

Giving Thanks and Thanks Giving

13 October 2019

Leaders Guide (Pick the questions you want to look at. The last question can be one for further personal and devotional reflection unless there is time and enough trust in your group to get very personal. Definitely not something to be forced.)

Giving Thanks

1. If you were to rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, overall how thankful do you think you are?
 - a. Rarely are we balanced in our self-assessments. We occasionally will over-estimate but most likely we will underestimate the gratitude in our lives. It might be useful pastorally to pay attention to how people in your group self-assess.

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and Luke 12:16-21

2. In this story of the institution of the Offering of the Firstfruits (a harvest festival) how many times is reference made to God giving to the Israelites?
 - a. Six: Vss 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, and 11.
3. In the sermon three reasons were given for why many of us are less thankful than we could or should be. What are they? Do any of these reasons resonate with you?
 - a. We can't see God's generosity to us.
 - i. because we are blinded by adversity.
 - ii. because we are blinded by prosperity - we believe the myth of self-sufficiency.
 - b. We can't remember God's generosity to us.
 - i. because of memory atrophy - as our information storage and retrieval systems have become increasingly sophisticated (printing press all the way to Google and Siri) we have had to rely less and less on our memories and they have become, for want of a better word, atrophied. Spiritually this means that we have a very short memory and, unaided, we don't have the basic mental tools to remember the whole history of God's faithfulness to us - both individually and collectively.
 - ii. because the last thing Satan wants us recalling is the generous self-giving of God to us. It is like the parable of the sower and the

seed, where the birds swoop down and eat the seeds before they can take root.

- c. We haven't cultivated the habit of gratitude.
- 4. In one sense addressing the third reason helps in dealing with all the reasons we are less thankful than we should be. How so?
 - a. "As we learn to look for the sustaining and loving presence of God in our lives - all facets and seasons of our lives, be it adversity or prosperity - it will get easier to see. As we record and retell God's faithfulness it will be harder to forget. And giving thanks will become a habit."

Thanks Giving

- 5. The point of our text in Deuteronomy is to respond generously to the generosity of God. Our parable also addresses this question. What does the parable say about giving to God?
 - a. Vs 21: "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is **not rich toward God.**"
- 6. How do we learn to become a thankful and generous giver to God?
 - a. While being generous to God is also a discipline to be exercised and an act of obedience, irrespective of how we feel, truly thankful self-giving to God begins with learning to be thankful to God for His generosity to us.

Final Reflection

- 7. Are there areas in my relationship with God where I am selfish and grasping? Can I name them to myself? In each of those areas what could generosity look like?