

Theme: Thanksgiving When You Already Have Everything

John 6:25-35 (EHV)

[The day after Jesus' miraculous feeding of the 5000] ²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled." ²⁷ Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." ²⁸ So they said to him, "What should we do to carry out the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent." ³⁰ Then they asked him, "So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?" ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³² Jesus said to them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven." ³³ For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴ "Sir," they said to him, "give us this bread all the time!" ³⁵ "I am the Bread of Life," Jesus told them. "The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."

I want you to picture yourself in front of the big Thanksgiving meal you are going to eat today: The turkey, the potatoes, the stuffing, all the side dishes, and let's not forget the pies! It's probably going to be a pretty big table full of food, right? Think of how good it smells, and how good it's going to taste! Now, imagine as your standing in front of this huge spread of food that you start to complain, "We really don't have anything to eat!" Sounds crazy, right? Who would say such a thing? Well, we would.

We have an example of it in our text for this Thanksgiving Day, but it really is an illustration of a problem that often plagues us as human beings, especially those who, like us, have been given so much. The problem is entitlement. We have been given so much and have so many incredible blessings and gifts in every area of our lives that we can begin to expect them, and even become resentful when we don't get what we are expecting. We can look at our closet so full of clothes that you can't wedge one more shirt in there and declare, "I just don't have anything to wear!" We can look at our fridge and freezer full of food and because it doesn't contain exactly what we want to eat right now proclaim, "There's nothing to eat in this house!" We can go out to our perfectly good, working vehicle and grumble, "Oh, I hate this old car!"

We have been so blessed with so much and are so used to having it all that we begin to expect it. We begin to think that we are "entitled" to all of it. When that "attitude of entitlement" sets in we become complacent and begin complaining when we don't have all the things we've had before, or don't get all the things we want in exactly the way we want them or are used to getting them. Perhaps the worst part about having this "attitude of entitlement" is that it can cause us to become completely "unthankful" and unwilling to give thanks to anyone for anything. Ironically, it can be hard for us human beings to be thankful when we already have everything!

Instead of that "attitude of entitlement" we pray that the Lord would work in our hearts an "attitude of gratitude" and thankfulness each day, and especially today as we set this day aside to give thanks to our God and Savior for all of His blessings and gracious works in our lives.

In our sermon text for today, we find a very unsatisfied and "entitled" crowd. They actually asked Jesus, **"So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?"** Um, what?! Are you kidding?! Didn't Jesus just miraculously feed more than 5000 of them the day before with just fives loaves of bread and two small fish (**John 6:1-15**)? Now they're demanding more miraculous signs? Didn't they know that this was the Savior

God had sent to save them from their sins, not just to feed their bellies and give them a bunch of magic tricks to entertain them? How about showing some gratitude and realizing who it is that is right there in front of you?!

In our text we see Jesus not only showing them the solution to their “attitude of entitlement,” but also redirecting their priorities.

- ✝ When the crowd demanded food, He pointed them to Spiritual food: the truths about Himself as the Savior from sin God had sent from heaven. **"Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval"** (John 6:27).
- ✝ When these Jewish listeners asked Jesus to prove Himself by giving them bread from heaven like the manna the children of Israel ate in the wilderness way back in the Old Testament, Jesus again turned their thoughts to spiritual food & the true bread of God: Himself. **"For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"** (John 6:33).
- ✝ When the people asked Jesus, **"Sir," they said to him, "give us this bread all the time!"** Jesus told them, **"I am the Bread of Life... The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty"** (v. 34-35). By having faith in Jesus they would never be hungry or thirsty again—at least not in things of spiritual and eternal significance.

Well, how about us? Do we see how many times we are a lot like the crowd in our text: Putting physical things and material needs and wants ahead of our spiritual needs? Do we find ourselves falling into an “entitlement mindset” with both the many material blessings God gives us, as well as the spiritual blessings He showers upon us? Do we always look to Him and view Him as our loving Savior and show our thanks and gratitude to Him for the many gifts He has already given to us—especially the gift of eternal life with Him in heaven which He gave us by giving up Himself on that cross?

Perhaps the problem is we aren't feeling too blessed this Thanksgiving. Maybe it's hard to see the gifts that God has given you. Maybe the pain of life has overwhelmed you to the point where right now you don't see—or can't see—how blessed you truly are.

Or maybe our problem is like so many people today: maybe we have been so blessed for so often, that even those blessings don't look all that good anymore.

How, then, can we overcome this “attitude of entitlement” and our apathy towards God's gifts? How can we have a true spirit of thanksgiving in a world full of un-thankful people that teaches us to always strive and compete for more “stuff” and “status”?

The answer is found where it is always found: In the One who is the Giver of all good gifts, Jesus! He can and will work in our hearts and minds a better recognition of and a better appreciation for His gifts. He can give us a heart like King David, who wrote in Psalm 103:

**Praise the LORD, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
 ³who forgives all your sins
 and heals all your diseases,
 ⁴who redeems your life from the pit
 and crowns you with love and compassion,
 ⁵who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
(Psalm 103:2-5 NIV)**

“Forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). May the Lord move our hearts to “not forget,” but to remember and recognize **“all His benefits:”**

- ✝ To recognize God’s blessing in all of their many forms and give thanks to Him even when it seems impossible to do so.
- ✝ To recognize the blessings we’ve come to take for granted (e.g., food on the table each day, running, water, heat, electricity, a vehicle that runs, etc.)
- ✝ To focus on what we have rather than on what we don’t have, and see if it doesn’t improve our attitude.
- ✝ To be thankful for some of the things we normally wouldn’t think of being thankful for:
 - Be thankful for the difficult times. God will use them to help us grow.
 - Be thankful for our limitations. God will use them as opportunities for our improvement.
 - Be thankful for our mistakes & failings. God will use them to teach us valuable lessons.

It’s easy to be thankful for the good things and to be thankful in the good times. But being thankful even for the setbacks? That is an attitude that only God and His Holy Spirit can work in us. Remember: God has promised to work all things—even the “bad” things—out for your good (**Romans 8:28**). As hard as it may be, be thankful for your difficulties, because God can and does turn them into your blessings.

As believers in Christ, when we look at our lives we can truly say we have been given everything—everything we truly need, physically, materially, and most important, spiritually. God has even blessed us way beyond just what we “need.” He’s given us more than we could even ask or desire. On this day of Thanks and always, may we see through new eyes each day the ways that God has blessed us and may we never take Jesus or those many blessings for granted. May we each remember with the Holy Spirit’s help see Jesus for who he really is: **“The Bread of Life” (v. 35)**. We have partaken of Him by faith and have had our everlasting hunger filled. May we now be truly thankful to our God and Savior who deserves our thanksgiving for *everything*! Amen.

We continue with our Sermon Hymn:

Sermon Hymn: 785 *We Praise You, O God*

LSB 785

- 1 We praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before You, we kneel and adore You;
We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.
- 2 We worship You, God of our fathers, we bless You;
Through trial and tempest our guide You have been.
When perils o’ertake us, You will not forsake us,
And with Your help, O Lord, our struggles we win.
- 3 With voices united our praises we offer
And gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.
With You, Lord, beside us, Your strong arm will guide us.
To You, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!

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