

ALWAYS THANKFUL?

The first thing I do every Monday morning after I get up is take the garbage out to the curb for pickup. Most of my neighbours will do this on Sunday nights instead. I have walked my dog enough on Monday mornings to see garbage bags that have been opened by racoons or recycling bins overturned by these nocturnal visitors to realize I would rather wait until the morning of to put my items out.

During the week I store my garbage in a shed underneath our car port. On Monday I noticed that the door to my shed was wide open. When I went outside, I found both of my garbage bags had been ripped wide open by a racoon and found a huge mess needing to be cleaned up. There I was at 6:15 a.m. picking up two bags worth of garbage from my driveway. As I was doing this, I thought to myself what an awful way this was to start off my week.

It was very unpleasant to have to pick up uneaten oatmeal, eggshells, and other items of rotten garbage with my bare hands. Fifteen minutes later I finally got everything cleaned up and the bags out to the curb. When I got to the curb, I noticed every one of my neighbours who put bags out the night before did not have their garbage opened by a racoon. It was my luck, or lack of, that a racoon somehow got my shed door open and began exploring through my garbage. It would have been so much easier if this critter had gone for a stroll down the road instead of stopping at my shed. It did not happen that way and as a result I had a messy start to my Monday.

After I got back inside my house I wondered if it was going to be one of those days or weeks. You know what I mean. Sometimes a bad start to a week makes us wonder if it is a sign of how the rest of the week will be for us. I was beginning to wonder if this would indeed be the case when a few other things did not go well on Monday morning. A few hours later I began to realize as unpleasant as it was to have to pick up all that garbage, the experience was a reminder of some of the things I can be thankful for. For instance:

- Thinking about the items in the garbage I had to pick up reminded me how blessed I am to have food on my table each day.
- Having to use two new garbage bags reminded me how thankful I am that I can afford necessary items like this.

- Putting the bags of garbage at the curbside reminded me how thankful I am to live in a country that offers these services to us.
- Thinking about the great neighbours I have made me thankful that I was the only one inconvenienced that morning by the racoon's prowling.
- Remembering my walk back up the driveway reminded me how blessed I am to have the home I do.

Taking this moment to reflect upon all I had to be thankful about despite this unpleasant start to my week changed my mood entirely toward the day and week ahead. It allowed me to start off this week of Thanksgiving in a more appropriate way by being reminded of some of the things I can be thankful about.

Learning to be always thankful in every situation is something the Bible encourages us to do. This is something the apostle Paul writes about when it comes to how Christians should live. In **Colossians 3** Paul reminds believers we should be tender hearted, merciful, kind, humble, gentle, and patient. He also reminds us to be forgiving and loving. He wraps this section of advice up by saying this:

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

Paul encourages Christians to allow **peace to rule in their hearts**. He points out one of the ways we can do this is to always be thankful in every situation. This is really what helped me be able to restore peace in my heart on Monday morning. At first my heart was ruled by frustration having to pick up all that garbage. Then my heart was ruled by dread and worry that it was a sign the rest of the week might be filled with similar frustrations.

Once I began to look back upon that early morning incident and to consider all the things, I still had to be thankful about, it helped my heart to once again be filled with peace. I was glad for this change in my heart all because I found something to be thankful about. It not only provided me with the inspiration for this week's message but allowed me to approach the rest of my busy Monday in a better state of mind.

If I can find something to be thankful about after picking up rotting garbage, I think we can all take this approach with some of the setbacks we encounter through the course of a day. By so doing, we will replace any negative feelings that may be trying to fill our hearts and replace them once again with a peace that comes from us knowing and loving Christ.

It is the week of Thanksgiving. The start to my week was definitely a messy one. I pray the start to your week was less messy. No matter what the rest of the week holds in store for us, as long as we remember Paul's advice to "**always be thankful**" we will ensure our hearts will remain filled with peace. I may have some heartburn added to that peace after I have my fill of turkey and dressing on Sunday, but that is okay. My mom's Thanksgiving dinners are worth suffering with a little bit of heart burn. I hope each one of you has a blessed Thanksgiving this weekend.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean