***“GRATITUDE’S ENEMY”***

***Grumbling & Murmuring***

Good morning! As you can see, I’m presenting this morning’s lesson from the church lectern as opposed to home. I felt compelled to so because this message is vitally needed and I feel so strongly about our subject this morning that I just can’t present it setting down.

The title of today’s sermon is, “***Gratitude’s Enemy, grumbling and murmuring.”*** I can think of nothing that needs our attention more at this time in our history. Not just in our society alone but in the church as well!

We must keep the biblical concept of gratitude alive and active! And not let grumbling and murmuring seep into our thoughts and actions!

If you haven’t seen our first lesson on gratitude, I encourage you to go to our web site and watch or read it. You can also see it on our site on Facebook. Just type in, “Cortland Church of Christ.”

This is the second of four lessons on gratitude. Our last sermon was on the basics of gratitude. We learned that Noah’s first act after stepping from the Ark was to build an alter to give thanks to God, thus showing his gratitude.

For the entire year of being locked in the Ark at close proximity with so many animals and his family, he never complained. He never grumbled about his circumstances. I wonder how we would have held up.

We will begin by stating our main point this morning;

***Grumbling and complaining undermine the grace of God and can poison the church and can even poison our hearts!***

Let our focus be on gratitude and not on the things we don’t have or always being concerned about having things go our way!

There is a movie series from the 1990’s that is about two men. We are going to give you a few clues to see if you can recognize which movies.

*Complaining, negativity, intolerance, uncompromising, griping, fussing, and one more that should give it away, grumpiness….*

Answer? – Grumpy Old Men & Grumpier Old Men.

Walter Matthau & Jack Lemmon get away with attitudes and behaviors done in a way to make us laugh. However, if we were to practice their words and actions in real life, we would be far from funny!

Because in real life no one wants to spend time with a complainer, a grumbler, a grumpy old man or woman, or even a grumpy young man or woman.

Studies have shown that few things are more detrimental to our health than a bad attitude. Because our attitudes begin with our mindset, if our perspective is stuck in the muck of negativity, our body, behaviors, mental, emotional, and even physical health will begin to take on this posture – a posture of negativity!

***The opposite of gratitude is ingratitude***

Webster defines ingratitude as, “the failure or refusal to acknowledge receipt of something good from another; the forgetfulness of, or poor return of kindness.” Have you ever had someone that you helped out or did something good for and they, rather than thank you act like you had to do it, or they deserved it, it was your job to do it so therefore no thanks necessary?

Ingratitude is the choice not to recognize good or kindness in our life or the life of others. It is the choice to take on the mindset and the spirit of the Grumpy Old Men. The Bible is full of stories originating from a heart of ingratitude!

All of us know the story of Cain killing his brother Able. Both brothers offered a sacrifice to God. Abel’s sacrifice was acceptable, Cain’s was not. Knowing Cain’s sacrifice was given from an ungrateful heart, God rejected his offering. Cain’s ungrateful spirit sparked a wave of brewing anger, which convinced Cain that the answer to his wounded pride was not a reflection of his ungrateful sacrifice but led to the murder of his brother.

David is another example. David lived a life that most only dream about. He lived a blessed life. The Lord gave him a kingdom, a successful career as king, a wife who loved him, all the provisions he would ever need and then some.

However, the moment his gaze shifted from goodness and mercies in his life and instead his heart followed his eyes to the nearby roof tops, David coveted what he didn’t have! And in his heart he became ungrateful. And his ungrateful heart led to sin. Adultery and manslaughter.

His life was scared by this sin. All because his focus shifted from the Lord’s grace in his life, forgetting all for which he had to be grateful!

**Ingratitude will cause us to slide down the slippery slope to a life of sin.**

Philosopher David Hume wrote, “Of all the crimes that human creatures are capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude.”

***Another put it this way. “Gratitude is a trait proven to be much more than an attitude, but the embodiment of expression, a value, and an emotional and spiritual connection.”***

It is a challenge to package gratitude into a simple definition or concept. Thus our four part series. However, ingratitude, gratitude’s opposite although easy to spot, can creep up on us in subtle ways and is often masked by other emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, making the spirit of ungratefulness a challenge to identify.

***It is a sin that can drive a costly price!***

Let us now take a look at Israel’s attitude soon after they left Egypt.

(Exodus 16) (in the interest of our time this morning, I will leave it to you to read the entire chapter). If you do take the time to read our scripture references, you will gain a better and deeper understanding of the lesson.

We learn from the text that after approximately 45 days of their travel from Egypt their resources were running low. Their hunger and exhaustion began to kick in. Their excitement from leaving their enemies and while learning how to be free, was beginning to be replaced by their hunger.

**We could say, “As their bellies began to rumble, their mouths began to grumble.**

Exodus 16:2 – “And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.”

(Read Exodus 16:3)

Just as we sometimes struggle with our needs, so too did Israel. We read that they were overcome by their fear of hunger. Israel’s focus shifted from the Lord’s provision to what Egypt may supply.

Their grumbling caused them to believe that Egypt could better care for them than God.

(Read Exodus 16:4-8)

So the Lord being gentil with these people fresh from captivity, heard their grumble and through His grace, provided for them. He sent quail from the sky and manna from the earth.

We read that Moses takes this moment to teach the people about their toxic attitude. To paraphrase What Moses said, “Hey, this attitude, this complaining amongst yourselves, this underlying murmuring is not against us (Aaron & myself), your words are against the Lord!. Is this who we are? Are we a people that would grumble against the Lord’s provisions?

Let’s not be quick to judge them. This attitude of grumbling was not and is not unique to those who fled from Egypt.

We read in the New Testament, the letter from (James chapter 1 verses 1-4) That James understood this quite well. When he surveyed his congregation he found that his body of believers were adopting different postures that could lead them into sin. James urged them as Moses did, to guard themselves. James tells his fellow Christ followers many of whom were also new to the faith, that even in the most significant trials, to remain strong with an attitude of Christ. Because if they don’t they will be overtaken with sin. (read James 1-12-15)

To break these few verses down so that we can more fully understand what is being said. Desires that tempt us to place faith in any other than the Lord, (for Israel, that was Egypt) have the potential to lead us away from the salvation of the Lord! And to be directed away from the Lord’s grace is to be led into darkness, (spiritual death).

Let’s come back to Israel in the desert; Please read (Numbers 11:1-15)

This was approximately 2 years after their first grumbling when the Lord provided manna and Quail. They were never without food although living far out in the desert. The Israelites accepting the food of the Lord graciously, and again they began to complain and grumble. Our text in Numbers says that the Lord burned with anger, and He demonstrated His anger by burning the camp’s outskirts.

**The Lord is not pleased with grumbling!**

Moses twice mentions that the people of the exodus were grumbling. I’m sure there was a lot more that Moses could have recorded, but he emphasized grumbling twice for a reason.

The Israelites thought they were justified in their grumbling, but Moses recognized that this would be a cancer that would end up destroying this new nation.

And Moses understood that grumbling had the potential to destroy God’s people in the future as well!

Why? Because Moses knows, as we read in James, that an attitude of ingratitude leads to sin that eventually pulls us so far away from the Lord that we no longer trust God. All of know some who have grumbled themselves right out of church after being filled with the attitude of ingratitude!

Therefore, what is grumbling? Why is complaining so detrimental to our faith?

To grumble and complain is to reject the grace of God!

Israel’s grumbling grew to be greater than their perceived needs. Their murmuring was a faithless act that displeased God and His provisions.

They were saying that God’s provisions were not enough. They chose to be ungrateful for God’s daily supply, and their grumbling grew to where they were saying that to return to slavery in Egypt would be better. **This was a rejection of God’s grace.**

*Grumbling takes the form of sin and leads to: discontent, fussiness, gossip, negativity, intolerance, impatience, uncompromising, and unyielding mindsets and behaviors*!

We all know this is true. We have seen it spring forth in others, and we may have seen it in our own lives as well.

*Grumbling has the power to sneak up and destroy the strongest of believers.*

Why do we find it so easy and self-gratifying to grumble?

In essence, grumbling gives us a pass to shift our focus from faith in God’s provision to the problems and concerns in our lives. This always leads to the eating away of our recognition of God’s grace in our lives.

Grumbling has the power to bring us to a place we should not want to be! A place of ingratitude for God’s grace.

To live without gratitude and choose to grumble is to live life backwards. Our lives under God’s grace will be eroded by ingratitude.

Remember that even the hardest rock can be eroded by the constant action of the waves. Never think that you are strong and above grumbling. Be always on guard.

**In bringing this lesson to a close;**

Each of us need to closely examine our thoughts, attitude, words and actions. ***Ask yourself. WHERE DO I GRUMBLE?***

1. Am I complaining a lot?
2. Do I look at my life and say: This is not enough.
3. Am I living in a state of I want, I wish, I had, I miss…?
4. Do I look at other’s lives longingly and wish I had their experience, possessions, house, job, family or friends?
5. Am I always looking to find fault in others?

These questions are designed to bring to our attention how grumbling and murmuring can sneak up on use without recognizing it. They express an attitude of ingratitude.

***A grumbling heart is the direct opposite of a grateful heart!***

Thankfully, grumbling does not have the final say. God’s grace surpasses the grumbling. God is gracious to forgive, and the answer to our ingratitude does not require a big push. You can begin to push the needle forward and start practicing gratitude right now!

Let us ask ourselves:

How can I move the needle forward in my life this week? Make a conscious effort to practice gratitude. It’s not hard at all. Just take that first step.

If you find trouble with your attitude, take it to the Lord in prayer.

If you feel stuck with a grumbling spirit or you find yourself leaning more towards ingratitude most days look to the beauty of the Gospel for your answer. The Gospel is a proclamation of God’s grace.

God through Jesus the Christ offers you a freedom based on grace. The good news? God freely offers His grace to you.

If you have already accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, PRAY OFTEN FOR AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE!

If you as yet haven’t given your life over to Him won’t you now consider doing so? Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, he who comes to me will be saved!”

Jesus is the way that leads to the truth that gives life everlasting.

Talk about something to have gratitude about, in both your darkest and brightest moments think on these things and you will discover the gratitude of God’s grace springing up from deep inside! You will discover a new you with an attitude of gratitude.

Thank you for your kind attention to this lesson!

In two weeks we will be covering “***Gratitude, What Unites Us”***