

More Than Thanks-Giving The book of Philemon

It's officially "Thanksgiving" week... even though some have already moved on to Christmas! Let us not forget what this week is supposed to be all about!

Thanksgiving is a time for thanks-giving, & this Wednesday all of us will have that opportunity, right here in this room, with this family & w/these friends!

It's been part of our tradition here at BRC, going back to 1981! It was at that service that Marilyn Zeigler, during a difficult time, stood up & shared!

Marilyn set the "thanks-giving" table, so that all of us all these years later, might still take the time, no matter our circumstances, to give thanks!

But Marilyn also took it a step further! She not only practiced "thanks-giving" well, she also used that opportunity to encourage people to action!

Here are a few examples of quotes from Marilyn, spoken just recently:

- *"That was a great sermon Pastor Dan... but we have to get the word out in our community about our church so more people can hear it!"*
- *"I am so thankful for my church... I love my church... You should come!!!"*
- *"Thank you for thinking of me... Thank you for the flower... Now you kids need to go out and invite your friends to youth group because we need more kids to experience how great our church is!"*

That was Marilyn, a "thanks giver", but also a "call to action encourager!"

If she was here today, I'm confident that she would tell us all to come on Wednesday night to share thanks & to challenge one another to action!

This is also what the Apostle Paul did in his pastoral letter to Philemon!

Paul was in prison in Rome & he writes a personal letter to a Christian brother named Philemon, but he intended it for an even greater audience.

It was addressed to both Philemon & to the church that met in his home!

It was a personal address, made for a public setting (much like what our Thanksgiving Eve service provides opportunity for)!

Paul publicly expresses gratitude & thanks to Philemon for all he is doing, & has done, to be a blessing to the saints out of his great love & faith in Christ!

Philemon 1:4-7 - *"I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of your faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints..."*

It gives Paul great joy, even in the midst of prison, to express thanks, personally & publicly, to a brother who has been a blessing to him & others!

This portion of the letter would fit so well at our Thanksgiving Eve service! But much like Marilyn, Paul doesn't stop there! **Philemon 1:8-16**

Paul is basically saying *"You know how you have been a blessing to me & to the brotherhood of saints that are meeting in your home... I want you to be the same kind of blessing to your servant who robbed you and ran away!"*

Paul's public expression of thanks gets followed by a public charge for Philemon to show the same love & faith towards Onesimus as he has shown to Paul!

Paul meant every word & expression of gratitude shown to Philemon, but he also wanted more from him because the gospel always takes us further!

Paul could have just said thanks & left it at that, but he knew that God had more in store for Philemon than just receiving gratitude! He wanted to use this occasion to spur him on to even greater works worthy of thanksgiving!

Opportunities to be a blessing, & to be the reason others might have for giving thanks, are all around us! May we never grow weary in doing good!

It was in Philemon's power to be another reason for Onesimus to give thanks! If Philemon would forgive Onesimus for what he had done, & receive him back as a brother, what another great reason for a celebration of thanks-giving!

Paul was willing to go to whatever extend necessary for Philemon to not only to be on the receiving end of "thanks-giving", but for him to engage in actions of thanks-living! **Philemon 1:17-21**

What an amazing example of how to live with gratitude & thanksgiving, & at the same time be used by God to spur others on toward faith & good works!

Marilyn lived this out so well! So can we by the grace of God! Let's honor her legacy, & be good ambassadors of God's Kingdom by being people of both "thanks-giving", & "thanks-living"! We can start by showing up on Wednesday night, sharing our thanks & encouraging those around us!

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