Thanksgiving 2020 | David Vinyard

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. What do we do with Thanksgiving this year?

The topic, the season, the holiday, just the whole practice. With so many challenges and what I would even say are frustrations for believers, and I'm talking mostly in the frame of for those who are saved today, what do we do with Thanksgiving?
William Jennings Bryan once said, on July 4th, we Americans celebrate our independence, and on Thanksgiving we acknowledge our dependence. I thought that was pretty good.
Henry Ward Beecher said, a proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he rarely gets as much as he thinks he deserves. Maybe that's my problem.
And here's one last quote that I found on Thanksgiving. It's from Kevin James, if you guys know who Kevin James is. One of my favorite comedians, yeah. He says, Thanksgiving, man, not a good day to be my pants.
[1:10] If you know Kevin James, that's really his theme. He talks a lot about food and just gaining pounds and all that. But he's right. For most Americans, that's the pinnacle of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving. It's food, maybe a little football, meeting with family and conversations, but I think it's appropriate we ask today, what does God say about the matter?
What does the word of God say about Thanksgiving? So let's pray and then we'll dig in. God, thank you for bringing us out. Thank you for keeping us.
Thank you for encouraging us here today and for the challenges and the enlightenment that we get from Scripture. God, we lift this up to you. We glorify you in this. We ask that you would speak today through your word, through your message, and that this would be helpful for the believers here this morning.
Amen. So 2020, social unrest, divided politics, sickness, unfortunately. What a year, right?
[2:13] It's almost enough to make you marvel. Almost. For those that were here last week. In preparation for this week, and it's been a long time coming, but I felt led to this question.

And so this is the path we'll take, and I hope it's encouraging to you. But who was the most thankful character, person, in Scripture? That's the question for today. Of all the examples, who's on the top of the list?
I can see some wheels turning here, some thought bubbles, some Wile E. Coyote thought bubbles, but yeah. And there's a slight twist to this, but thinking about who were the most thankful in all of Scripture, let's talk about it.
Maybe it was Job. Was Job on the list? Did you think about Job? Yeah? He was a man described as perfect and upright, one that feared God and shunned evil. That's a pretty good description.
And if you're familiar with the story of Job, you know that in one day, in one instant, what happened to him? The devil asked to test his life, and it seemingly comes to ruin.
[3:19] His kids are destroyed in a windstorm, wipes out the whole house. It says fire rained down from the sky and destroyed his servants and his livestock, and in that day, it's really his livelihood, his everything.

And it says Job, in Job chapter one, it says he stood up, tore his robe, fell to the ground, and worshipped. Later in the first chapter of Job, it says, Job speaks on this, and he says, the Lord gave, and the Lord is taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord. So is it Job? Is Job on the list? I actually found something new in the story of Job as I was going through this. At the end of the book, in chapter 42, it gives this account of sort of how his scenario ends, and I found it similar to Thanksgiving.
And listen to this, in Job 42, it should be on your handout. It says, It's kind of interesting, right?

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In the week of Thanksgiving, was Job the OG, the original, the inventor of the Thanksgiving holiday. It says, They gathered to eat with extended family.
[4:43] They shared comfort and reflections on the past. They brought gold and silver, which means somebody had to do some shopping at some point for those gifts. So, maybe it was Job. Maybe he was among the most thankful.

We're going to buzz through a couple examples, and so stay with me here as we'll go. You know, there was a woman in Mark chapter five. It says, This particular woman had a sickness for 12 years.
It said she had been bleeding, and she suffered under many physicians, if you look at verse 24, and had spent all that she had, and was no better, but grew worse. I've been paying attention to the prayer requests, and to the challenges of this year in particular, and we've seen a lot of things like this.
Under the law, this woman would have had to separate for seven days. That's under normal circumstance. That's pulled from Leviticus 15. Any object she came around became unclean, and so imagine that sort of scenario for 12 years.
Just, you know, disqualified from marriage, probably, and in those days, that's a big thing for a woman. Still is today, don't get me wrong, but just, it's such an impactful part of your identity back in this time.
[5:55] Disqualified her from religious activity, or for participating in events. That's from Leviticus 15. So imagine 12 years in that scenario. Being an outcast. Being judged.

The frustrations that go with that. I think, you know, we can relate to that feeling in this year. But in Mark chapter 5, it says, she opened, she had heard the report about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd, and touched his garment.
For she said, if I touch even his garment, I will be made well. And immediately she felt in her body that she was healed. And Jesus perceived that power had gone out from him, and immediately turned around in the crowd, and said, who touched my garments?
I omitted a couple verses there, but the disciples are like, come on, man. Like, everybody's touching you. Verse 33, it says, but the woman, knowing what had happened, came in in fear, and trembling, and fell down before him, and told the whole truth.
And he said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease. So the question I would ask is, do you think this woman spent the rest of her days complaining?
[6:58] Do you think she, do you think she was full of thanksgiving? We don't get a lot of context around her, but that was a, that was a, just a quick example I thought I'd share.

How about the Apostle Peter? Thinking about the most thankful persons in all of Scripture. I guarantee Peter's on the top of a couple other lists. How about Thanksgiving? You ever think about that? So what do we know about Peter?
He was a fisherman, which probably were about a dime a dozen those days. From what we gather from stories in Scripture, Peter's probably not even that great at his profession.
He's probably mediocre, average at best. He was uneducated. He wasn't from a prestigious line. He was a bit coarse, a bit of an unrefined, somewhat of a loud mouth. I put this in the text, I like this phrase, he was headed for a life of fantastic mediocrity.
That is, until Jesus called him to a purpose. And I love the story of Peter because even when he had otherwise disqualified himself, do you remember in Luke 22?
[8:03] Right as Jesus is being put into trial in the Jewish court, look in verse 54, it says, Then seizing him, they led Jesus away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance.

And when some there had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and they had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight and she looked closely at him and said, This man was with him.
But he denied it. Woman, I don't know him, he said. And a little later, someone else saw him and said, You are also one of them. Man, I am not, Peter replied. About an hour later, another asserted, Certainly this fellow was with him for he is a Galilean.
And Peter replied, Man, I don't know what you're talking about. Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. Immediately, the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered

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the word of the Lord had spoken to him and he went outside and wept bitterly.
That's one of those moments. I mean, can you just, can you imagine what that stare would have been like for Peter? Just the weight of that instant. It's hard to take in. And yet, you think about Peter.
[9:12] Think about what was reserved for him. He was among the first to receive God's Holy Spirit as a believer. He was used extensively to minister after Jesus' resurrection.

He worked miracles. You look at Acts. He rebuked the Pharisees, the high priest. I mean, he was kind of seen as this champion of God's salvation. He taught many.
And he penned this. If you look at 1 Peter 1, the same guy. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.
Could have been Peter. There's a lot of other verses that might line up with that one, but he's an interesting example as one who was saved and who was enlisted in the work of being an apostle.
Who else is on the list? This giving, who could we take our cues from? Was it David? Maybe I'm biased. Kind of like the name. A man after God's own heart.
[10:32] Someone who is still, it's hard to reconcile with me, but after the death of his son is able to worship God immediately. Someone who God uses to deliver the Messiah through.

The author of most of the Psalms. Was it David? Was it the woman from John 8? One of my favorite stories is the woman caught in the act of adultery. It says she was thrown at Jesus' feet to be stoned.
The law demanded it. So it wasn't even this conspiracy or this, you know, personal vendetta. This is what happens. And yet, Jesus speaks softly and disarms her accusers.
What's more, he forgives her and sends her back to a renewed life. was it the blind man in the next chapter? John 9. Not only does Jesus restore this guy, his sight, but the shame of his entire life is vindicated in a moment.
If you remember this guy in John 9, he has been disgraced, pretty much disgraced and rejected as an outcast for his whole days, blind for birth. I think even disowned from it by his family if you read the text and what happens there.
[11:46] What a life that must have been. Jesus says out loud, neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in him. Can you imagine that moment, that day?

Was it him? Could he have been the most thankful? You know, a side note, I realized something in this study in particular because I cut out a bunch of examples for the sake of time. But the one thing I noticed, it's so easy for me it's shocking actually how easily I can look at someone else's life and with minimal effort draw up a whole page worth of conclusions on why they should be thankful.
God knocked him off his horse, blinded his physical eyes, I feel like I'm looking at some of you through a, yeah, we're good, and spoke the truth into his heart.
Listen to what Paul writes. I love, this is becoming one of my new favorite verses. 2 Corinthians chapter 2. Now thanks be to God, this is Paul, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of his knowledge in every place.
For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved, among those who are perishing, oh sorry, and among those who are perishing. What a text. I almost felt like, I read this a couple times in prep, but I feel like that's almost Paul's own poetic testimony of himself to go from the scourge of believers to the fragrance of God's knowledge and the truth.
[13:20] Was it Paul? Was Paul the most thankful? Alright, I'm not going to beat this to death, but let me give you one final example. There's an example that comes from Luke chapter 7, and there are plenty of examples, let's be honest.

There's a lot of characters you can look at. I found it overwhelming, actually, so I pared this down a bit, but Luke chapter 7, the story of the sinful woman who had entered the Pharisee's house, the Pharisee named Simon.
Picking up in verse 37, it says, when she had learned that Jesus was reclining in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, began to wet his feet with her tears and wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet and

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anointed them with the ointment.
I know a lot of people don't like feet. This was just, you know, a different type of thing. But you can imagine what this, you know, what she's doing here and what this is a picture of. And it says in verse 39, when the Pharisee saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would have known what sort of woman this is who's touching him, for she's a sinner.
Watch this. Jesus said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. I love that. I think God often has to lay it out there for me as well.
[14:40] But he says, a certain money lender had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii, the other 50. And when they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?

Simon answered, I suppose, the one for whom he canceled the larger debt. And Jesus says to him, you have judged rightly. Then turning towards the woman, he says, Simon, do you see this woman? I entered your house and you gave me no water for my feet. But she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss. But from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet.
You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven. For she loved much, but he who is forgiven little loves little.
And he said to her, your sins are forgiven, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Out of all the characters in scripture, all the examples, this one might be the most telling.
[15:47] And it's worth looking at on Thanksgiving. Kind of leads us to our answer today. Who was the most thankful person in all of scripture? This is up for debate.

You guys can challenge me later. The answer today is this. It's the sinner. And it's not all sinners. Specifically, the sinner who's been saved. The broken who's been restored. The lost who were adopted as sons and daughters of God.
It's specifically the sinner who has believed on the finished work of Christ. Your faith has saved you. As it says. Now I realize that's not the answer you're hoping for.
On the test, that's E, you know, circle E, all the above. Which nobody likes. But that's precisely the point. This Thanksgiving. Did you notice that all of our characters had that in common?
[16:46] Each one was a sinner. Each one was forgiven much. Each one then fully known and loved by a perfect God. So here we are soon celebrating Thanksgiving.

National holiday in the United States. And for we who are saved, this is the challenge I want to share with you as it came to me. Thanksgiving should be so much deeper.
And that sounds obvious, you know, but it should for those who believe. Sure, we gather with family just like everybody else does. Maybe not as many this year, but we gather. We have a nice meal. I know many of you personally, phenomenal cooks and had great food from you, so I know what you're going to enjoy this week is superb. I know that's happening. You know, we reflect on what we have, but it's just, we don't do this in vain.
It's not just to conjure up some emotional response. Some whim of appreciation or, you know, just this acknowledgement of our comparative state. That's what the world can do.
[17:51] That's not what we do. That's not all that we do, I should say. Take the lesson from Jesus' own words. If thankfulness and the love of Christ is measured based on what's been forgiven, then how great a cause have we to be thankful?

I'm preaching that to myself as much as anything, I tell you. But who among the elect here, if you're saved, who has enough hours in their day to appropriate the gratitude that's deserving?
You know, it should be, it should be an everyday thing. It should be an every minute thing for my life. And just in light of that example, even in the year that we're having, in Thanksgiving 2020, the temptation here is the same temptation that we looked at in those examples.
It was kind of a subliminal message, but it's to look at the circumstance. Does the circumstance dictate how thankful you should be? Does the circumstance decide how much gratitude you should maintain or carry or what your attitude should be?
For those who believe, who Christ has redeemed from the path of destruction, whether or not you tested positive for COVID, and we've had several, whether or not you drive a new car or an old car or have challenges at work or you have five children or no children or young children or grown children or channeling some Dr. Seuss here, but, you know, it's all, it's insignificant considering that

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we sinners have been made sons and daughters and heirs with Christ, as it says in Romans 8.
[19:36] Heirs. We talked about that a little bit this morning, just about what do you gain as a believer, you know? I wanted to share that verse, but I figured I'd wait. You know, sons and heirs. If love and thankfulness are measured based on what we've been forgiven, then there's a never-ending response to be had.

It's a scale that's permanently tilted on the side of me being thankful for what's been done. I think the Apostle Paul probably figured this out at some point in his later years.
I put a list of texts from Paul and it's not even exhaustive, but times where he's incessantly giving thanks in his letters. He says, God be thanked. I thank God.
Thanks be unto God. We give thanks to God. Giving thanks to the Father. It's rapid fire. And despite, you think, you know, the Apostle Paul had some circumstance to deal with?
Sure. I mean, think about what was going on with the church at the time and just so many different variables between politics and internal disputes.
[20:37] I mean, there was just a deep list. He even had a thorn in the flesh. He had some pain. And that's a real thing. You know, maybe you have something like that.

In fact, I know there's many people in here, some chronic issues that have, it just nags at your every day. For me, it's sinus issues. I know that sounds petty, but it's just, you know, I've had two surgeries.
It's only gotten worse. It just, it plagues my night's sleep, probably my wife's night's sleep. And, you know, that's, again, maybe it's not trouble breathing.
Maybe it's heart issues or maybe it's pain in your joints or maybe it's, you know, migraines, headaches, anxiety, depression. Some of you might also be circling E again, all of the above.
Yeah. Maybe you live with a difficult spouse, you know, like my wife does. Whatever ails your every day, babe, there will always be circumstance that can point us down.
[21:38] I think that's the reminder. And, you know, I think it's important to, it's important to be realistic, right? Is it a tougher year to be thankful on the surface?

I think we could nod along to that from a human perspective. But has anything changed in your status before God Almighty?
Has the promise been diminished in any way? Has the reward been taken away of what we have to look forward to? How about this?
Has the truth been any less freeing this year? I've felt quite the opposite. I've been so thankful for, if nothing else, just the benefit of being a believer that has the truth and has a peace that permeates what's happening on the outside.
So this Thanksgiving, even this 2020 COVID year, for those whose sins are no longer counted against them, lift up your face is what I want to encourage you with. Remember what's been done to ransom your life.
[22:47] The great hope that we have as believers. It's meant to be encouraging as much as it's meant to be challenging. Colossians 1.27 says this, To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery which is in you, which is in Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So, in closing today, I just want to give you a couple quick bullets on the holiday, on what to think about this year, three reasons to pursue a spirit of thankfulness as a believer.
And I promise we'll go quick. Why should we be thankful? What else should encourage us to be thankful as believers here this Thanksgiving? Number one, Thanksgiving, our Thanksgiving as believers, brings glory to God.
There's a full story, you can read it, but if you go to Luke 17, you remember or are familiar with the ten lepers. Jesus is passing through town. On the outside of town is where the unclean would gather. He sees them lying at the gate and he says, Go, show yourselves to the priest.
You ever think about that story? If anybody but Jesus would have said that, they would have been sent right back or they would have been reprimanded or dealt with. I actually didn't look up what happens to an unclean person if they try to break the rules in a way, you know.
[24:11] But it says in Luke that as they went, they were healed. And look what it says later on. It says, Luke 17 in verse 15, it says, So Jesus answered and said, We're not the ten cleansed, but where are the nine?

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Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? So it's a quick call reminder. Our thankfulness brings glory to God. Second, we give thanks out of obedience. Paul writes to the Colossians in chapter 3, he says, Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another, forgiving one another.
This just keeps getting harder to do. But it's all part of it. And he says, But above all, these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful.
And if you scan down that passage in the text, how does it end? It says, Whatever you do, you might be familiar with this verse, Whatever you do in word or deed, do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
[25:30] Paul says similar things to the Ephesians. He says, Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God for everything. To the Thessalonians, he writes, Rejoice always, pray continually, and then the familiar phrase, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

So it's an imperative to be thankful. It's instructive that we give thanks, not just around the dinner table, or not just for the obvious things. It's an act of obedience. So one, it brings glory to God when we're thankful.
Two, it's a form of obedience. Lastly, this one might be the most helpful for this year. Being thankful actually helps us to increase our own faith. It develops us towards a maturity and understanding as we're thankful.
There's a verse in 2 Corinthians that says, All this is for your benefit so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.
Kind of a two-in-one there. I pulled in the story of Daniel for this example. And I know it's a popular story. But you look at the life of Daniel and there's just so many different things you could get from that text.
[26:45] But I really like the element of just this last point about being thankful increases your own faith. If you look at, you know, in Daniel 6, it says, The king set magistrates over the land who hated Daniel because he loved God.

Remember that from last week, right? 1 John, marvel not if the world hates you. But it says they tricked the king into signing an order to trap Daniel as we're familiar.
And can you imagine? Here's Daniel, a faithful servant of the king. He's a hard-working guy. He's honest. And the world hates him. What does Daniel do in response? Daniel 6.10. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home.
In the upper room, with his windows open towards Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees thrice that day. And he prayed and he gave thanks to God before, sorry, gave thanks before his God as was his custom.
We know how that story ends. God saves Daniel. His faith is rewarded. The king honors Daniel's God before the people. And his thankfulness here leads to a faith example that's world-renowned.
[27:51] Maybe Matthew Henry summed this up best. I like this quote from him. It says, when the peace of Christ rules in our hearts, thankfulness overflows. Even in the darkest of times, we can praise God for his love, his sovereignty, and his promise to be near us.

Let me close in saying this. If the musicians want to come up here and wrap us up, it's great to be together. And I do hope everybody has a wonderful Thanksgiving.
But let's aspire to more than Kevin James. You know? And I like the guy. He's a good comedian. He's clean. He's funny. But if all we're thankful for is just that circumstance and, you know, the great food that makes our pants tight or the table that the food is on or just the house that's over the table, we miss the mark in a major way.
If we spend the day or rather the week or the break that you get for Thanksgiving, if we're talking about this world, this year, politics, a virus, if that's the focus here, I really think we rob God of the glory that he deserves.
I think we rob ourselves of a chance to be obedient. I think we rob ourselves of a chance to develop in the faith. Remember, who are the most thankful in Scripture? to the one who much was forgiven.
[29:18] The sinner saved entirely from their sin. This Thanksgiving, I challenge you to remember God, not our circumstance. God who ransomed us to a knowledge of truth and gave us an everlasting hope.

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I know it's easier said than done. I just felt encouraged to lead with that today. And I'll share one more verse here from the Psalms in chapter 86. It says, I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart and will glorify your name forever.
Let's do that today. And I'll pray for us here. God, we thank you that we've made it to Thanksgiving. We thank you that our country still holds on to these practices and principles that give us an institutional opportunity to acknowledge you.
God, I thank you for the circumstance this year, as trying as it's been. I thank you that it has been a great, revelation for believers of the magnitude of this peace and the truth that we have against the lacking in the world.
I thank you for that. I thank you for the body of believers here that we can still gather, that we can encourage each other, and that we can hear from your word. I thank you that we can identify with scripture.
[30:31] I thank you that we can call to reminder what a great debt was paid, that we can focus in our lives on so much more than what's in front of our face.

I just, God, I pray that you would help us, strengthen us with that, help us who are continually here trying to do that all the more. I just pray that you would give us the fruits of our effort, that you would inspire us to greatness there, and that we would ultimately bring glory to you through that thanksgiving.
God, I just pray that for each one of us, and that we would just enjoy this week ahead in your son's name.

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