

THE BIG IDEA: When we're thankful and prayerful, our lives will be full.

The Take-Off

Here's a one-minute recap of what we've learned in the first 2 weeks of our series in Ephesians called "ONE":

- everything we need comes from ONE
- that ONE is Jesus, which is why over 30 times Paul talks about us being "in Christ" or "with Christ" in the letter
- if everything we need comes from Jesus, then it's critical that we make sure that we're in Christ, which means that there's really only ONE choice to make: choose Jesus
- once we make that ONE choice correctly, we find ourselves blessed with all kinds of cool things - we're selected by the Father, set free by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit
- Having those blessings fills us with praise because we realize how little any of this is about us, and how much it's about God

Now, as we'll find out this morning, all of that sets us up for another amazing step in our walk with Jesus

And just as a backdrop to keep in mind while we work through our passage, let's take a peek over at John 10:10 to learn the one thing that our enemy wants to do to us and the one thing our Savior wants to do for us

Our enemy wants to do one thing to us: kill us

I know it says steal, kill and destroy and if you got out of grade school you know that's 3 things, but they all work together to accomplish one goal: take you and me out

Jesus has a goal, too, and if the enemy's one goal is death, then it stands to reason that Jesus' one goal would be life, but not just any kind of life.

Jesus came to give us life to the full.

That's an interesting phrase - "to the full" - and it literally carries the meaning of "more"

Not just a remarkable life, but MORE remarkable, MORE amazing

It is uncontainable, and the moment we try to contain the kingdom of Jesus is the moment we miss out on that MORE part, the part that is so much more that we could never take glory for it

It is a life that is beyond us and yet offered to us

The reason that I bring this verse up is because in the last half of Ephesians 1, Paul is writing to his readers about that kind of full life, and he gives us two specific ingredients that both need to be present in our lives in order to live that full life that Jesus spoke about

If we only have one or the other, we'll find ourselves living lives that are only half-full, and that's far short of the MORE life that Jesus has in mind for us

So, here are the 2 ingredients we need to live a life to the full...

1. We've got to be thankful

- a. If we were asked, "Are you thankful?" most of us would probably say yes
- b. But are we thankful for the same reasons that Paul was thankful?
- c. He said "for this reason I have not stopped giving thanks for you?" (vv. 15-16)
- d. For what reason? All the things we learned last week in the preceding verses:
 - they'd been selected by God, set free by the Son and sealed by the Spirit
 - we're good at being thankful for stuff, but Paul was thankful for the salvation of people
 - Are we?
 - I don't necessarily mean we have to jump around and go nuts when someone gives their life to Jesus, but if the angels are rejoicing in heaven, shouldn't we have some kind of reaction? Paul gave thanks for the way God saved souls.
- e. And there's one more convicting truth in this simple statement by Paul: he never stopped giving thanks for the people who made up the church
- f. That's probably not how most of us roll, is it?
- g. I mean, we may give thanks to God because certain people couldn't make it to church, right??!
- h. Can you and I say, like Paul, that we have never stopped giving thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ?
- i. So Paul was thankful for at least 2 things:

- One, the saving power of God, and
 - Two, the saved people of God
- j. My guess is that if we could just practice giving God thanks about those 2 things, our experience in church would probably change dramatically for the better
- k. But being thankful is only one of the ingredients. Let's look at the second one.

2. We've got to be prayerful

- a. It's never enough to just be thankful
- b. In fact, all of us have been, or know people who are, thankful for blessings without also being mindful of who gave those blessings to begin with
- c. If we go all the way back to Genesis 1:28, God blessed us at the beginning and even when we sinned through Adam, we still live with the benefits of those blessings
- d. Evil people still love, still prosper
- e. We're blessed even without the realization of the blesser
- f. But that's not a full life. That's a half-full life.
- g. Paul was more than just thankful, he was also prayerful (v. 16)
- h. What was he prayerful about? Well, really it was only 1 thing which became 3 things in order to see the 1 thing better. Confused?
- i. Just remember the Kimmer closet, right? Sometimes 1 thing has a lot packed into it, and that's especially true when the one thing is one person named Jesus
- j. So Paul prayed in verse 17 that they would know Jesus better, and then he prayed about 3 specific things that would help them know Jesus better.
- k. He prayed that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened so they would see three things:
 - One, that they would see the hope of Jesus
 - Two, that they would see the riches of Jesus
 - Three, that they would see the power of Jesus
- l. If we're not careful, we'll check out right now, because all of us have hoped for things and been disappointed, sometimes bitterly
- m. But the reason for that is because we typically hope in things that are not secure or reliable
- n. We hope we'll pass the test. We hope she'll love us back. We hoped that the Panthers would beat the 49ers.
- o. But the truth is that none of those things are reliable - all it takes is one bad test, one bad date, one bad game and those things aren't happening
- p. But our hope, our riches and our power in Jesus aren't like that
- q. They are grounded in the 100% iron-clad, without a doubt resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
- r. God doesn't have bad days, and we can hope in Him with confidence
- s. Let me show you that in Scripture and then we'll start landing the plane.
- t. Flip over to the right about a quarter of an inch and find the book of 1 Peter. We're going to read 1 Peter 1:3-7 and I think you'll be as amazed as I was at the similarities between what Paul wrote in Ephesians and what we'll read here.
 - we have a living hope because Jesus is alive (v. 3)
 - we have riches that can't fade because they are protected in heaven (v. 4)
 - we have power that shields us in the ups and downs of this life (v. 5)
 - this allows us to not only be thankful and prayerful in good times, but in the fires that refine us (vv. 6-7)
 - and all of that results in our faith being proven as "genuine" (v. 7)
- u. Swing back quickly to Ephesians 1 and remember what we learned last week: we are sealed - marked as authentic and genuine - by the Spirit
- v. And why would we appear authentic? Because we live with hope, riches and power even when we find ourselves in situations that appear hopeless, poor and powerless.
- w. When we live like that in all circumstances, people see in us faith that is real - that is MORE real!

The Landing

So here's the takeaway, the Big Idea for today: **when we're thankful and prayerful, our lives will be full.**
A lot of people live their lives half-full.

They're thankful but not prayerful (aware that it's God who blesses them) or they're prayerful but not thankful (and so their prayers are marked by complaining about people or demanding of God)

And that's a far cry from the MORE life - the life to the full - that Jesus desires for each of us in John 10:10

What's the end result of living lives that are thankful and prayerful?

Ephesians 1:23 - the church will be full - a word used 3 times by Paul in this letter to describe the fullness of Jesus in the church as his body

The world sees a church full of pride, anger, bigotry, and homophobes, but when we are thankful for the saving power of God and the saved people of God and pray on a regular basis that they would see the hope of Jesus, the riches of Jesus and the power of Jesus, the promise of this passage is that the world would see a church full of Jesus.

And that is our mission. Near a God who saves and near a people he saved in order to show a world he loves how much he wants to be near them, too.

It's a big mission, and it can't be achieved by people living lives half-full.

So be thankful, and be prayerful, and then your life will be full.