

Cultivate Gratitude July 1, 2020

Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other.
None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.
Colossians 3:15-16

Paul says in another letter “in all things give thanks.” However, we shouldn’t think that he means we should give thanks for evil. This would be a wrong-headed conclusion to his abundant expression of gratitude for all things God gives us. When we look at the context in which his exuberant expression of gratitude arises, in Colossians, it is about the gifts and graces God provides the church. One of those rich graces is other Christians. His desire for all his churches is that they love one another with such boldness, that a natural expression of gratitude arises because their presence in the joint life of the church. Paul is concerned, always, that a feeling of unity, and the advancement of a common purpose be embraced within the church. An equal submission to each other, in the spirit of love, is required to withstand the forces of division, and the consequences this division will create in the church.

Gratitude is such a difficult expression to define. It is mainly used to explain the forces inside a person toward God. Worship is, and always has been, hands and eyes lifted to the sky, in order to say, “Thank you.” Worship is gratitude. It is our singular expression of worship in order to let God know that we appreciate the love, gifts, purpose and peace that come from his wisdom and heart. It is our lifting up of the love in us for the gifts we have been given. When my child was born, my thought and my desire was to give thanks to God for this unworthy gift. In the same way a friend of mine, who is not a believer in God, told me that when his child was born, he wished that he believed, so he could say “Thank you.” So, gratitude is mostly associated with an expression of receiving something you feel so unworthy to be given, and so honored to be its recipient.

Paul, uses this most sacred word to tell his congregation to be grateful for one another. He wants them to look at others in the church with the similar gaze of a wide-eyed worshiper, who is reaching to the sky to express feelings of love to God. To be grateful for one another, is to recognize that they are special gifts in your life. Even when they drive you crazy, they help carve a sculptured personality that is learning to live in the presence of God. When that is accepted, as a necessary piece of spiritual development, we will have lived out the purpose of God and Paul. In this acceptance, is the heart of growing in the Spirit, who has taken all the trials of life and turned them into a word that we cannot live without-----hope. Hope and gratitude cannot exist without each other. For when we say thank you, we are saying at the same time that I have power to persist until the end.

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle,” says, *Albert Einstein*. Another way to say this is “There are only two ways to live your life. One is to give thanks for all the gifts that have made you, you. The other is to suggest that life is life, and has no special gifts.” One leads to hope and gratitude. The other leads to a loss of engagement with others, and most importantly with God. It is most important during this time of isolation to embrace the former. Give thanks, be grateful for what you have now, instead of thinking that all the good and bad of the past is just part of life. It is more than that. It is the good soil that we were grown in, and people are part of that good soil.