

Thx: The Gospel & a Grateful Life | September 17, 2017

Mothballs, Rust guard and the Age of Discontent

Introduction: Have you ever met a truly thankful, gracious person?

- Is that our culture, what we're surrounded by?

"I'll often see moments as 'good content' for my social media followers. It's almost like the photographing and sharing of a cool time is more important than actually appreciating it in real life."

One psychologist interviewed in the article said,

*"It's not our outward behavior that we need to concentrate on, we need to look inward. People are using external validation on social media for a reason. We need to examine what is missing at the heart of people."*ⁱⁱⁱ

- So, what's missing? Haven't we got everything we could possible want in the West today? Yes, we call have challenges, and certainly not to diminish those, but in comparison to the majority world, many of us are living the high life – sanitation, care, housing, technology, absolutely unprecedented access to information. If information is power, we are the most powerful generation in history.
 - And in the middle of all this it seems people are more driven, more discontent, more hurried than ever.
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- “Everything is amazing and nobody’s happy.”^[iii] – Louis CK
- Alfred Lord Tennyson felt similarly:

*Why are we weigh’d upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from
weariness?*

*All thing have rest : why should we toil
alone,*

*We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber’s holy
balm ;*

*Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
‘ There is no joy but calm ! ‘*

*Why should we only toil, the roof and
crown of things?*^[iv]

- Living around the time of the industrial revolution you can imagine how Tennyson might have felt amidst the intensity of progress around him. Maybe not dissimilar to information and telecommunication revolution we’re experiencing now.

- But the ancients struggled with this stuff too. Listen to king Solomon on riches and contentment way back in 970 BC.

¹⁰ Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! ¹¹ The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth—except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers!.... ¹⁵ We all come to the end of our lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day we were born. We can't take our riches with us.

¹⁶ And this, too, is a very serious problem. People leave this world no better off than when they came. All their hard work is for nothing—like working for the wind. ¹⁷ Throughout their lives, they live under a cloud—frustrated, discouraged, and angry. [\[iv\]](#)

Discontent with Being Discontent

- So the ancients struggled with the big questions, as did the modernists, and obviously we're still wrestling with these aches today.
- We struggle with enough never being enough – and we know it!
- And so as entitlement grows, consumerism is rampant and discontentment is systemic, how do we find our way into what we see a glimmer of every now and then, the under explored world of thankfulness?

- How do we move from feeling discontent with being discontentment into genuinely present and grateful living?
- Jesus tells us we *can* move beyond that discontentment and into deeper territory through the gospel.
- Through the Gospel, understood and experienced to the full, we're ushered into the uncharted country of grateful, abundant living.

Jesus

- So what does Jesus have to say about it? We've talked a little about money, and the topic of thankfulness doesn't entirely revolve around cash, but Jesus, like any great thinker (though of course much more than that) knows that money and the human heart tend to get unhealthily tied up. That's almost universal.
- Voltaire says, *"When it is a question of money, everyone is the same religion."*^[1]
- At one point in The Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about money, and he speaks about money similarly – in term of worship or subservience.

¹⁹ *"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and*

thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²² “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.^[vi]

- Now Jesus is talking about money in this instance, but behind all that he's really talking about something broader – service.
- Bob Dylan said, “You’ve Gotta Serve Somebody”.^[vii]
- Jesus points out what hides in plain sight – everyone serves something, everyone worships a god.
- The important question is: what kind of God are they?
- Jesus said, emphatically. “I’ve come to give life and life to the full.”^[viii]
- Here’s the point: the potential to live a grateful life is all tied up with who or what you serve. Because our gratefulness or discontentment, hope or incalculable despair, is entirely dependent on who or what we worship.

The Gospel and a Grateful Life

- Living a thankful life implies you have received something from someone. In order to live gratefully, we must first *receive* and be willing to acknowledge the *giver*.
- A grateful life is only possible once we remember there is someone to be grateful to. And so in order to live gratefully we must learn to appreciate what we've been given, but principally, get to know the character of the giver.
- Are you discontent with being discontent?
- Come to Jesus. Jesus, later in Matthew's gospel, said:

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."^[ix]

- I like what Mother Theresa said, *"Yesterday has gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."*^[x]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is the most thankful person you know? Share a little about them.
2. What is so hard about being thankful?
3. What have you learned about thankfulness in the past?

4. What did you learn about thankfulness through this teaching?
5. What steps can we take to move toward a grateful life?

[i] (The Guardian, *I, Narcissist – Vanity, Social Media, and the Human Condition*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/17/i-narcissist-vanity-social-media-and-the-human-condition>)

[ii] Louis CK

[iii] Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Choric Song*

[iv] Solomon, Ecclesiastes 5

[v] Voltaire

[vi] Jesus, Matthew 6

[vii] Bob Dylan, *You've Gotta Serve Somebody*

[viii] Jesus, John 10.10

[ix] Jesus, Matthew 11

[x] Mother Theresa