**“Stuffed” Week 3 – Stuffed with Thanksgiving**

**November 20-21, 2021**

Well, happy early Thanksgiving everyone! I especially want to wish you a Happy “Breaks-giving” as well. It’s going to be a great time. We’ve already got started on the right foot because we’re all here at church in our comfy pajamas!

We are continuing our series called STUFFED and we are focusing on a passage of Scripture from the New Testament in the book of Galatians. This passage is commonly known as “The Fruit of the Spirit.” As we’ve talked about the last two weeks, the writer, Paul, is not talking about literal fruit, but instead, he is referring to the fruit of our life (or the actions and behavior of our life).

Let’s look at this verse together again…Galatians 5:22-23: *“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience,* *kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against* *these things!”*

In this season of Thanksgiving, the focus is obviously on being thankful. It’s always a good thing to think about what we are thankful for and how we need to live a life of gratitude or thanksgiving. Have you ever had a situation happen where telling someone “thank you” simply wasn’t enough? You were MORE than thankful or MORE than joyful because of what they did for you.

**(Teacher’s Note: Tell a story where you were truly thankful for someone because of a godly action or deed)**

I believe the first fruit listed in this verse, joy, can go hand-in-hand very closely with the word “thankful.” A thankful person is usually a joyful person: they are content, thankful for what they have and don’t necessarily feel that they need more. Joy doesn’t mean happiness. In fact, in the original Greek language, the word “joy” here translates to mean “rejoicing because of God’s grace.”

In other words, if we are STUFFED with joy, we are STUFFED with a deep thankfulness for God; how much He loves us and what He has done for us through the life of Jesus. In fact, that’s what our THP (or Take Home Point) focuses on today!

**Be STUFFED with thanksgiving for what Jesus has done!**

Since that’s our THP for today, then we really need to look at this question: what did Jesus do that should make us so thankful? We can even take it a step further and ask that same question this way: what did Jesus do that should cause us to joyfully and thankfully devote our entire life to him?

I love the way that Colossians 2:6-7, a verse from the New Testament says it. Check this out: *“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”*

For those of us who are Christians, we all have a story of how God has changed our life. I would like to briefly share some of my own personal story with you.

**(Leaders Note: In 3-5 minutes, briefly share your journey in becoming a Christian.)**

One encounter with Jesus can change you forever. Now, that doesn’t mean that Jesus is like a magic trick where we just snap our fingers and say, “I’m a Christian now. Everything in life is easy.” In fact, it’s going to be difficult more times than not. There will be tough challenges. Many times, the right thing and the hardest thing are the same. However, it’s worth it!

**Being STUFFED with thanksgiving doesn’t mean we’re going to be happy all the time. It will be God’s joy in us despite whatever happens in life. A joyful person is a thankful person; a thankful person is a joyful person. In fact, you probably know someone like that; someone who seems to be content no matter how much or how little they have. It doesn’t matter if they’ve had a good day or a bad day…they still live a life of thanksgiving and joy to God because they know what He has done for them!**

In the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says this: *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* Students, it is God’s will for us to live a life of thanksgiving. Out of all the things He could ask us to do, this is what His will is for our life…GIVE THANKS! Give thanks to God for what He has done FOR you and IN you!

The most important message of Christianity is what Jesus Christ did for us. It’s good news…in fact, it’s the BEST news! The word “gospel” in the Bible literally means “good news” and here’s the gospel of Jesus Christ. God accepted us just the way we are…even though we are imperfect people. Instead of punishing us or killing us simply because we have sinned or couldn’t be like Him, He showed us grace. Since He loved us, He sent Jesus Christ to live a perfect life, a life we couldn’t live. Then, Jesus Christ offered himself **AS A SACRIFICE** so that he could take the punishment we deserved. Now when God looks at us, He doesn’t see imperfect, sinful, and unthankful people…HE SEES WHAT JESUS HAS DONE!

The message of Christianity isn’t just to obey God and be a good person so God will like me and accept me. It isn’t “Obey God…then I’ll be accepted.” It’s the opposite. The Gospel is “I’m accepted…therefore I obey.” I obey God because I am so thankful for what He has done for me and the joy that He brings to my life.

A life transformed by God is a life STUFFED with thanksgiving. When you recognize that Jesus died for you and loves you despite your weaknesses, it can change your life forever.

**(Teacher’s Note: Move into Gospel presentation. Finish the last paragraph of the script after you’re finished with that moment.)**

I want us to spend some time in our group discussions thinking about some basic, but pretty important questions: what am I thankful to God for? How does God bring joy to my life? Who is someone who has taught me about God that I am thankful for? What do I have to be thankful for during this Thanksgiving season? As your group discusses that, I want you to remember to be thankful, be joyful, and remember what Jesus has done for you. Let’s pray!