "tears." So again, he wasn't spirit yet. He was of mankind, and he was of God that goes beyond what we have as a calling and God's spirit dwelling in us. What an awesome thing.

So, this was so moving to him. He was close to them; he so longed for what he was coming to accomplish and fulfill but hadn't yet experienced it. He didn't know what it was fully like yet to be a high priest, but he became that for everyone, and Passover obviously first.

Then the Jews said, Look how he loved him! That's not why tears came into his eyes because Lazarus was dead. We don't deal with death in the same way the world does. We know what happens. So, it wasn't a matter of him being so moved that now, "He's dead!" Sometimes we go to an extreme with death. It's not the end! Death sometimes—and I'm going to say this this way—is a blessing to the human life. Death sometimes becomes a blessing in human life.

Now, I don't know about you but if I get to a certain point of suffering? I've been at that edge at different times and thankfully because of nice little drugs they have sometimes, but they can kind of put you in la-la-land, you don't know what's going on. But before you get to that point of la-la-land – I'm just calling it la-la-land because you don't know what's going on and you can begin to feel pretty good after you've felt really, really bad, after you feel like you're dying. And you are! We come to a point in life where we begin to experience certain things and there begins to be a point in time where it's meant that we die. That's the way God created us. We're not meant to live forever. Yet human beings can tend to try to grab a hold

of and hang on to it. It's like, if it's time, it's time, and especially in God's Church we know, "My life is in God's hands." I mean, there's peace in that, you don't have to worry about it.

There is much to be learned in that process, there really is. It's amazing what we can learn in that. So much of it is a matter of becoming at one more and more with God, where our values are, what our knowledge is and our thankfulness for what we know and what we see. "My life is in God's hands. I don't have to worry about it." But if something comes along and you start suffering there are times when you get to a point in live where I don't want the tubes down in my body pumping air into me, keeping me alive and filling me with things and my mind is gone. What kind of a life is that? Death is a blessing when it's time.

Matter of fact, I think some of the greatest blessings when it comes to death is when you're there in that chair and it's over. You know what? You don't know it. You don't know it. There is nothing in the mind anymore. It's like turning the switch off—electricity—the lights went out. Hmm, the lights are out. You don't know the lights are out. Just knowing those kinds of things.

The hard part so often is for those who are alive. The rituals we go through sometimes. I don't want to get into that. That's why for me and my wife and our agreement, it's just I want to go to ashes quicker than normal. Dirt, dust to dust. Just get it done quickly, put it in a container. Don't keep it anywhere. Pour it somewhere, it doesn't matter. Out in the garden, I don't care because I don't know. I'm at peace with that because I don't know. So again, it's for those who are alive and how we think and so forth.

So here Christ wasn't mourning because Lazarus was dead. It's like, "My friend!" Because he was very close to them, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They were close, close friendship. Doesn't go into all of it but you know by what is written there it was a very close friendship, relationship. But he wasn't mourning, and crying, and tears coming to his eyes because of death, because now Lazarus wasn't around anymore. It's because of the people. It's because of what they couldn't see and because of what he couldn't share with them, and that longing of looking forward to a time when that could become a reality.

I'll tell you what, moments like that to me, that kind of an experience whenever they happen in life, are precious because there's a knowing that goes with it and an agreement with God that is strong and you look forward, you're forward looking. But there's a gratitude toward God for His plan and purpose that brings you true peace. It's a beautiful thing. But again, thankfulness and love toward God because of that.

What an awesome thing we love God more, we can come to love God more because of these things we see, and we value that then, we value that process in life. We're not against it. Death can be, in the sense of human beings, someone is not with us anymore, the loneliness or whatever is with that for a time until we're able to adjust to various other things in life; it's not an easy thing to go through. That's a different experience in itself but we learn from it. We learn to become more thankful for God's purpose, for what He's doing.

Because the world doesn't have that. You think about what they have hope in and they don't know. You should know, absolutely know in your mind and because of that knowing, again, is a gratitude and the thankfulness toward God, but there's a peace that comes in no other way.

Then the Jews said, Look how he loved him. They didn't know what they were saying. They didn't grasp what was being done, why this was happening.

Then some of them said, Couldn't this man who opened the eyes of the blind have caused it so that even this man would not have died? You know you think whether they believed that fully or not – some might have, some would have said it for the wrong reasons, those who went back and tattled with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Anyway, another story. But they're about to come into a huge shock because it's one thing that someone can be saved from death, to be healed of something, it's another that they be resurrected from dead. Incredible!

Joshua, therefore, again, groaning in himself... So again, it's this same thing. They can't see. They can't know. It hurts. There's a pain in that to have to wait, and yet we have to wait. So, it says he then **came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone was lying upon it. And Joshua said, Take away the stone. Then Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to him, Lord, by this time he's stinking.** What a horrible thing to have to say, your brother, "He's in there and by this time this is the fourth day, and this, you shouldn't do this because it's not going to be good."

And Joshua said to her, Did I not tell you if you believed you would see the glory of God? Now, this to me is one of the most inspiring. I just almost get chills going through this story because it's such an incredible thing. Here toward the very end of his life, and all that happened in that last three weeks it just got bigger and bigger and bigger, and here the biggest of all in the sense of miracles that were done, of how could you answer this, he's been in there, his body is decomposing, at that point ready to decompose and he's about ready to have an incredible miracle take place that has never happened like this.

So they took away the stone from where the dead was laid. Then Joshua lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard me. Now, this is something we should have in our lives all the time. Because if we understand the entire process of how that's possible, I don't know how a person can have a prayer without thanking God. I really don't. If there is not something we can thank God for, that should be a part of what we say, because it's a matter of love toward God. It's expressing love toward God. "Thank You." Because there's an appreciation there, a gratitude there, something we value highly that we see, that we treasure, and God knows it, and so that lifts us up and strengthens us even as we say it.

I thank You that You have heard me. And I know that You always hear me. Now, that to me is an awesome thing too when you think about some of these kinds of things. We realize, and it's good to be reminded of that from time to time, to know that every time we go before God as His people He hears

us. I don't care where you are! I don't care where you are you can pray to God. You can pray to God when you're lying there waking up from your sleep and you can't get back to sleep, and you even ask God for help to go to sleep. And you know what? Occasionally He gives it to you right away. You think, what an awesome thing to be able to pray to God about little things like that in our life. Other times it doesn't happen that way because He lets us experience it, old age, getting older and waking up in the middle of the night.

So, he says, **I thank You that You have heard me. And I know that You always hear me.** So, whether we have an answer or not. Because sometimes it isn't good that we have answers. Sometimes it isn't good that we have our petition, our request answered because "it's not my will it's Yours be done." If there is something we can glean and learn from it, awesome. It doesn't take away the thankfulness, the treasure of valuing highly the relationship with God.

Sometimes children, if they don't get something from their parents, it doesn't go over well, or they don't get what they want? This time of year, you see those kinds of things and sometimes what they consider to be funny videos or whatever. Sometimes they're not so funny because of the temper tantrum that takes place because they didn't get what they wanted. They throw the thing down on the ground, what they did get, and it's like, "This is funny?" Anyway.

I know that You always hear me. But because of the people who stand by I am saying this. So, he's just repeating something that's inside of him that is toward his Father, and yet saying it out loud because he has a special job to do for the people. At other times, it doesn't mean he isn't thanking God, because he is in his prayers, okay? To understand that kind of relationship? So again here, this is just the way he was.

...that they may believe You have sent me. So, that doesn't make everyone believe to the sense of having God's spirit and being called, but to be able to see something and saying this could happen in no other way but God did it. It doesn't mean a person has to be called, it's just that they believe that.

"Someone was resurrected from the dead! I saw it. I witnessed it. He is the Messiah!" That's why there were several thousand as he went into Jerusalem that glorified God, that cried out to him as being the descendant of David, as being the Messiah that was coming into Jerusalem at that particular time.

Awesome!

Then when he had spoken this to the Father, to his Father, **he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.** Whew! Awesome! **And he who was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave cloth. And his face was bound about him with a head cloth.** Now, the way they wrap the body you can't see. He has this over him, he's coming out, he hears the voice, and they have to take these things off of him. Not all right there but... Anyway.

Then many of the Jews who came to Mary, who had seen the things which Joshua did, believed on him. Now again, they basically believed because of what happened, that this is of God, he is the

Messiah. It convicted them in the sense of something on a physical plane of something they believed within their religion that a Messiah was to come; he has to be the Messiah. This is what it did to them.

Then after he died so many went by the wayside again. Others, God worked with on the Day of Pentecost. So, **they believed in him as being the Messiah.**

Let's turn over to Colossians 3. So again, what an incredible story of something to read like this and a relationship that Christ had with his Father. Again here, this matter of gratitude and thankfulness that he expressed to his Father and yet saying, in this respect, "and I know that You always hear me." That's for us, you know. He always hears us because He dwells in us, He's called us for a purpose, an incredible purpose, and if we can keep that in the forefront of our minds there is tremendous strength and power in that. There really is. Confidence, boldness, a relationship with the Great God of the universe.

Who are we? And yet He's called us and we're able to be small and yet mighty. Because everything that's being done now is still primarily first and foremost about the Body of Christ, and it will always be because that's where God works powerfully to reproduce Himself, in that respect, to create Elohim. That's where His focus is.

It's in the world in different things as well, bringing things together, but not like it is here, not like it is in different places where God's people get together with His spirit and a change that's taking place in the mind and being fed Sabbath-by-Sabbath and the ability to grow and see things that are not able to be seen any other way except by God's spirit that dwells in us. But we see them.

What is the value of that to each one of us? What do we think about that? What do we think about that closeness we're able to have with the Great God of the universe? "I know that You always hear me." What a bold thing to say before God. What a beautiful thing to be able to say before God. What a thing of treasure, if you will, to hold up.

Colossians 3:12—Therefore, as the elect of God, the select of God, those selected by God. That's what we were just talking about. What a dumbfounding thing to be able to see and to know and to understand. Selected by God. We don't grasp it. I don't know why, you know, of all people. So many so far better as far as how they lived their lives and yet He picked whomever He chose. We don't know why, just grateful that He did. Awesome, awesome, awesome. What value can you put upon that?

And yet the vast majority who have been called have turned against God. That's a hard one to grasp, to comprehend. There are some out there listening today who are on the verge of being put out of God's Church. It's going to happen in the next couple of weeks or so. Not going to put up with it anymore, certain games that people play sometimes, go through certain motions of certain things. It's like it's time to quit playing games. It's going to just keep happening until the end here, until it's all over with. What's going to be left? God's people, those who seek to walk in integrity, those who have chosen, who want to

hold on, who value, who are thankful to God Almighty, who are thankful for one another in the Body of Christ, who treasure the experience, the opportunity that we have being His people.

Therefore, as the elect of God. I'm sorry, when I think about that, and I think of different ones and some things that some say and do. I think, what are you doing? What are you doing? Do we hear? Do we listen? Do we seek to change? Are we striving to make changes? Are we crying out to God for help to change, to grow, to become more at one with Him in what we live and what we practice, and what we say and what we think and how we talk about one another and so forth?

Therefore, as the elect of God, those selected by God, **holy...** What does that mean? Set apart by God for holy use and purpose to become Elohim. How incredible! How much do we believe that? How much do we see that? How much does that motivate and move us in life?

...put on. Now, it says "tender" here, but it's a word that means "the inward parts of the heart." In other words, it's like that heart, a man after God's own heart, speaking of David. A desire here in our heart of being right with God. So, this is what it's talking about. It's talking about that which is deep down inside of us in our thinking that is of great value to us. Because this is digging down deep then inside, in here, in the inward parts, the expression that's used here.

...put on mercies inside of us. I marvel at the word "grace" and how it's used throughout the New Testament because it's a word that encompasses everything about God's calling in the sense of everything He grants us, gives to us, makes possible that we become a part of His Family. Whether it be the patience, the mercy, the forgiveness, all those things, the love, everything that He gives to us, it's what this process is about.

I think of how merciful God is to us, how merciful God's been to me. Now, sometimes if we're playing games with God and we don't really see ourselves for what we really are and we're not acknowledging that and not admitting what we really are before God, if we really don't see our selfish human nature, we're missing the mark, we're missing the boat. We all have problems, we all have things to repent of, and we all have things to conquer and overcome. If we're not seeing that and acknowledging that before God we are not a part in the sense of being stirred up in God's spirit in this Church, in His Church, in the Body of Christ. Because that's a part of the process.

And so if that's real in our lives we treasure that process and we value mightily God's mercy because He is exceedingly merciful to every one of us. Because every time we sin, if we could really understand it, if we could really see it, what we deserve is death. That's a reality. Death without the possibility of being resurrected, or depends on the situation, whether it be the Great White Throne. But it has to be repented of at some point in time. But that's what it means, in essence, there comes that point where that has to be decided. But this is what it is, it's death still, it's hanging over us.

God's very merciful because He forgives us over and if you repent every day you're forgiven every day. It's put behind. It's not remembered like we tend to remember different ones, of sins of different ones in God's Church and we hold it against them and put them in this category and don't let them grow and be forgiven by God. Who are we? So, we better have the right mind and be merciful, and if we really understand that and we have received and recognize we have received mercy from God, the whole point of grace is that grace live through us, that we change, that we learn to be merciful to others. Because it doesn't just happen, you have to learn it. It's something you have to grow in.

You receive, we receive forgiveness, we better be forgiving. If we're not, if we don't, who are we? What do we value? What do we esteem? Do we esteem the forgiveness that God grants to each one of us? On and on it goes. Incredible.

"Put on." So, it doesn't just happen. You have to work at it. You have to pray about it. You have to ask God for help to accomplish this because it isn't in us to be this way on a spiritual plane in our thinking.

...**mercies**. It's a word meaning compassions, if you will, as well. Again, this mind of thankfulness we have to have to be able to really see what has to take place in the mind.

...**kindness**. So again, recognizing, being thankful for the kindness that God has given to us. So again, do we learn to be kind to others? Do we grasp that kindness we have just within the Church from others, that we're able to be a part of a Family, that we're able to receive kindness from others because of the kindness God has shown to each one that He's selected and drawn into the Body of Christ, and we're beneficiaries? We benefit from that kindness working through each person as we learn to be kind toward each other. Not harsh. Not judgmental. Not condemning. Not tearing down. Not looking for fault. Forgiving. Merciful. Patient.

Sometimes we're impatient with one another and that affects us, our thinking, it affects our compassion, our mercy toward someone else. So, what's in us? What do we value? What are we thankful for?

So again, put on these things, again, where it says, **humility**. It takes that in so many cases above everything else, in one respect, because we have to know what we are. Humility is recognizing what we are, not being lifted up in pride and haughtiness or thinking we deserve something, or something is owed to us, but really, really, really being thankful. It produces humility. Really being thankful, being humbled by seeing what we are, by acknowledging what we are and realizing we have nothing to be lifted up over anyone else about. That's not God's plan. That's not God's Family.

...**meekness**. Teachable spirit. It's probably the best way to explain some of that. Meekness, teachable spirit, we always have something to learn. Every Sabbath we have something we need to learn from what's given to us in sermons. Every Sabbath, and so that depends upon our state of mind, our thinking, whether we have that meekness and a teachable spirit. And what's that require? It goes right back looking at this – humility. Without it we can't have a meek spirit because we're too lifted up.

...longsuffering. Patient endurance. So, even there it's an awesome quality. Do we grasp how great God is? We can't. Yet He has patient endurance with us. He knows what we are. He wants us to change but at what pace are we doing that? How much do we seek it? How much are we crying out to Him for the help? But what does that mean when it affects the Body, patient endurance with one another in different things? We all have certain proclivities; we all have certain things that are not good qualities necessarily that perhaps rub like sandpaper because of our personality being different. Sometimes because of where we are in our growth and our development. We can't expect everyone to be at a certain place and think that we have arrived, because we haven't. We have things to conquer and overcome and grow in as well, don't we? Every one of us. But if we're not careful we can judge that way.

I hope you see those things because that determines so much whether or not and to what level you're going to be thankful with all of your being to God Almighty, to Joshua the Christ, and thankful for the Body of Christ, thankful for one another in the Body. That's something you can grow in. That's something you can pray about. Because you can grow in that more and more and more because it's more difficult toward imperfect human beings, which we all are, and our willingness then to go past that, to see beyond that, to value one another. It's a beautiful thing, it really is, thankfulness, gratitude, patient endurance. A sermon in itself.

Verse 13—fornbearing with one another. That has to do with the mind of tolerating, in the sense of allowing for the differences. Because as human beings, so often we don't allow for the differences. On the contrary, we tend to judge differences. "Well, you should have done this," or "You should do that," or "You should think the way I do," or "You should agree with this," or "You should..." "You should..." "You should..." "...because I know! That's why you should." (Anyway, I'm sorry.) Our human nature really sucks. It's sickening, it really is. It's disgusting. But that's the way we tend to be as human beings.

So again, if we're thankful for one another this doesn't, this won't be difficult. On the contrary, we relish it. "Viva la différence!" Thank God we're not all the same. You wouldn't get along very well if you were all alike because we have troubles with this. And if you saw this everywhere and you knew exactly what he was thinking, she was thinking, you would have trouble with them. You would have trouble with yourself, trust me. I hope you see that.

Thank God there are differences. Do we love the differences? It's an awesome thing. It's like the creation. I love the differences. I don't care where you go, what you do, the time of year. Just like I think of the changing season. You get to the fall you see the changing in the colors and then you see the leaves that are totally gone, and then they start coming back. Every one of them has a unique thing to learn from it and to enjoy from it. The cold, the hot, the in between, the mind that goes with that and how we think. Oh, there's no end out here of what God has put out here for us to experience, to feel, to taste, to see. He created it all to make life more fulfilling to us. If we aren't thankful for those things and don't grasp that we miss out a lot in life what life is all about, the joy, the fullness, the happiness of it that it can give

you. That's something that God doesn't just give to us. We have to grow in it. It's something we have to develop. It's something we don't have by itself fully. There is much growth in that that can take place.

...and forgiving one another. "Forgiving one another." God has forgiven me over and over and over again, day-by-day-by-day, and I'm thankful. I treasure that. I value that. How could you not? How could we not be thankful for that? Then to be thankful that everyone else in here has that same opportunity and blessing in their life.

And if anyone has, as it says, **a quarrel,** translated as "a quarrel," or complaint. It's a word that means "holds a fault." To hold something against someone else. **...even as Christ forgave you, you should do the same.** Where is the thankfulness in that? It has to be there.

But above all things put on... So it starts out by putting on these different things, these different qualities and then, which all produce if we have them, if we see them, if we're thankful for them, **and above all things put on agape,** God's love. What an awesome thing. What does that mean? The more His spirit, the more His mind is within us, the more God's spirit dwells within us, the more we're able to experience it and have it live through us to the benefit of others. If we're forgiving toward someone else, if we're merciful, that's God's love, God's grace. If we're growing and those things are working through us to the benefit of others we are exceedingly blessed. Again, to be thankful for that.

Even let the peace of God rule in your hearts. Deep down inside, the peace of God. What does that mean? You know, we've gone through a series at different times and mentioned it. There is so much drama and we let so much drama sometimes into our lives and we let it control our lives and we let it control our emotions and our feelings and we get caught up and twisted and tormented and everything else because there's a lot of evil in the world around us, and if we're not careful we get caught up in it. We're not to be that way. We're to understand what we have with God and God's truth, God's way of life.

Let the peace of God rule. Do you know what that means? It means you have chosen that God's way governs your life, not the way of the world, not the way of mankind. Because that's where everything comes from that creates the drama. The world can hardly live without drama. They have to have it. There would hardly be any news stations out there if they weren't there to create drama. They get a great big spoon, just like see the old woman there and she's got this great big pot and she's stirring it up. "Woo hoo!" And she takes off on a broom.

Anyway, that's the way they are, bewitching, and they get other people involved. People by the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, they tune into it, and they love it. "Oh, feed me more! Feed me more of that drama!" If that isn't enough you can switch the station and go to some other kind of drama that people are doing in the world, running around naked and trying to survive, living it up in a very perverted way, whatever it is that people do.

I'm serious. What's this crazy thing that they do, dirty type of thing? I don't even want to know the name. But you can't help but go through a dial and certain things pop up and you see advertisements for certain shows, and they bring these people to live together. I don't know what they're doing! I don't even want to know! But you think, what's wrong with hundreds of thousands of people that tune into that crap?! I hope none of God's people are! Why would we want to have that kind of drama in our life? "What's Joe going to do?" "They're coming back and they're going to have this reunion." That's been in some advertisements here recently and it's like, "Are you kidding me?" Are you kidding me! I'm going to spend my time watching all that? "Because I love drama. I don't get enough drama in the world around me, so I want more drama. I just love drama." It screws up your mind!

And that's what we feed? What we feed up here, if we're not careful, that's what we can begin to become in our thinking. I guess I saw three years of such drama by grown men. I couldn't believe it. I thought, "You've got to be kidding me!" Grown men, such drama in their lives over little things. Because that's all they had at that point because they couldn't go out and have bigger things and steal more to have...cheat, bribe, whatever. You see that drama.

I came back, and I'll be honest with you, candid with you, I came to see drama on a plane, on a level that I'm thankful for but I hate it when it's in our lives. It's really bad. It's really evil. It comes at us all around us in life, drama, drama, drama, drama. No peace of God. No happiness in life, satisfaction in life. It robs people of gratitude and thankfulness, and it causes them to thirst for something more. "I don't have enough. Give me more of that! Give me more. I've got to have more. Get me on TikTok. I've got to have that ten hours a day," or whatever, until they die. I mean, it's nuts.

Let the peace of God rule your life. Let God's government, God's way, God's truth, integrity rule in your life. The more you do the more fulfilled, the more satisfied in life you will be, the more grateful, because it's a matter of gratitude and thankfulness, of seeing the greater things of greater value. They go together in a very powerful way.

So it says "let." So often we don't let that happen. We let the world rule in our lives. We let drama rule in our lives. We should run from it as fast as you can. In whatever it is, to ask God for help to get it out. Now, you can't be totally rid of it and away from it because it's in the world around us all around us in different things in life, but you don't have to go shopping for it either.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, inside. Deep down inside that's what it's talking about. God wants us to search deep down inside of our thinking and our minds and why we think the way we do and why we want what we want so we can learn to value the really important things of life, to be able to see them more clearly.

...to which you were called. That's why we've been called, that God's way rule our life, that His truth rules our life, so that the peace of God rules in our life. You know what God wants to give us. That's why I

love the name Jerusalem. Jerusalem. It means so much. It's a beautiful thing to bear that name, peace. Not the kind that's in this world. That's sick.

...called in one Body. What a beautiful thing to know and to understand. If we know there's one Body where are we going to go if we don't have this Body? Where is that one Body? Where's the one Body that knows we had an apostasy and all the things that go along with it? And then people turn their back on that and they want something else out here. You think, where did you take a left turn? What happened to you? Where are you resisting God's government? Where are you resisting? What feelings do you have towards others within the Church and so often towards people in the ministry sometimes that your mind is screwed up and you have prejudices, and you have wrong thinking? And if you have that toward them God is not going to let it go. You will be judged for it and not in a good way.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. That's our choice – "let the word of God dwell in us richly." If you see the riches you're going to treasure it more and you're going to have more gratitude and more thankfulness. You're going to be more fulfilled, more satisfied, more complete. It's a beautiful thing. More rejoicing on a spiritual plane. It doesn't mean in the world, it means with what you know, with the truth toward God, toward His Church, toward Christ.

Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing... It's not "**one another.**" They didn't know how to translate these things. **...yourselves.** Because this is what it's talking about. This is what the word is. **...teaching and admonishing yourselves.** We have the ability to do that because of what we receive Sabbath after Sabbath that God gives to us, to receive His teachings and then our response to it and what we're going to do.

...in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. This isn't a matter of going out here and turning to Psalm whatever it is and start singing. It's not about something physical out here at all. It's all spiritual. It's about a relationship with God that lives inside of us. The closer we are to God, the more thankful we are, the more grateful for what we have and seeing that, and thanking God for it, this is the result.

It's inside. Peace. A rejoicing. Whenever you think about it, whenever you pray to God about it, whenever you pray to God, period, there is that which just fills you up inside. It just does. There is something awesome about that process of prayer that's genuine, that's true before God and you're pouring yourself out before God and thanking God and seeing the things that are before us and praying about different things within the Body, within the Church and whatever it might be. There's a life in that that is given to you that's fulfilling inside and you're nurtured by that. It stirs you up inside. It's an awesome thing that God has given to us through the power of His holy spirit.

You know, we're going to stop there. Good place to stop because we need to review that, start up the next part here when we go into Ephesians next. But awesome, awesome to understand what God has given to us, the choices we have to make, the blessing and the ability we have of drawing closer to Him.

Our ability to draw closer to Him has so much to do with the very subject matter of this sermon series – learning and growing in gratitude and thankfulness to God because we see everything He’s placed before us, or more and more.