

Thanks for Everything and Nothing

Ephesians 5:4-21

#25 in our Ephesians Series

June 2, 2013

Prayer

Father you are so good. You really are so good...beyond anything we can begin to conceive. Sometimes I think I begin to see it with my mind, and my heart is just overwhelmed. I think, "Can I really believe this?" God would you give us courage through the power of your Holy Spirit to believe your word, to believe Jesus, to believe what he's accomplished and to believe what you're doing with us even if we can't understand all the pieces? Lord you destined us to live to the praise of your glory.

We will, and I thank you.

In Jesus' name Amen.

Message

Ephesians 5:4-21

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which [don't fit]

But instead let there be self-discipline, accountability groups and shame? NO

but instead let there be Thanksgiving [eucharistia] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater),

In Romans Paul makes it clear that all sin is "idolatry."

Idolatry is praising some created thing (like yourself) in place of God.

has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness,

"You were darkness; You were son's of disobedience."

Wrath upon darkness is Light.

Wrath upon "disobedience" is the Mercy of God.

"For God consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all," writes Paul in Romans 11:32. Then (12:20) he tells us to be merciful to our enemies, "for by so doing we heap burning coals on their heads."

"At one time you were darkness,"

Darkness is not a substance but an absence, not a thing but a no-thing.

Darkness is the absence of Light...And "God is Light"

Like: A lie is the absence of truth...and Jesus is the Truth...

Like: Death is the absence of Life...and the Spirit is Life.

At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern [and show, and discover] what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Literally He will “epiphany” you, He will in-lighten you

Look carefully [well] then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time [literally: “redeeming the time”], because the days are evil.

Last time we said that to “redeem the time” was to invite the redeemer into all your space and all your time. Julian of Norwich wrote, “His Love will not allow our time to be lost.” Jesus fills time with Himself and He is the will of the Lord.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

Faith, hope, and love in us is the Spirit of Christ in us; that is, the will of the Lord in us; it is the decision of God in us; it is the judgment of God in us; it is the Word of God in us; it is Christ rising in us. When we cry “Abba Father,” it’s Christ’s Spirit bearing witness with our spirit. (Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6) We become “one spirit” with Him, writes Paul. (1 Corinthians 6:17)

addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks [eucharisteo] always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Giving thanks at ALL times for ALL things!

“At all times and for all things” - That’s crazy!! Most commentators gloss over this as if Paul didn’t really mean what he wrote. In the 4th century A.D. Saint John Chrysostom archbishop of Constantinople, who read Ephesians in his native tongue, preached that Paul meant we should thank God “even for Hell.”

“At all times and for all things.”

Should an alcoholic thank God for alcohol?
Should a man tempted to lust thank God for naked ladies?
Should a greedy woman thank God for shoes, houses, and money?

In verse 4 Paul wrote: “Instead of crude joking let there be thanksgiving. Maybe he meant “Instead of crude joking about a thing, let there be thanksgiving for the thing.”

At the last supper Jesus said, “as often as you do it in remembrance of me...”
Maybe he didn’t just mean that cup of wine but any cup of wine.

And God created naked ladies. Did you know that?

And God created all the stuff used to make shoes and houses and money.

Listen to Paul in 1 Timothy 4:4-5

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

“For everything created by God is good.”

In Ephesians 3:9 Paul told us that God is the Creator of all things—*everything*.

So anything else must be a no thing and definitely not a good thing...for God creates all things, good. So evil must be a no thing and uncreated...like a shadow.

Well anyway, Paul writes:

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected **if** it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.”

“Everything is made holy by the Word of God.”

And remember God made all things with his Word.

So all things are a gift of grace.

And if all things are grace, you can't earn anything because everything is free.

And what could you earn anything with? You didn't create yourself.

So everything is made holy by the Word of God and prayer. What kind of prayer?

Well...thanksgiving.

God makes it, and we thank him for it, and that's the way it's supposed to be.

So sin must be messing up that relationship, like a lie or illusion about that relationship of grace, as if we were our own creators and could, therefore, bargain with God and merit things from God.

Remember Eve was tempted by the father of lies to take fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in order to create herself in the image of God, as if she were her own creator who could accomplish her own creation...or desecration...as if she were not entirely dependent upon grace.

Karl Barth wrote:

To say if briefly: That action of man's is good in which man is thankful for God's grace. Nothing else? No, nothing else...That deed of man's is evil in which man, openly or in secret, because of anxiety or pride, is unthankful. That is what is evil. Nothing else? No, nothing else, for everything which is evil from Adam to our own day, from the great horrors of world history down to the little lies and acts of unfriendliness with which we have mutually poisoned our lives, springs from human hate of God's grace.

We hate God's grace,

Which means, we hate being created,

Which means, we construct an illusion—a shadow self, a false self,

The “me” I think I create.

But if I thank God for all things, including me, it shatters the illusion that I created “me:”
it shatters all illusions.

You see, all sin is idolatry; it's worshiping a created thing in place of the creator and the greatest idol is me, myself, and my will (my supposedly free will).

But what happens when I thank God for things?

When I truly thank God for wine my heart places God above the wine and so I don't want to be “drunk with wine” but rather, “filled with God's Spirit.”

When I truly thank God for a beautiful woman, my heart remembers that she's not mine to possess.

When I thank God for all things my heart realizes I own nothing, deserve nothing, and absolutely everything is a gift.

When I truly thank God for myself...I necessary stop idolizing myself.
Because I just thanked another Self for myself.

And when I stop idolizing "me" I'm free of the prison that is me, my old man, my shadow self, my arrogance, insecurity, and pride.
I'm no longer a greedy whore mongering drunk, nor a self-righteous Pharisee.
I'm a little child at play in his Father's garden.

So maybe we really should "thank God always and for all things" because all things are created by God, and all God creates is good.

So you see, it wasn't the fruit from the tree that was evil. God made that tree and the knowledge was good. It wasn't the fruit that was evil but faith in a lie, a lie that caused Adam and Eve to take the fruit.

So maybe Paul really meant it...
And we should "thank God for *everything*."
But what about the lie or faith in the lie?

I mean maybe we should thank God for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
But should we thank God that Adam and Eve took it?
Should we thank God for sin?

The medieval mystic Julian of Norwich wrote this after her famous vision:

Ah, wretched sin! What are you? You are nothing. For I saw that God is all things: I saw nothing of you. And when I saw that God has made all things, I saw nothing of you; and when I saw that God is in all things, I saw nothing of you; and when I saw that God does all things that are done, greater and lesser, I saw nothing of you. And when I saw our Lord Jesus sitting so gloriously in our souls, and loving and liking and ruling and guiding all that he has made, I saw nothing of you. And so I am certain that you are nothing; and all those who love you, and like you, and follow you, and choose you at the end, I am certain that they shall be brought to nothing with you... God protect us all from you.

–Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love

Well, if, in fact, sin truly is nothing and we can only pretend to pay for sin with nothing...then, when you think you pay for your sins, you're paying for nothing with nothing, which is more nothing. Or maybe you're turning the nothing into something. You're giving power to the lie—making a place for the father of lies.

In Romans 11:35 Paul writes:

*"Who has given a gift to God (or "limited" or "betrayed God")
that God might be repaid?"*

(Who has entered into a business relationship with God?)

See, any payment is a lie trying to pay for a lie.

When you try to pay for your sins, you are paying for nothing with nothing. But when God in Christ Jesus pays for your sins he's paying for nothing with something. He is filling your nothing with something.

And what is that something?

It's his body broken and his blood shed.

It's fruit from the tree of life...where he makes you in his own image.

So in the place you tried to make yourself in his image (the tree of knowledge). In that place, God makes you in his own image (the tree of life.)

"Where sin increased grace abounded all the more..."

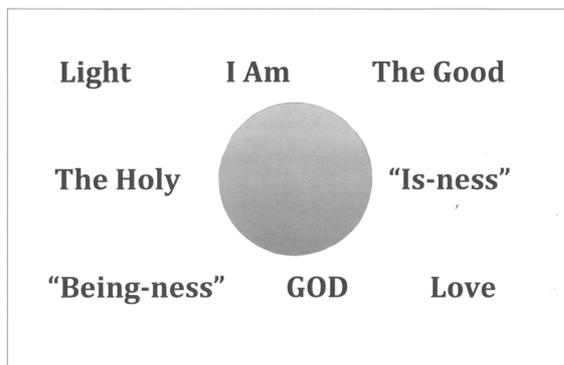
At a tree in a garden...a tree we call the cross.

So sin may be NOTHING, but make no mistake, that nothing hurts God...

Like a wound in his side...where flesh and blood were taken from his side.

Like a wound in his side or a void in his being.

And now I want to remind you of what we said last time:

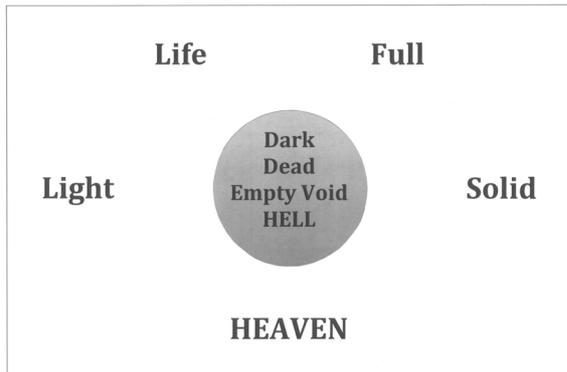


Creation or the Big Bang wasn't an explosion of light in the dark, but if "God is Light" it was an explosion of dark in the light. Like a wound in God. It was an explosion of nothingness in the somethingness because he is I AM. It was like an explosion of "I am not" in the side of "I AM." Like a wound in God.

Then God spoke light into the dark; he spoke something into the nothing.

[Image of the earth floating in space]

And likewise, the earth is really not light floating in the dark, somethingness in the nothingness but more like nothingness in the somethingness.



Like the heavens are full and the earth is empty as hell.
 And yet, one day, it will be full of something, the glory of God.

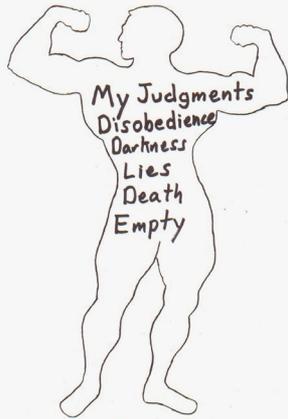
And likewise, we think we're full...



but when we're full of ourselves we're empty with pride (which is the lie that we make ourselves.) With pride, we construct a false self, a shadow self, what Paul calls the "old Adam," the "old man." He writes: "At one time you were darkness."

You see? My old man is constructed with my judgments...using knowledge (called law) which we stole from the tree.

The "Me" that I create



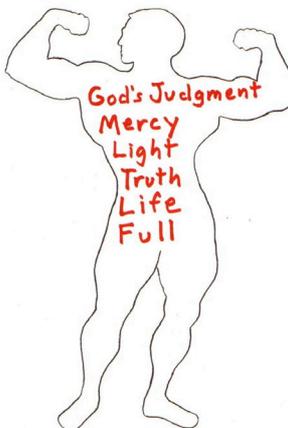
The Old Adam

He is constructed with disobedience and so consists of darkness, lies, and death. He is vain, futile and empty.

But in the very place of shame, God is filling me with grace—his body broken, and blood shed.

See? My New Man is created with God's judgment, which is Jesus Christ and him crucified on the tree.

The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

My New Man is created with God's mercy.
Instead of disobedience, there is mercy.
Instead of darkness, there is light.
Instead of lies, there is truth.
Instead of death, there is life.
Instead of emptiness, there is fullness.

Paul wrote: "At one time, you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord." My New Man consists of Light, Truth and Life. He is full of faith, hope, and love, that is: He chooses the good in freedom, in the image of God. In other words, he loves, and God is love.

I can't make myself love. That's a lie! Isn't that surprising? I can't make myself love. Well, why? Because God is love. When I think I can make myself love I think I can make myself God.

Do you see the lie of the snake in the garden? What's that tree of knowledge of good and evil? That's the law. He's saying take that fruit, take the law and make yourself love. Well the law is good, but the law can't make me love; only Love can make me love. Only God can make me in the image of God; only God can make me part of his body; only God can turn me into his Bride.

My old man is sin, and my New Man is Grace.
(The same shape but an entirely different substance.)
My old man is an illusion, and my New Man is reality.
My old man is no-thing, and my New Man is God's thing.
And Paul writes: "Thank God always and for everything."

So back to our question:

"Should I thank God for sin?"

Well, thanking God for sin is like saying: "Thanks for nothing!"

Thanking God for evil, sin, and darkness is saying: "Thanks for nothing." and yet that nothing does reveal something.

Remember what we preached last time?

God didn't create darkness, but he created space and time for darkness.

God didn't create evil, but he created space and time for evil.

God didn't create sin, but he created space and time for sin...

Like he created space and time for me.

God is filling all space and time with himself.

God is filling me (my space and time) with himself.

God is filling my old man with my New Man.

I'm commanded to hate evil, yet I can thank God for making space and time for evil.

In doing so, he made space and time for me...

That I might come to know evil and choose the good in freedom.

That I might be made in the image of God.

And so, I hate the dark and yet I can thank God for the dark, for it's in the dark that I see the Light shine.

Hate the nothing...and yet...maybe I can thank God for the nothing (or at least space and time for nothing.) For it's in the nothing that I witness the creation of something.

I hate sin and yet maybe I can thank God that I've sinned for it's in the place of sin that I come to know Grace.

It's in that place that I witness my own creation.

It's in that place that I'm filled with body broken and blood shed.

It's in that empty place that I'm filled by the Great Bridegroom.

"Where sin increased...grace abounded all the more!"

It's in the darkness of my space and time that the glory of God is eternally revealed.

CS Lewis wrote:

All times are eternally present to God. Is it not at least possible that along some one line of His multi-dimensional eternity He sees you forever... in that moment of cowardice or

insolence...? It may be that salvation consists not in the canceling of these eternal moments but in the perfected humility that bears the shame forever, rejoicing in the occasion which it furnished to God's compassion and glad that it should be common knowledge to the universe. Perhaps in that eternal moment St. Peter—he will forgive me if I am wrong—forever denies his Master. If so, it would indeed be true that the joys of Heaven are, for most of us in our present condition, "an acquired taste" ...Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a public place.

- CS Lewis, The Problem of Pain

Do you see what he's saying? Maybe the absolute ecstasy of eternity is grace filling my place of shame; maybe the absolute ecstasy of eternity is singing: "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me..." and you, and Peter, and Paul, and doubting Thomas and Mary of Magdalene.

Julian of Norwich wrote this:

God also showed me that sin is not shameful to man, but his glory; for in this revelation my understanding was lifted up into heaven; and then there came truly into my mind David, Peter and Paul, Thomas of India and the Magdalene -- how they are famous in the Church on earth with their sins as their glory. And it is no shame to them that they have sinned, any more than it is in the bliss of heaven, for there the badge of their sin is changed into glory...

Sin is the sharpest scourge that any chosen soul can be struck with; it is a scourge which lashes men and women so hard, and batters them and destroys them so completely in their own eyes, that they think they only deserve to sink down into hell. But when the touch of the Holy Ghost brings contrition, it turns the bitterness into hope of God's mercy...And so all shame will be turned into glory and into greater joy. And I am sure, by what I feel myself, that the more every well-natured soul sees this in the kind and generous love of God, the more loath he is to sin.

- Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine

Love

Brennan Manning wrote this:

Ponder these words of the Apostle Paul: "The things which are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by the light will be illuminated and anything illuminated turns into light." (Ephesians 5:12-14,)

God not only forgives and forgets our shameful deeds but even turns their darkness into light. All things work together for those who love God, "even," Augustine of Hippo added, "our sins."

- Brennan Manning, Abba's Child

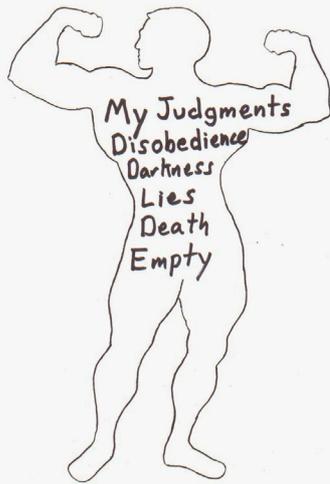
In Luke 7 Jesus reveals to Simon the Pharisee "The one forgiven little loves little." But when we see that we're forgiven much, we love much!

So, we must thank God for everything and we can even thank God for nothing. Or at least the space and time for nothing because it's there that God reveals the glory of his Love and that is the Something—God is Love.

When I thank him for that something, I'm no longer nothing...but rather... His something. I'm no longer darkness but light!

So, in the place of my old temporal man

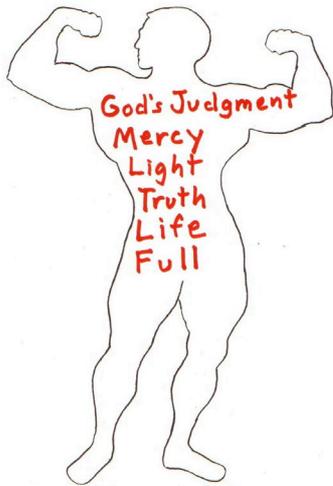
The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

God is creating my New eternal Man.

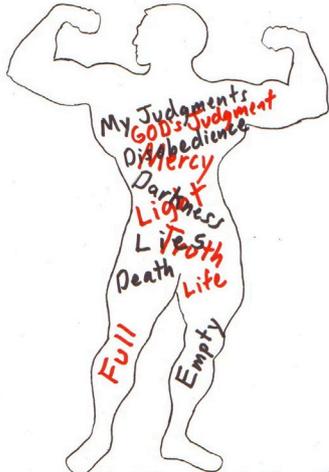
The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

And right now, in space and time, I'm being created.

Me being created
in Space and Time



"Putting Off The Old Man"
and "Putting On The New Man"

You see? I'm part full and part empty.

Everyone that's anyone, every bit of clay that's animated by the breath of God, at anytime in any place, is part full and part empty.

Some don't know who they are; they're lost, and some have learned who they are, they're Christians.

But all are part full and part empty
part good and part bad,
part sheep and part goat,
part wheat and chaff,
temporal darkness and eternal light.
And not just people....
all space and all time!

And as Paul has taught us: God is filling all space and all time with himself.

"Jesus descended into the depths of the earth and ascended far above the heavens to fill all things" with himself. He is the "Light of the world." So every space in every time is being filled with the Word of God, who is Light, Life and Truth, who is Jesus. That means that every space, in every time, is Easter just waiting to happen. And every person you meet is a front row ticket to the resurrection of Christ: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive," writes Paul.

So thank God for everyone you meet. And even as you thank God, Christ is rising in you, and you are being made in his image.

Salvation, quite simply, is agreeing with your own creation and the creation of all things. It's agreeing with the Word of God, which is the Judgment of God.

Salvation, quite simply is "thanking God, always and for everything."

On the 7th day in the new, finished, and eternal creation, "Everything is good," and everyone sees that everything is Grace.

Salvation is Faith in Grace.

So thank God for everything and maybe even the nothing, at least the space and time for nothing.

When I was a kid, we had this set of The World Book Encyclopedia in our family room. My favorite entry had to do with the anatomy of the human body. If you turned the clear pages forward, one on top of another, you would see a skeleton, then the nervous system, then the muscle tissue, and finally the skin. In other words, you would see a person being created in space and time. Every empty space in this semi-created person would become a full and meaningful space in time. And you see? God is creating us in space and time.

It reminds me of this clip from the Sci-Fi movie The 5th Element. They're reconstructing an alien body from a bit of DNA in a severed hand. We see bones, then tissue. We wonder: "Is it a monster?"

[Peter shows a brief clip from The 5th Element in which surgeons are controlling a robot which is quickly reconstructing the bones, then tissue, and finally skin of an unknown being. At the end of the clip, we get a brief glimpse of who it is...a human]

We'll stop right there

[Image of Milla Jovovich]

It's not a monster. It's 19-year-old Milla Jovovich in her birthday suit!

Well you see, God is creating us in space and time. So every nothing will be filled with his something. The body and blood of Christ and then we will be clothed with Christ.

So anyway, if you're walking down the street and you see one of these:

[Image of a skeleton]

What does it mean?

And should you give thanks?

And if in some dark room you see one of these?

[Image of a skeleton touching the shoulder of another skeleton with muscular tissue on it]

Well, is it a monster? And should you give thanks?

Well...it depends on which way the pages are being turned. It depends on the Lord of space and time. Are *you* the Lord of space and time?

What is the Lord of space and time creating?

He said, "Let us make man: male and female in our image."

He is good and everything he makes is good. Perhaps every monster is a person being created.

What if you saw one of these?

[Image of Hitler]

Someone who has bones, muscle, and skin but a serious lack of faith, hope, and love.
Someone that's incomplete.
Someone that's a sinner.
Someone like Saul of Tarsus, "chief of sinners," "a child of wrath," "a son of disobedience..." even persecuting the children of God, dragging them to their death and hating the Christ and the Spirit of Christ.

What is a person like this? Which way are the pages turning? And should you give thanks..."always and for everything?" Should you give thanks for every space and every time?

You might want to close your eyes for this next picture

[Image of a mass grave]

Should you give thanks for this?
You see...giving thanks doesn't come easy. It takes profound faith in the power of Grace, and nothing is as offensive to human pride as Grace.
Should you give thanks for this?

I know that you should hate this; this is evil; this is a corner of hell!
You're commanded to "hate what is evil." And yet, it can only be evil because evil has infected something good.

Do you know what this is?
This is the House of Israel—The chosen people of God.
This is the Valley of Dry Bones.
Now read the Word of God.

Ezekial 37:1-14

...“Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, thy say, ‘our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves...And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live.

Well, when these dry bones live, when those people are filled with the Spirit of the Son of Man and they walk into the New Jerusalem, and even become the New Jerusalem—The Bride of Christ (far more glorious than Milla Jevovich in her birthday suit...) Do you think they will thank God that they knew evil but will forever choose the good so that they may forever surrender to the good, so that they may forever commune with the Great Bridegroom...in endless ecstasy?

Well, this next picture is a depiction of a far greater evil than the last picture.

[Image of Jesus dying on the cross]

Should we thank God for this?

What is this?

This is a picture of the greatest evil ever perpetrated on the face of planet earth, and it was perpetrated by you.

When we sing “Thank you for the cross Lord.” We are singing: “Thank you Lord, for the space and time in which the children of Adam took your life by nailing it to a tree in a garden.

Thank you for the instrument of death with which we tortured and murdered you.

Thank you that with it we sent you to hell,

bearing all our sin,

bearing our empty illusion that we create ourselves,

bearing the cost of creating us in the image of Love.

Thank you for your body broken and blood shed.

Thank you for delivering up your Spirit that descends into our dark hearts crying: “*Abba.*”

Thank you that at your tree “it is finished” and “we are completed,”

that we die with you and rise with you.

Understand that I’m not saying this to make you feel bad. I’m saying this to kill you, that prideful, arrogant old you, to kill you and set you free that you might say: “Thank you!” and mean it.

Salvation quite simply is “thanking God.” Always and for everything in and through Christ Jesus.” For the absolutely worst event in human history. The day we tried to take God’s life on a tree became the absolute best event in human history. The day God gave us his Life on the tree. In the words of Paul: “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

Julian of Norwich wrote that she heard the Lord say this: “Since I have turned the greatest possible harm into good, it is my will that you should know from this that I shall turn all lesser evil into good.”

In other words, He will fill all darkness with Light, and he is Light.

So Paul writes, “Giving thanks always and for everything.” Always and for everything.”

And Saint Chrysostom says, “even Hell.”

And now I wanted to tell you about an amazing experience I had a year and a half ago in the basement of this building with some members of our prophetic team as we prophesied to dry bones, but we don’t have time, and you probably wouldn’t believe me. Suffice it to say, “the gates of Hell cannot prevail” against Christ’s Church, and certainly not against Christ, who is the Word of God, and who is the Light of the world, and who descends into the depths of the earth,

Who makes a way when there is no way...because he is the way.

Who makes a door when there is no door...because he is the door.

He is the Light.

And “whatever is exposed to Light becomes Light.” And that even includes hell, or to be more precise *Sheol*, in Hebrew, and *Hades*, in Greek.

There is no biblical equivalent for the English word “hell.” So when Chrysostom said, “Thank God even for hell.” He would have used the word *Hades*. And *Hades* is in the depths of the earth. *Hades* is temporal, and *Hades* comes to an end and Jesus is the End.

You see Hades has no purpose, and yet God has a purpose for Hades. And I think it's this: That those who refuse the Grace of God in Christ here would ultimately surrender to the Grace of God in Christ there, when they see Light in the darkness.

To refuse to thank God for his Grace (and all is Grace) is to trap yourself in lies and outer darkness. It is to refuse your own creation. It is to make a place for the devil. (We'll talk about him and what he is and isn't later) In Ephesians 4:27 Paul literally wrote: "Give no place to the Devil." When we say that there is a group of people to whom God's mercy can never reach, an endless place where God's light can never shine, a place of endless torment. Where they will never give thanks. Aren't we giving an absolutely immense place to the devil? And aren't we then "living to the praise of the devil's glory?" Perhaps we think it's our glory, but it's the devil's glory, it's an illusion.

To refuse to "give thanks always and for everything," is to preserve a place for nothing and the devil inhabits the nothing, the abyss.

But to "thank God always and for everything" is to be saved.

It is to have faith in Grace.

It is to "Live for the praise of God's glory."

It is to be created in God's image.

It is to be filled with the Holy Spirit...

and come into agreement with the Kingdom of Heaven.

So let's just start "thanking God always and for everything" and maybe even your nothing, for it's there that God reveals His something...CHRIST IN YOU.

Prayer

Now let's thank God for everything.

Thank God for everything. [Peter begins listing all the things he's thankful for and encouraging the congregation to do the same.]

And now I think we can thank God even for our nothing.

Thank God for your nothing.

I think Paul said it this way: "I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Thank God for alcoholism, there he will reveal his glory.

Thank him for your struggle with lust, there he will reveal his love.

Thank him for revealing your greed, it's there you'll meet him and all things with him.

So thank God always and for everything.

Communion

On the darkest night in the darkest place the Light of the world took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you; eat it. I give it to you. What you take I give. I forgive it to you. Before you took it, I gave it. Eat it."

And then having given thanks he took the cup. Did you catch that? He gave thanks for this, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink, do it in remembrance of me...thanking me."

So he calls you to come to his tree; He calls you to come to his table. He calls you to come and see that he is good, that you might forever thank him, that you might forever surrender to him and forever enjoy him. That you might forever believe the good news, and it really is good. In Jesus' name, Amen

Benediction

And what's his name? Jesus... and what does Jesus mean? God is salvation.
The name that is exalted above every name including "God is not salvation."
God *is* salvation.

So Church, the gates of hell cannot prevail against you when you shout his name into the darkness. That's how he destroys the work of the devil, through you praising him.

This is such GOOD news. Now when we say, "Let's praise the Lord" at the beginning of the service... if you're like me, you might be thinking: "Ugh... but I don't want to praise the Lord." But see we take it as a law. Do you realize your life is the story of you looking for something deserving your praise?

You do it all the time. If you go out for pizza, you're hoping it's really good because in the moment of praising that pizza you lose yourself and in so doing find yourself momentarily.

You get married, and the day you see your bride coming down the aisle you think she's gorgeous, for a moment you lose yourself and then find yourself.

Sometimes we even praise ourselves. So we try to lose ourselves by praising ourselves, but that doesn't work very well.

In the end, you will see he is worthy of all praise. You were made to praise his name forever; you were made to live to the praise of *his* glory.

When you praise him that is when you are most truly alive. God isn't up there all insecure saying, "You better praise me." No, it's the greatest gift he could ever give you: His Spirit flowing from the throne, through you and back to himself as praise. So when you leave this place, don't stop making melody in your heart to the Lord. Because, when you stop making melody in your heart to the Lord you make a place for nothing and the devil inhabits nothing.

Give no place to the devil.

In Jesus' name believe the gospel. Amen

Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.