

Sermon Podcast 1124.MP3

0:08

Today, we're gonna continue on second part of our 2 week series where we're looking at how we can live as people of gratitude. So how can we live as people of gratitude? 1st, last week, we talked about how do we live giving thanks to God for the gift that is life. Then the second thing that I wanna talk about this week is how do we live as people filled with grace to each other? How do we live as people that are graceful and kind and generous in our dealings with each other?

0:37

And we're gonna get into that in just a moment, but it's always right, and it's good for us to begin by reading scripture together. And so, we're gonna turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2, and we're gonna read verses 3 and 4. Philippians chapter 2 verses 3 and 4, and the translation I've got is the kingdom new testament, so it might differ a little bit from what you have. But here's what Paul has to say to the church. Philippians 2 3 and 4.

1:03

Never act out of selfish ambition or vanity. Instead, regard everybody else as your superior. Look after each other's interests and not your own. Look after everyone else's interests and not your own. So that's what I want us to talk about this morning.

1:23

And so I wanna begin by reminding you that this week is the week, y'all. This week is the week. This week, we start, preparing for Thanksgiving, which is gonna be happening on Thursday. And I don't know about you, as we talked about last week, I am jazzed. I'm incredibly excited about Thanksgiving because I get to watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade at 8 and or 8 o'clock, I think, and it ends at noon.

1:43

And I'll watch it all the way through. I'm flying to Texas on Monday, and so we're gonna be in Dallas, Texas, actually, in a town called Prosper, which is, like, the most Texas name of a town you could ever imagine. Right? We're gonna be in Texas

spending Thanksgiving with my family. It's gonna be incredible, and we're gonna eat all the best food.

2:00

We're gonna do all the things, and it's gonna be awesome. But before Thanksgiving, there's actually another holiday. Did you guys know this? There's another holiday before Thanksgiving that a lot of people experience, and it's called, not Thanksgiving, but Friendsgiving. You guys familiar with Friendsgiving?

2:14

Anybody do Friendsgiving? You know the origin of Friendsgiving? I went and I did a little background research for this. You know the origin of Friendsgiving? Anybody?

2:22

It's actually the show Friends. Anybody watch Friends? Back in 1994, they ran an episode about Friendsgiving. But the first time it appeared in popular culture really taking off was 2,007. And the basic idea, for those of you don't that aren't familiar, is Friendsgiving is for people who either can't go and spend Thanksgiving with their families or sometimes people that don't want to go and spend Thanksgiving with their families, so they spend a Friendsgiving together with everybody that they like.

2:51

I've got a buddy of mine who lives in New York, and I was talking to him earlier this week. And he's not gonna be able to come back to Thanksgiving in our hometown. And so I said, well, what are you gonna do? And he said, well, I'm going to Friendsgiving. I'm going to Friendsgiving on Thursday.

3:05

He said, but here's the thing. There are gonna be a couple of people there that I don't really like, and so I don't know if I'm gonna go. Do you catch the irony in that for a minute, you guys? It is Friendsgiving, and yet there are going to be some people there that he doesn't like. So he's wondering if he's gonna go to friendsgiving because there are people there that are not his friends.

3:24

And I'm thinking about that constantly over the last couple of days since I talked to him because the reality is this, that every single one of us over the next few days, whether you're going to Friendsgiving or whether you're going to Thanksgiving, some of us are really excited about going into these spaces and spending time with the people that we love. But the reality is also that many of us are not looking forward to going into these spaces and spending time with people that maybe we don't love. And so the question that I want us to wrestle with, because I think it's universally true for all of us, the question that I want us to wrestle with this morning is this one. How do we treat people that you don't wanna be around? How do you treat people that you don't wanna be around?

4:07

Because, listen, some of us in this room, we know exactly what is gonna happen. We're gonna go into the room with people we don't wanna be around, and if you don't know that feeling, then you're probably that person in the room, y'all. So how do we spend time with people we don't wanna be around? And the answer the answer to that question on the surface level, thank you, is actually pretty obvious. The answer to that question is pretty obvious.

4:30

It's it's actually a question that we've been wrestling with since the beginning of recorded history. There there were 2 rabbis, 2 rabbis, and I could go way further back than that. But I actually wanna focus on 2 rabbis who were living about a generation before Jesus. And their names were Hillel and Shammai. And Hillel and Shammai were the 2 most respected rabbis in Israel a generation before Jesus.

4:53

They were so respected, in fact, that their voice still resonates and carries weight 2000 years later. And there's a story in the Talmud, which is an ancient collection of Jewish writings, about Hillel and Shammai. And Hillel is a rabbi who takes probably a more progressive approach on things, and Shammai is a very conservative stand up, let's follow all the rules sorts of rabbi. And and the story goes that there's a Roman citizen because they're

living under the yoke of the Roman Empire. And there's a Roman citizen who comes one day to Shammai.

5:26

And he says, rabbi, if you can teach me the whole of the Torah while you are standing on one leg, I will convert and become a follower of Yahweh for the rest of my life. And the story says that Shammai was so offended by this question that he picked up a shovel that was nearby him, and he ran the Roman citizen away, telling him if he ever came back, he was gonna kill him.

Interestingly, the the Roman citizen leaves Shammai, and he goes over to Hillel. And he comes to Hillel, and he says, Rabbi, I trust you're a good and wise teacher. The same sort of thing people would say to Jesus.

6:06

And he said to Hillel, if you can teach me the whole of the Torah while you are standing on one leg, I will convert and become a follower of Yahweh the whole of my life. And in this beautiful moment, Hillel looks at the guy with a smile on his face, and the Talmud says, he says to the gentleman, what is hateful to you what is hateful to you, don't do that to your fellow man. The rest is just commentary. What is what is hateful to your to you, don't do to your fellow man. The rest is just commentary.

6:45

And that, 2000 years ago, a generation before Jesus, set a benchmark for how we ought to interact with people that are not like us, with people that maybe we don't enjoy being around. Now I wanna fast forward just a generation, and we've got instead of Hillel and Shammai, but now we have Jesus. And Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, which if you're here this morning or you're watching online, you're not a Christian, I wanna recommend to you. I always do because it's that important. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7.

7:14

The greatest teaching that the world has ever known. If you wanna know what it looks like to be a genuine and dedicated follower of Jesus, but more importantly, if you want to know what it looks like to see the world the way that Jesus sees the world,

go and read the Sermon on the Mount. And in Matthew chapter 7, there's this beautiful moment where Jesus is beginning to sum up the whole of his teachings. 5, 6, he's laying out how we're called to live as followers of Jesus, how we're called to see the world in the light of the gospel that the son of God has come and taken on flesh, and he's living among us. And as he's winding his teaching down in Matthew chapter 7, he actually addresses this question.

7:55

How are we called to treat other people? Not just the people that we love to be around. Because earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, what good does it do you if you love only those that love you back? He said, everybody does that, but you are called to love even your enemies. How do we treat people that we don't want to be around?

8:23

Hillel said, what is hateful to you, don't do to your fellow man. And Jesus says something similar, but a little bit different. And in Matthew 7:12, here's the famous words of Jesus that we all know, the golden rule. So in everything, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. So in everything, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, for this sums up the law and the prophets.

8:52

It's the golden rule, y'all. Even in a post Christian culture, which we are firmly and squarely living in now, even in Augusta, Georgia, everybody would know the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That's what Jesus gives as a simple answer to the question, how do you treat your uncle at the Thanksgiving table when he starts ranting about politics? How do you treat your crazy liberal niece who just came home with her liberal arts degree in sociology and you disagree with everything she says?

9:24

Right? How do you do it? How do you treat your friend at Friendsgiving who has 12 or 14 too many beers? Right? You do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

9:35

You treat people with kindness and with generosity and with grace. That's what Jesus teaches. And I wanna pause on this for just a minute, you guys, because the reality is that even though we know the golden rule, even though we were all brought up with that being the framework, Christian or not Christian, you've heard it before. But what we don't think about is just how incredibly countercultural that whole idea is. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

10:07

Treat others the way you wanna be treated. Do you guys think for a second about how countercultural that entire idea is in the whole of human history? I want you to think for a minute. Let's put on some historical glasses for just a couple of minutes. Because if you go back into the ancient world, if you read Plato, if you read Aristotle, if you read Socrates, what you will find is that they talk a lot about human relationships.

10:36

They talk about how we should interact with each other. And each of those 3 great minds, maybe the greatest minds of the western philosophical tradition, what they say is that you're called to treat people well if they are in the same station as you socially. Chris and I would be friends because he is on the same social standing and ladder as me. But I would not ever for a moment think about treating Kathy in the same fashion because she is a woman, And as a man in the ancient world, she's beneath my station. So how do you deal with people that you don't like?

11:18

Well, you treat those who are in your same social world with generosity, but you could never ever imagine treating someone who is less than you in the same way that you want to be treated. It was a caste system in the ancient world. And it doesn't matter if it's Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle, or Seneca, or Marcus Aurelius, or any of the great ancient writers, they all say the exact same thing. We treat people the way that they deserve to be treated. We treat people that the the way they deserve to be treated.

12:00

It's true in the ancient world, but what I wanna suggest to you this morning is that, actually, it's how we act in our world. It's how we act in 2024 in America. We were raised with the golden rule, but the fact of the matter is we don't live that way. Culture says treat others the way they deserve to be treated. And I know this is true for a fact because I experience it on a regular and rhythmic basis in my life.

12:30

When I come to work Monday through Friday, I wear dress clothes. Right? When I go out into meetings, when I go to hospitals, I have all my suits in a closet in my office. And I'll put my suit on. And you guys, it's incredible.

12:43

Because when you go to the hospital, you walk in with a suit on, and you know what happens? Everybody treats you like you're supposed to be there. And then I wear the suit when I leave the hospital, and I'll go grocery shopping or whatever. And it is fascinating because you walk in when you're dressed up, and now I am clearly a middle aged man. And I walk in and everybody goes, well, how are you, sir?

13:03

How are you, sir? Are you having a good day, sir? Did you find everything you need? What are you having a good day? And everybody's smiling and everybody's happy.

13:12

But here's what I need you to understand. I hate wearing suits. I don't like wearing suits. And when Friday Saturday I am off, I am not wearing suits. Matter of fact, I'm not even wearing something like this.

13:23

When I am off, I'm wearing, like cheapo lululemon pants, like the knockoff brand, and hoodies. Okay? That's what I'm wearing. And it is fascinating to me a genuine experience that I have. When I go in with my suit on, sir, how are you?

13:39

Can we help you at all? And then when I walk in with my

sweatpants and my hoodie on, almost the exact opposite sort of thing happened. Sir, can we help you today? Is there anything that you need? And it's not said with generosity.

13:59

It's not said with a kindness, but it's said with suspicion, because I don't look like they think I should. Treat others the way you want to be treated. It's the maxim of the golden rule. But every single one of us could probably take my microcosm story and apply it to your own life. You've been in situations and in moments where you weren't treated the way that you would want to be treated, but you were treated as lesser than because of the way you looked, because of the education you've attained.

14:36

Or maybe on the flip side, you've treated someone with disrespect. Maybe on the flip side, you've treated someone as lesser than because they didn't measure up to all of your accolades and achievements. Culture tells us, don't treat people the way you wanna be treated, but treat people in the way they deserve to be treated. And listen to me y'all. As followers of Jesus, we have the opportunity to live in the most countercultural of ways when we think about how we are called to interact with other people.

15:16

If we reject the notion that we treat people the way they deserve to be treated and instead embrace the solid foundational teaching of Jesus that we treat others the way we would wanna be treated, listen, I'm telling you right now, it would absolutely turn the world upside down. And so the question that we have to wrestle with as we're approaching Thanksgiving, undoubtedly gonna sit at the table we love, and we're gonna sit at the table with people we don't love. The question we have to ask is, how do we implement that way of thinking in our lives? How do we implement what Jesus said? Treat others the way you want to be treated.

15:55

And I actually think that what Paul says can open our eyes to how we can do it and do it well. I read to you from his letter to the

church at Philippi. Paul wrote 13 letters. We talk about this pretty regularly. Thirteen letters in the new testament.

16:08

And his letter to the church at Philippi, it is the most joyous, it is the most celebratory because he's writing to a church that he spent time with. He's writing to a church that he deeply loves. And this letter is just overflowing with joy and with generosity and with gratitude. And in chapter 1, he lays out, I thank God every single time I remember you because I've heard of your faithfulness. I've heard of your generosity.

16:34

And Paul says, I wanna remind you. I wanna remind you of how you are called to live with each other. Because central to representing Jesus out in the world is to embody his way, to embody his teaching. And in Philippians chapter 2, right at the beginning of the chapter, what I read to you is this. Philippians 4 verse 34.

16:56

In humility, consider others as better than yourselves. And if you can do that, then you will be in a position to live and live well. In humility, consider others as better than yourself. And this is the key. Right?

17:09

If we're gonna treat others the way we wanna be treated. Humility, consider others as better than yourselves. And this is it. Taking on the same mind as Christ Jesus. Taking on the same mind as Christ Jesus.

17:24

Who and then he launches in Philippians 2 into the great hymn of Christ. Right? In the same way as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to be comprehended. And so he emptied himself of the divine nature, taking on the very nature of a servant, becoming a human being, and being obedient to God even to the point of the cross. How do we implement the teaching of Jesus to treat others the way we want to be treated?

18:00

And according to Paul, the way we do it is to take on the mind of Jesus, who being in nature God, he was greater than us. He is greater than us, but he didn't consider it as something to be exploited. So he took on the very nature of a servant. You guys, I cannot tell you how important that is. If we wanna treat others the way we want to be treated, then we have to remember first and foremost how Jesus has treated us.

18:34

In humility, consider others as better than yourself. Why? Because Jesus did the exact same thing for you. Now we're back on track. In humility, consider others as better than yourself because Jesus did the exact same thing for you.

18:55

And just before he launches into that hymn in Philippians chapter 2, he says, taking on the very mind of Christ. I wanna sit on that for just a few minutes. We are called to take on the mind of Jesus. We're called to begin to think like Jesus in our relationships, not only with God, but listen, in our relationships with other human beings. This is so important for you to understand.

19:24

If you want to treat others the way you want to be treated, then you consider others as better than yourselves. You take on humility, and that means that you learn to think properly. Let's think properly. For so many of us, right, I'm gonna treat others the way I wanna be treated, and I'm just gonna work as hard as I can. I'm I'm gonna treat others the way I wanna be treated, and I'm just gonna grind and try and try and try again, and eventually I'll get it right.

19:53

But what I want you to understand this morning is that the key to living properly according to Paul is to 1st and foremost to think properly. Because proper thinking leads to proper living. Take on the mind of Jesus, the one who was seated at the right hand of God, who took on flesh and came among us, the one who didn't consider equality with God as something to be exploited. And so

he gave himself for us, dying a shameless death on the cross. And if Jesus was willing to do that for us, then it changes the way not only we deal with God, but most importantly, it changes the way we deal with each other.

20:41

In Paul's letter to the church at Rome in Romans chapter 12, here's what he says, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Proper thinking will ultimately lead to proper living. And you guys, I think we need to stop and consider the implications of that for just a few minutes. If we think properly, we will live properly.

21:09

If we understand who we are, if we understand whose we are, then we can live well. That is so important for us to wrestle with this morning because here's something I wanna tell you, and it might strike us a little offensive. Okay? We live in the most narcissistic culture that the world has ever known. Do you know that?

21:28

You familiar with that? We live in the most narcissistic culture that the world has ever known. Do you know how I know that personally? Because I'm raising children. And you know how we treat our children, and this is true probably of every parent since the mid 1980s.

21:43

Right? You raise your children, and do you know what you teach them? You're perfect, baby. You're perfect. Look at you.

21:54

You did so great in your basketball game even though you turned the ball over 57 times and didn't do anything good. You're perfect. You are incredible. You can do anything you set your mind to. We are the most narcissistic culture that the world has ever known.

22:16

Right? Culture says you're perfect just the way you are. It's the way we raise our kids, but center of all things. We have been

conditioned to think that the world revolves We have been conditioned to think that the world revolves around us. And culture says you're perfect.

22:44

And the problem with that is if I am perfect, then everyone else is below me. If I am perfect, then everyone else is less than me. In humility, consider others as better than yourselves. In humility, remember that Jesus, in spite of your shortcomings, took on flesh and died for you. Culture says you're perfect just the way you are.

23:21

And thinking properly leads to living properly, which is why we have to understand we don't take our cues from culture, but we take our cues from the gospel. And the gospel says that we are dead in our sins and our trespasses. That rather than being perfect actually, do you know what we are? Fundamentally, we are broken as human beings. Fundamentally, we are not perfect as we are, but we are sinners in need of grace.

23:49

Paul says, you are dead in your sins and your trespasses, but God, who is rich in mercy, reached out in his steadfast love. And while we were yet sinners, he died for us. And his grace comes to us not through anything we've done, but through his mercy and his goodness so that no person may boast. I love what Paul says. You were broken.

24:16

You're not perfect. You're actually a wretched sinner who deserves death. But it is through the grace of God that you have been brought to faith, and now as a result of that, you are a new thing in this world. Do you see the contrast and the juxtaposition? Culture says you're perfect like you are, which means you're never gonna treat anybody as equal.

24:40

And Jesus says you're broken and in need of a savior. And thanks be to God, he took on flesh and came among us. And if we understand who we truly are, that we are broken but loved by a

savior, then I want you to understand this morning, then and only then will we be in a position to actually live out the teaching of Jesus, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Because while we deserve death, Jesus gave us grace. While we were deserving of hell, Jesus went to the cross.

25:22

He didn't consider equality with God as something to be exploited, but he humbled himself. And if we understand what he has done for us, then we are in a position to do that for other people. Do you see what I'm talking about? Proper thinking leads to proper living. And now we see what he's talking about in Ephesians chapter 4.

25:41

Right? Be kind to one another. Cherish tender feelings for each other, and get ready, forgive each other. Why? Because Christ forgave you.

25:56

Forgive each other because Christ forgave you. That is the key to turning the page and living into the fullness of who God has created you to be. That is the key to how we can enter into thanksgiving meals on Thursday morning and afternoon and not walk out frustrated, to not walk out angry and saying I'm never gonna come back and do this again. Because if we understand who we are, then maybe we'll extend a little more grace to the people around the table. I'm just a fellow sinner like you.

26:39

I'm just as broken as anybody else. And were it not for the grace of God that I have experienced in Jesus Christ, then I would be in the same boat as you. When we understand who we are, when we learn to think properly, then we can live with a little more grace. Then we can live with a little more generosity and forgiveness. And so the question that I have for you this morning really is pretty simple.

27:11

Who is it that will be around your table? Seriously, who is it? Is it your son-in-law? Who is it that's gonna be sitting around your

table that you just can't wait to get away from? Is it your mother-in-law?

27:26

Who is it that you're gonna step into the office on Monday afternoon and your blood will boil as soon as you hear their voice start to go up a little bit. Can I get an amen? And the question becomes, will you live out the teaching of culture? Do unto them as they deserve? Are you will are you living to the teaching of Jesus?

27:50

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And the key to doing this right, the key to living well is to remember who we truly are, sinners who have received the grace of God. I'm broken just like you. So in humility, I will consider you as better than myself. How are you going to live out that teaching this week?

28:20

Maybe a better way to frame it is who are you going to show generosity to? Who are you gonna show generosity to this week? It's the challenge of the gospel. And I tell you right now, if we could just live this one simple thing, then every area of your life would be different. Your relationships would be more fulfilling.

28:41

Your marriage would be healthier. Your kids would wanna be around you more. I'm not saying it's easy. It wasn't easy when he went to the cross, but he did it out of love. And when we know who we are and we know whose we are, we're in a position to live in the same way.

29:06

So who will you show generosity to this week? But I actually think there's a greater question that we need to close with and here's what it is. Do you know that you've received grace from God? Some of us are not able to live with humility towards others because we still haven't heard the good news. We're not able to live in right relationships with each other because we're not living in a right relationship with God.

29:32

And some of us need to understand maybe for the first time this morning that you are dead in your sins and in your trespasses. But thanks be to God, Jesus who is rich in mercy came and went to the cross for us. That he was resurrected on the 3rd day and he is seated at the right hand of God ruling over all things. And you have the opportunity right now to trust him with your life. You have the opportunity right now to pivot and live in a brand new way, not with selfishness and with arrogance, but with humbleness and grace, forgiving others as Christ forgave you.

30:16

Some of you need to know today that you were forgiven by Jesus. Some of you need to know today that you are loved by the God of all creation. And if we can do that, and if we can live that in our minds and in our hearts, then we can ultimately be thankful. So that is my prayer for you, that you will live with a thankful heart, in right relationships with others, but more importantly with a thankful heart because you are loved by Jesus. Let's take a few moments now and let's pray together.

30:54

God, some of us are here in this room today, and we need to know that we're loved by you. Some of us have been taught, Lord, that we earn, acceptance and we earn our merits through all the things that we do. But God help us to know that's false. Help us to know, God, that we don't treat others as they deserve to be treated because you don't treat us the way we deserve. Lord, we know we are broken.

31:23

We know we don't deserve your love and yet we have it anyway. So God, make us mindful of that on this day. Help us to know, Lord, that we treat others the way we want to be treated because you have given us grace, because you have given us mercy. Lord, help us to live into your fullness. May you transform our minds on this day so that we might live in the way you've called us to.

31:51

But, God, for some of my friends who are here in this room today, Lord, maybe for the first time they're hearing the news, that they don't get what they deserve from you, but they get love and

grace instead. God, may we cherish that in our hearts. May we know that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us so that we might live and live well. Remind us of the goodness of the gospel, Lord. Transform our hearts as we worship you this morning.

32:18

God, this is our prayer, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.