

Over the last couple of years I have been seeing this thing on social media where people try to post one thing they are grateful for, every day of the month on Facebook, or Instagram, or whatever. I think this is a very good idea. So during the rest of the month of November as we have our Stewardship series we are not going to talk about budget short falls, or how much money we need for this program, or that ministry or to keep the lights on. Instead we are going to spend some time talking about those ministries for which we are the most thankful, and then I am going to ask you to keep supporting those ministries through your tithes. I am going to ask you to give us the funds so we can expand or grow those ministries into the New Year; into 2020.

Our first stop in our series on gratitude is with our youth program.

**(play Debbie's video)**

Debbie, feels as though she has a calling for youth ministry, and I am grateful she does. I am pleased to see youth assisting up at the sound board, leading the Apostle's Creed and reading this morning's long passage of Scripture. The Youth serve as a reminder to me of God's great faithfulness and the way God provides for God's faithful people.

In this morning's passage David has instructed Asaph and his brethren to offer songs of thanksgiving to the Lord. This is the moment where king David is very pleased because God has allowed the Ark of the Covenant to come into the city of David; Jerusalem. Now, that may sound strange.. After all, didn't the Ark always live in Jerusalem? Wasn't the temple in Jerusalem and that's where the Ark was kept. Right?... well, not exactly.

Yes. The Ark of the Covenant did eventually end up in the temple in Jerusalem, but the Ark had quite a journey before coming to live in the temple in Jerusalem. Back before the Israelites conquered the city of Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was kept in the tabernacle, which was a tent the Israelites could roll up, take down, and carry with them whenever God told them to move. In 1Samuel 4 the Israelites had been fighting with the Philistines. In a very important battle the Israelites had been whipped by the Philistines. So they had the idea, "if we go get the ark and take it with us then God will come and fight for us." Sadly this idea flopped. We cannot make God do anything. We can only ask. The Philistines whipped the Israelites even worse, and horror of all horrors they took the Ark of the Covenant. This was a very bad thing for the Philistines. For seven months God poured God's anger and disappointment. The Philistines tried to put the ark at the foot of one their idols. God knocked their idol down and destroyed it. The Ark brought tumors on the Philistine people and leaders and infested their country with mice. Like the Egyptians, the Philistines were all too happy to see the Ark of the Covenant leave their lands (1Samuel). However, the Ark coming back into the Promised Land was still a tricky thing.

When the Ark came back to Israel it was received by the men of the town Beth-shemesh. Some of those men looked inside the Ark. For this offense God killed seventy men. So those who remained in Beth-shemesh sent the Ark to the home of Abin'adab and the men of Kir'iath-je'arim. They accepted the Ark and kept it safe for some twenty years. All of this happened during the reign of King Saul. Once Saul was killed by the Philistines God completed God's promise to make David King over Israel. David captured the city of Jerusalem and dedicated the city to be the capital of Israel. Then David said, "If it seems good to you, and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send abroad to our brethren who remain in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasture lands, that they may come together to us. Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we neglected it in the days of Saul." All of the assembly agreed to do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all of the people" (1Chronicles 13:2-4). However, even this transition did not go well. As they were bringing the Ark of the Covenant from the

home of Abin'adab and the men of Kir-iath-je'arim, "Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza; and he smote him because he put forth his hand to the ark and died there before the Lord. (1Chronicles 13:9-10). When David was finally able to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the City of Jerusalem without further incident they threw a party. However, two lessons were learned by all who came into contact with the Ark. #1 Just because they Ark could be picked up and moved it does not mean it should be moved. Just because we have freedom of religion in this country it does not mean we should put God where ever we want. We have to turn to God. We cannot make God turn to us. When we repent we are turning our lives around by turning back to God. God is not looking to leave us where we are. God is calling us home. #2 the Ark, and in a way, God had been violated when the Ark was taken from Shiloh by the Israelites to go into battle. God didn't tell them to move it. The Israelites wanted their Lord God of Armies to fight the Philistines for them, but that's not how God works. God works through us. God was to work through the armies of Israel to fight the Philistines. It was dumb to assume God would do all of the work for them. The Philistines tried to defame the Ark by placing it lower than their "g" gods. And yet through the Ark God made the gods of the Philistines fall before the Lord God Almighty. Throughout these passages God works through the Ark, and through the Israelites and through us.

How should we respond? We should respond with gratitude. Hear again the song sung by Asaph and his brethren about God's faithfulness in allowing the Ark of the Covenant to be brought into Jerusalem. (Read **1Chronicles 16:8-34**).

This is the way the Israelites showed their gratitude for all God had done for them. They offered God glory and honor. They bragged about what their God had done for them to others (v8). They reminded each other and all of their neighbors about how God had been faithful in the past, and who is their God (v14-27). The Israelites encouraged one another to continue to seek the strength and protection of the Lord in times of ease and in times of trouble (vv.11-12,28-35). They even encouraged each other to bring offerings to the Lord (v29). Israel showed gratitude through song, action, encouragement and generosity.

How should we show our gratitude for all God is doing through, and for us? Right now your tithe dollars make it possible for us to have a youth group. This year our youth program went to Christian music day at Carrowinds. When they visited Open Hands in Lexington they saw people who are in real need and had the opportunity be God's hands and feet serving food, eating and worshipping with them. At the Halloween Street Treat they created a Haunted House to go along with the church cake walk. Today you have seen our youth help out with the sound board. You have seen our youth lead the Apostle's Creed and read Scripture. These are the kinds of things our youth are doing today. This is a great first step, but our youth could be doing more. If you would consider increasing your tithe by just a few dollars a month the youth would be able to have a separate youth time on Sunday evening where they could enjoy a common meal – very similar to the common meal people ate in the early house churches. They would have more time to study and to explore God's Word for themselves. Their faith would be challenged to grow. Some of these youth will go on to be active and participating members in this church. How will we support them? How will we celebrate what God is doing through them today? How will we support the youth of our church in terms of what God wants to do through them for our community today and out in the world tomorrow? How will we show our gratitude for what God is doing?

In the Name of Jesus Christ,

Amen