

THANKSGIVING AT ENCOUNTER

THE ELUSIVE INNER QUALITY OF CONTENTMENT

Pastor Daniel Hahn

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MESSAGE NOTES

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations. — Psalm 100:4 – 5

The constant hum of consumerism undermines the contentment that God wants us to feel.

- What occupies your attention?
- What are you telling yourself over and over?
- Is your default mentality contentment or wishing for something more than you have?

I have ... beheld Your power and Your glory. Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands. — Psalm 63:2 – 4

Then He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them ... — Matthew 26:27

After He said this, He took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then He broke it and began to eat. — Acts 27:35

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. —Viktor Frankl

Gratitude, for a follower of Jesus, is the Spirit-enabled ability to see God's many gifts to us, even though surrounded by undesirable people and circumstances, and then to give God thanks in the middle of it all.

... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. — Philippians 4:12

... you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household. — Deuteronomy 26:11

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. — Exodus 20:17

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. — Proverbs 14:30

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." — Hebrews 13:5

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. — Psalm 23:1

There is always the choice between resentment and gratitude ... Indeed, I can choose to dwell in the darkness in which I stand, point to those who are seemingly better off than I, lament about the many misfortunes that have plagued me in the past, and thereby wrap myself up in my resentment. But I don't have to do this. There is the option to look into the eyes of the one who came out to search for me and see therein that all I am and all I have is pure gift calling for gratitude. — Henri Nouwen

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Take some time to read back over the passages mentioned this past weekend at ENCOUNTER.
- Was there one take-away from our focus on contentment that stuck with you in a unique way?
- What are some of the circumstances of your life right now that tend to shut down your contentment?
- How does God make it possible to find contentment even in the middle of great trials?
- How does our culture make it even harder to stay focused on our many blessings?
- What was Paul's source of his contentment? Check out Philippians 4:12 – 13.
- What happened to Paul while he was in Philippi that provides an amazing backdrop for what Paul writes to that church?
- Why do you think the last of the 10 commandments is a clear directive never to be envious of what others have? How does envy quickly erode contentment?
- What sort of spiritual practices can help us develop contentment?
- What are some of the amazing blessings God has poured out on your life that may often get unnoticed?
- If you have kids or grandkids, what are some specific ways you've helped them develop the life-skill of contentment?
- How could you develop a greater capacity for gratitude going forward?