



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 12, 2012
150th Anniversary Worship
Sermon Text: [1 Corinthians 1:4-9](#)
Pastor Douglas Engelbrecht

First Lesson: [Isaiah 6:6-8](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 100](#)
Second Lesson: [Revelation 3:7-13](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 17:1, 13-26](#)

ALWAYS...It's Such A Strong Word!

But you should ALWAYS:
Thanks God for His Grace
Thank God for His Evidence
Thank God for His Promise
Thank God for His Faithfulness

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

One day a pediatric nurse, who was given the difficult assignment of giving the flu shot to children, entered the examining room prepared to give the shot to a little girl named Meghan. “No, no, no,” she screamed. Her mother scolded her for her behavior and said, “Meghan, that’s not polite behavior!” With that the little girl yelled even louder, “No, thank you! No, thank you! No, thank you!” Apparently little Meghan had learned it’s polite to always say “thank you”, no matter what the circumstances.

You know, saying “thank you” is not just polite behavior...it’s expected behavior, at least as far as God is concerned. Yes, even when conditions and circumstances make it difficult to do, God expects us, as Christians, to always say “thank you”.

In the portion of God’s Word that I chose for this segment of your 150th anniversary celebration, the Apostle Paul serves as a good example of a Christian who learned to always say “thank you”. Let’s take a closer look, then, at these words from 1 Corinthians using this theme:

“Always...It’s Such A Strong Word!”

But we should:

- 1] Always say “thank you” to God for His grace.
- 2] Always say “thank you” to God for His evidence.
- 3] Always say “thank you” to God for His promise.
- 4] Always say “thank you” to God for His faithfulness.

Yes, we should learn from the Apostle Paul to always say “thank you” to God for **HIS GRACE**.

Now, you might be thinking: that's not hard to do! I mean, after all, that's a good share of what brings me to church every Sunday.....thanking God for the grace He gave me in Jesus Christ by bringing me to faith in Him and giving me the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life in His cross. Isn't that what it's all about when the pastor says in the liturgy: "In the peace of our forgiveness, let us praise the Lord?" Aren't we thanking God for the grace He has given us in Christ?

True, but listen to what the Apostle Paul says in verse four of our text: ***"I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."*** The Apostle Paul was thanking God, not for the grace that he had received, but for the grace that God had shown to his fellow Christians in Corinth. Paul said he was always thankful for the faith that God had created in their hearts and for the fellowship in the Gospel that they shared with him.

And that's not always easy to do! I mean, it's not as if the Corinthian people didn't give the Apostle Paul a headache or two. There was the case of the man who was living in adultery in the Corinthian congregation that Paul had to deal with. Then there was the matter of abuses of the Lord's Supper and members bringing lawsuits against each other....all in this Corinthian congregation. And yet Paul says, *"I always thank my God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus."*

Do you always thank God for the grace that He has given the people who sit next to you in church on Sunday morning? Are you always thankful for the gift of faith that the people you see around you today have been given by God, and for the fellowship in the Gospel that you share with them?

I know I don't....ALWAYS. I know that as a pastor of a congregation there are times when I think as someone comes into church: Be careful that you don't get hit by the roof falling in! Where in the world have they been for the last three months? It's about time they showed up in church! Instead of thanking God for the grace that they have been given in Christ Jesus and for the faith that brought them to God's house to worship that day. I know there are times when I think: why do I have to spend so much time on those members who always seem to have a complaint or a problem? Instead of thanking God for the blessed fellowship that we share as believers in Christ.

How important it is for you to look beyond those things that members of the church do that irk you or exasperate you or cause you headaches or even anger you at times, and thank God that they are believers in Christ....people who, like you, have been shown the grace of God in Christ Jesus, when you all deserve nothing but His wrath and punishment. How especially important it is for you, as you celebrate 150 years of being here as a congregation of believers, to, like the Apostle Paul, always thank God for the grace that He has given to those who share your fellowship in the Gospel.

Always...it's a strong word. But you should always thank God for His grace given to those who share the Christian faith with you!

And you should always thank God for **HIS EVIDENCE**. Now what do I mean by that? Well, listen to what the Apostle Paul says in verses 5 and 6: ***“For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.”***

Another thing that the Apostle Paul was thankful to God for was the evidence that the preaching of the Gospel was confirmed in the believers at Corinth. Keep in mind that Paul had labored hard in Corinth. Corinth was labeled one of the three major economic centers of Greece. And so he had to go up against things like materialism, idol worship, a preoccupation among the Greeks with wisdom, and the opposition of the Jews who had settled in Corinth. And all he had to work with was the simple Gospel message of Christ. He said, in 1 Corinthians 1:23 ***“But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”***

Now, we are told that the population of Corinth in Paul’s day may have been as high as 700,000. And we are also told that the number of believers that made up the Corinthian congregation may have been about 200. Now, for those of you who are mathematicians, that comes out to .0003% (three thousandths of a percent). You talk about averages! That makes Ricky Weeks’ .212 batting average look like he should be the leading candidate for the National League MVP!

And yet we hear Paul say ***“I always thank God for you...”*** because you are evidence that the Gospel works. Paul was thankful to God that God gave Him visible proof that his preaching Christ crucified was not in vain.

Do you always thank God for the evidence of the power of the Word in your congregation? I know I don’t...ALWAYS. I know there are times when I’m disappointed that only 12 showed up for Bible class on Thursday morning. I know I’m disheartened when on some Sunday mornings the church is filled with people disguised as empty pews, or jealous when I drive past one of those churches that preach everything but Christ crucified and see the parking lot full to capacity....instead of being thankful to God for all the indications that the Word is working...for the people who are at that Bible class eager to grow in faith, for the people who come faithfully to worship because they do love their Lord Jesus, for the many deeds of love and kindness that those who hear the Gospel preached here every Sunday have been motivated by the love of Christ to show in their lives during the week.

How about you? Are you always thankful to God for those evidences that the Word works? Again, how important it is for you, especially as you look back over 150 years of history here at Zion of Morrison, to look beyond the numbers and beyond the failures of people to respond to the Gospel in their lives, and beyond the successes of others, real or imagined, and thank God for the blessings of the Word that you do see among you. How important it is for you to thank God for each member that comes to church on a given Sunday, each member that takes the time out of their schedule to come to a Bible

class during the week, for each person that brings their gift of song to sing in the choir, or lends a hand to take on a project for the church...for these are all evidences of the fact that the Word works, and is working among you!

Always...you know, that's a pretty strong word. But, as Christians, you should always thank God for the evidences of the Word working in the hearts of people, wherever and to whatever degree that may exist!

And you should always thank God for **HIS PROMISE**. Paul says in verse 7:
“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”

One of the things that Paul was thankful for was the fact that the believers in Corinth had everything they needed....spiritually that is.

We are told that the Christians in the city of Corinth were not necessarily the A-list of their society. They were not the movers and shakers of the ancient world. They were ordinary people, not unlike you and me. And yet Paul says that he was thankful to God for the fact that they had been given everything they needed.

You see, they didn't need what everybody else around them had. And so it made no difference to them that they didn't have the wealth or the power or the fame that other people in the city of Corinth boasted about. They had the promise of God that they had a home waiting for them in heaven and the promise of God that Jesus would come back some day to take them to that heaven. And that promise of God was especially important when those early Christians faced the persecutions and the prospect of death. Because they had the promise of God of a home in heaven and a promise of Christ's return, they, as the Apostle Paul says, ***“eagerly waited for the Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”*** For that promise that allowed them to face each day confident and hopeful, Paul was very thankful to God.

Are you always thankful to God for the promise He has given you that you have everything you need, that you have a home in heaven waiting for you, and that the Lord Jesus will come some day to take you to that home to live with him in eternity?

I know I am not...ALWAYS. There are times when I look around at the way the rest of the world lives and I think I'm missing something....I don't have everything that I need. There are times in life when I forget to ask myself how bad can things be, or how difficult is the situation I am in? I have a home in heaven waiting for me and the promise that my Lord Jesus will take me there! And I realize that I don't have everything I want, but I really do have everything I need.

Have you been there too? How important it is for you, like the Apostle Paul, to always thank God, no matter what, for His promise, and for blessing you with everything that we need in life to allow you to be content, confident, and eagerly waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. How important it is for you as a congregation celebrating God's grace to you for 150 years to remember that, even though you may not have a crystal cathedral with plush theater seats, a 72 rank pipe organ, a video screen and a

sound system that will knock your socks off, a field house with sky boxes for athletic events at your school, or a gathering area in the back of the church complete with Starbucks coffee and a smoothie maker, God has given you everything you need!

Always...that's a strong word. But you should always thank God, under any circumstance in life, for the promise of heaven that is yours in Christ Jesus!

And you should always say "thank you" for God's faithfulness. Paul says in verses 8 and 9 ***"He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord."***

One of the things that Paul was so thankful to God for when it came to the Corinthian people was God's faithfulness. Again, keep in mind the situation in Corinth in the 1st century AD. It would not be long before the Roman government would begin some of the most horrendous persecutions of those who confessed to be followers of Christ. Homes burned, people beheaded, fed to the lions, used as torches for the emperor's back yard bar-b-ques. But Paul knew that the Corinthian people would not lose their faith through it all. Why? Because he knew how strong they were and how faithful they were to God? No, because he knew how faithful God was. He knew that God would keep them faithful to the very end, no matter what they might have to go through, so that they could stand before God blameless on the day when Christ would return in judgment.

Are you always thankful for God's faithfulness? I know I'm not...not ALWAYS. I know there are times when I wonder about what I will have to go through before the Lord calls me home and whether or not I will be strong enough to withstand what life may throw at me or whether I will lose it in the end. I sometimes wonder what the devil has up his sleeve and will pull before I reach my home in heaven and whether or not I will be up to the task. But that's when I have to thank God for the assurance that He is the one who is faithful and will not let me fall or slip through His fingers.

Are you always thankful for that promise that God has made to you that He will not be the one who will forsake you, but will keep you strong unto the end?

How important it is for you to always be thankful for God's faithfulness, because you know how weak and unfaithful you can be sometimes! How important it is for you members of Zion, as you celebrate your 150th anniversary, to be thankful for God's faithfulness, because you don't know what the future holds for this congregation. You don't know what difficult times lie ahead of you or what challenges will face you as a congregation. But you do know who holds the future. And you know that the One who holds the future of this congregation in His hands will be faithful to the end.

Always....that's a strong word. But, as Christians, you should always be thankful for the faithfulness of your God.

Conclusion

Saying “No, thank you,” when she was getting her flu shot was probably not what her mother had in mind when she said that her behavior wasn’t very polite.

But always saying “thank you”, no matter what the circumstances are, is exactly what our Father has in mind. May God grant that, even though it’s a strong word and a tough assignment sometimes, you **ALWAYS**, as individual Christians and as a congregation of believers, say “thank you” to your God for:

- 1] for His grace given to those with whom you share faith in Christ,
- 2] for His evidence that the Word you have been preaching for 150 years works in the hearts of people, no matter where or to what extent you see it.
- 3] for His promise of heaven through Christ, giving you everything we need
- 4] for His faithfulness that keeps you safe in His arms unto the end, and keeps you strong as a congregation of believers into the future, no matter what that future might bring!