**Breakthrough – Week 6 – Breakthrough in Thanksgiving**

**Message Big Idea**: When the Spirit brings breakthrough, we respond together with thanksgiving.

**Scripture:** Psalm 103:2-5a, James 1:16-17a, Psalm 8:3-4, Ephesians 5:19b-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Colossians 3:17

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**Why I Love Thanksgiving**

*(Series Graphic)* I don’t know about you, but I love Thanksgiving. Like… more than I probably should, to be honest. But think about it – what’s there *not* to like about an entire holiday focused on eating? It’s the perfect holiday! And I don’t know about you, but I love just about every item in a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal: ham, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, cream corn… Is anyone salivating yet?

But can I confess something to you? I know this might be heresy for some of you, but I actually don’t love pumpkin pie. I know, I know, judge me if you must. In my opinion, this is the only way to eat pumpkin pie:



Who’s with me? Raise your hand high if you’re team whipped cream! Ah, my people!

But who could forget the most important item of the Thanksgiving meal… the turkey. Yes, the turkey, so good we’re all getting sleepy already just thinking about it. Did you now that 91% of American households will have turkey on Thanksgiving? It’s true! In fact, did you know that Butterball even has its own online help page? Well, I took the liberty of checking their website and here are a few of my favorite stories they listed:

* One gentleman called to tell the operator he cut his turkey in half with a chain saw and wanted to know if the oil from the chain would adversely affect the turkey.
* A disappointed woman called wondering why her turkey had no breast meat. After a conversation with a Talk-Line operator, it became apparent that the woman’s turkey was lying upside down.
* Lastly, a proud gentleman called to tell the staff how he wrapped his turkey in a towel, laid it in the floor and stomped on it breaking the bones so it would fit in his pan.

~~Whether you like turkey, pumpkin pie, or that weird green bean casserole or not, the thing I love most about Thanksgiving is the people. It’s a chance to simply be together with one another, being grateful for all that we have.~~

A couple years ago I saw something troubling, though. It was an ad floating around the internet. See if you can guess which part I found troubling:



Um… excuse me? “Brown Thursday”?

*(Pause to gather yourself)*

That day already has a name and it’s, say it with me… **Thanksgiving!** I don’t want to overstate this, but is it possible that we’ve forgotten how to be truly thankful for what we have? How many of us have shared a lovely Thanksgiving meal, only to wake up early the next morning to get the best deal we can on a new gadget or gift? It’s so easy to jump right over Thanksgiving to the gift-giving, and often gift-*getting*, of the Christmas season. Is it possible that how we treat Thanksgiving is actually a microcosm of our inability to truly be grateful?

**Gratitude**

Now, gratitude doesn’t come from acquiring more stuff or going on more vacations. Having a grateful heart is not the product of job promotions or award presentations. In fact, gratitude isn’t even necessarily tied to people and relationships.

No, gratitude is a product of a framework, a way of seeing things, and it *always* involves three factors.

Author and pastor John Ortberg calls these three factors **The 3 *Benes*.** *Bene* is actually a Latin word that means “good.” Gratitude comes from recognizing three good things.

The first is a ***Bene*fit**. In order to be grateful, you have to recognize that you’ve received something that you find positive. In Psalm 103, David declares: *(add)*

**“Praise the Lord, my soul,**

**and forget not all his benefits—**

**who forgives all your sins**

**and heals all your diseases,**

**who redeems your life from the pit**

**and crowns you with love and compassion,**

**who satisfies your desires with good things…” –Psalm 103:2-5a**

People with grateful hearts regularly recognize all the good things in their lives. It doesn’t mean that they don’t have unmet longings or desires; they just choose to focus on the benefits, all the blessings they *have* received.

And, they recognize that these benefits come from a ***Bene*factor**. Benefactor is related to the word *factory*. A benefactor is someone who *produces* good. To be grateful, a person must recognize that there is someone behind every benefit who is intentionally producing good. You didn’t stumble upon something good randomly or receive it by accident. No, a truly grateful person recognizes that someone or something is *behind* every blessing.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, said it this way: *(add)*

**“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights…” –James 1:16-17a**

As Christ-followers, we learn to recognize that a loving God is the source of everything good in this world.

And not only do grateful people recognize the benefits and the benefactor, they also see themselves as a ***Bene*ficiary** of that goodness.

Astounded by the goodness of God, the Psalmist says: *(add)*

**“When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—**

**the moon and the stars you set in place—**

**what are mere mortals that you should think about them,**

**human beings that you should care for them?” –Psalm 8:3-4 NLT**

In order to be grateful, you have to recognize that the benefits that come your way aren’t earned or merited. They aren’t just the product of your hard work and ingenuity. If we believe we deserve the good things that come our way, then we are no longer grateful. You can’t be grateful for something you believe you are entitled to.

*(3 Benes on the screen)* Gratitude is a product of a worldview, of a way of seeing things where we recognize that we are the Beneficiaries of a multitude of Benefits from a loving Benefactor.

**Thanksgiving**

However, just *feeling* gratitude isn’t all that matters, is it? Pastor Tim Keller reminds us:

**“It’s one thing to be grateful.**

**It’s another thing to give thanks.**

**Gratitude is what you feel.**

**Thanksgiving is what you do.” –Tim Keller**

Simply put: gratitude is *incomplete* if it goes unexpressed.

We know this by experience, don’t we? Let me ask… How many of you are going to be responsible for cooking Thanksgiving dinner this week? Raise those hands high. Oh, God bless you. You are going to spend hours chopping and mixing and seasoning. You’re going to get up before the crack of dawn to get that bird in oven. You’re going to sweat in front of a hot stove and likely collapse at the end of the evening. And chances are the people who will sit around your table will likely feel grateful as they stuff their mouths full of turkey and potatoes. But it’s true, isn’t it, that if they are truly grateful, sometime during the meal you should hear the words, “Thank you.” In fact, let’s express some preemptive thanks to all our Thanksgiving cooks out there! *(Clap)* On Thursday, when you are the one stuffing your face with turkey remember… Gratitude is incomplete if it goes unexpressed.

And here’s the thing… Our gratitude to God is also incomplete if it goes unexpressed. I think that’s why there are so many reminders in the New Testament to “give thanks.”

To the church in Ephesus, Paul says:

**“Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” –Ephesians 5:19b-20**

To the church in Thessalonica, he declares:

**“…give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” -1 Thessalonians 5:18**

And to the Colossians, Paul writes:

**“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” –Colossians 3:17**

So, here in this season of Breakthrough, what we are here to do today is to give voice to our gratitude. To respond to God with thanksgiving for…

* What he has done
* What he is doing
* And what he will do!

Over the next 45 minutes, we’re going to join together through prayer, singing, and stories to give thanks to God for he is good. Let’s express our gratitude to him!