

First Presbyterian Church of Blackwood
21 E. Church Street
Blackwood, NJ 08012
Sermon Notes (Thanksgiving Eve Service ~ November 20rd, 2016)
Rev. Mouris Yousef, Pastor

“Hidden from the Wise, Revealed to Children!”

Micah 6:6-8; Mathew 11:25-30

I wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving, my friends. Glad to see you all in the Lord’s House this Thanksgiving Eve and to worship the Lord with Pastor Lewis and his congregation. What a blessing!

The Scripture passage we will be looking at tonight is a very special one. It helps us to give thanks to God for things the world can neither give nor take away from us. The more I think about Thanksgiving, the more I feel that our understanding is so narrow. Indeed, we are to give thanks to God for His abundance in our lives. We are to give God thanks for food, shelter, harvest, health, family, and so many other things. But the Scripture also exhorts us to give thanks to God for other Spiritual blessings; and this will be the focus of my meditation tonight.

In Matthew chapter 11, we are told that Jesus was filled with joy, praise, and thanksgiving as He contemplated God’s Spiritual gifts to us. As we look together at that passage from Matthew 11, please allow me to underscore two brief observations:

First: Jesus Praises God the Father for His Calling

In Matthew 11:25 Jesus says, “At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent (the learned) and have revealed them to infants (to little children).” Jesus gives thanks to God for calling the least and make them His very own.

Corinth was a vast immoral seaport town, but right there, God planted a church and gathered a people to Himself. Whom did God choose as founder members of this congregation? Let’s read what Paul said to these Corinthian Christians in his first letter to them. Right at the beginning, in chapter 1:26-31 we read:

“**26** Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28** God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, **29** so that no one may boast before him. **30** It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. **31** Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

My friends, the Lord chose fishermen to become his disciples. He did not choose the philosophers of Greece or the poets of Rome. God in a singular exercise of grace had revealed to these fishermen understanding who was Jesus of Nazareth. All the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees,

and Teachers of the Law, had the same Old Testament books, but it was Peter, the simple fisherman, who declared in Matthew 16:16, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” This understanding, this revelation was a gift of God.

Certainly I long for you to come here week by week for the light of the Scriptures; you need to come, but a blind man needs more than light. He needs sight and that is a gift of God. I encourage you today to give thanks to God for revealing the love of Jesus to you and your need for a Savior. These things are hidden from the wise, but revealed to children.

Second: Jesus Rejoiced in God’s Good Pleasure

“Yes, Father,” Jesus says in Matthew 11:26, “for such was your gracious will ~ for this is what you were pleased to do.” Jesus was a joyful man. He didn’t grumble because God had not chosen the Roman Emperor, and King Herod, and the Chief Priests to be his disciples, but rather these childish men who quarreled with one another as to who would be the greatest in God’s kingdom. Jesus was totally content. He basically said, “Even so Father; for the choice you made was good in your sight and so it is good in my sight too.”

My friends, we’ve made decisions based on what seemed good to us and we’ve made some terrible mistakes. We chose the wrong university, the wrong subjects to study, the wrong car, the wrong financial decision, etc. It had seemed good in our sight but it turned out to be really bad! None of us have been all that clever.

But if something is good in God’s sight then He’s not a God who makes mistakes; too wise to be mistaken, too good to be unkind. Our highest joy is learning to bow down before the will of God. If it pleases God then it pleases us. This is the road to contentment, peace, and joy. The sovereignty of the Almighty God, His good pleasure, should be an encouragement to thanksgiving. “Yes, Father,” Jesus said, “for this was your good pleasure.”

Let me conclude by a story from the Talmud, a Jewish huge collection of doctrines and laws. The story is told about about a wise and pious Rabbi named Akiba. He had taken a trip to a strange country where mystery still dwelt. With him, he took his three possessions – a donkey, a rooster, and a lamp. When he stopped at a village for lodging, the people drove him out and he was forced to spend the night in the forest.

Being the holy and pious man he was, he took his pains with ease and said, “All that God does is done well.” So he found a tree under which to sleep, lit his lamp and prepared to study the Torah before retiring. But a fierce wind blow out the light, forcing him to go to sleep early. Later that night, wild animals came through and chased away his rooster. Still later, thieves took his donkey. But, in each case, Rabbi Akiba said, “All that God does is done well.”

The next morning he went back to the village. There he discovered that soldiers had come and killed everyone in the village. Had he permitted to stay there, he too would have died. He learned also that the soldiers had traveled through the same part of the forest where he had slept. Had they seen the light of his lamp or heard the rooster crow or the donkey bray, again, he would have been killed. Thinking on all of these things, he replied as he always did: “All that God does is done well.” Thank you Lord for your call. Thank you Lord for your good pleasure; things that are hidden from the wise and learned, but graciously revealed to your children. Amen!