



Pastor Hanke's Blog

November 22, 2018

Thanksgiving

Bible Reference: Luke 17:11-19

About Halloween time, I often look at the upcoming month of November as if I was standing on top of a bridge looking down at the water below, knowing once I dive in, it won't slow down. As an adult and pastor, I am never ready for Thanksgiving. Yet, I pray I am always ready for Thanksgiving. Yes, you read that correctly. Our culture as good at making Thanksgiving just a day, but when Jesus transforms you, thanksgiving is now a lifestyle.

Family has become one of the greatest blessings I will ever know. As kid, sharing my room with my brother and watching my siblings wreck my stuff was a burden. Yet, in some of my most trying moments they have been by my side. People wonder how Mindy and I raise so many kids. The truth is everyone pitches in. Audrey, my two-year-old, is actually on the way to becoming one of my greatest helpers. Right now it is cute when she quotes Mickey Mouse and says, "I got it," and super cute when she helps soap up Ellie. (I am not sure Ellie loves it though.) We are watching her helping heart develop and the heart of a servant come through. I also cannot express just how much my extended family has helped me. There are days when we have too many schedule conflicts and they step in to help make it work. Even though I'd like to believe I can do it on my own, the truth is I need them and I couldn't be more thankful for them.

My wife is by far the greatest blessing in my life. The Lord knows I cried out as a young boy for a wife and a family. Everyone who is married knows most of us are naïve to the kind of work involved in a marriage. Yet once you have been married to someone for a long time, you get to see the way God bonds you together. Mindy is my best friend, and I look forward to the minutes we get together. The world is sometimes blind to my faults, but not Mindy. She knows my greatest weaknesses and struggles, and yet she loves and forgives me every day. This was uncomfortable in the beginning, but it is a blessing today. It reminds me of a line of a song we often say to one another, "I will not take my love away!"

I am also very thankful for the church. Church is all I have ever known—from running through the halls of my grandpas churches as a boy, to spending hours serving as a

teenager, to working as a pastor today. Time and time again the church reminds me of the value of every single person. It is a place that can draw very different types of people together under the common denominator of connecting with their Creator and Redeemer. I can't be grateful enough for what the church has been for me in my life.

This week is a wonderful time to sit down and recount the things for which we have to be thankful. The devil is quick to convince us to slide past Thanksgiving as any ordinary day, or to believe that our worries are far greater than our blessings; neither of which are true. In our Thanksgiving Scripture reading, 10 guys with an incurable sickness were healed, but only one of them stopped to thank Jesus. Let this remind us to stop and thank Jesus for His grace, mercy, and peace, because no matter how crazy November gets, Jesus never stops giving to us. I pray you'll join me in thanking Him!

God's Peace,

Pastor Will