

Sermon – Thanksgiving service. November 2nd, 2008.

Proverbs 30:1-9; Rev. Bruce Stanley

III – Video – Lotto. Imagine winning \$30 million! How often have you said “When I win Lotto, I’m going to... It’s a dream isn’t it? But **WHY** do we dream about it? Maybe we’re just joking around. Maybe we really want to win it. But maybe it’s because we’re actually not satisfied with what we have.

PPT 1 – CONTENTMENT

Contentment really is one of the great challenges we face as Christians. The world encourages us to always want more, but God challenges us to say something very different: **“Give me my daily bread.”** Or in today’s terms: “God, **don’t** let me win the Lotto. Because I don’t need that much. I’m satisfied with what you’ve given me. Thank you God for what I have.” Could you say that to God?

Listen to verse 8 again:

PPT 2 – 8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.

Could we pray to *NOT* have more? To be thankful for what we have, and desire nothing more than our daily bread?

PPT 3 – III – John Wesley was a well known preacher in the 1700s. He started in ministry on an income of 30 pounds a year. He was able to live on 28 pounds. So he gave 2 pounds away that year. In his second year, his income doubled. But he still lived on the same amount. 28 pounds. So he gave away 32 pounds. Year 3 he earned 90 pounds. Still lived on 28. Gave away 62 pounds. Just kept what he needed. Neither poverty nor riches. He died aged 87. He only had a few coins to his name. He earned over 30,000 pounds in his life but only ever kept what he needed. His daily bread. And he was content with that. And he was thankful for that.

Being content with what we have can be difficult. But it starts by trusting God.

PPT 4– TRUST

If we can trust God... if we can believe that God is trustworthy... we can be content because we know he will look after us.

PPT 5 – III – I get on well with my dog. Unless I'm holding scissors. Why? Because I once tried to cut my dog's hair. I made him bleed. Accidentally of course! Now, anytime I go near him with scissors, he doesn't trust me. It's the one time he'll growl at me. The rest of the time he loves me. Mainly because I feed him. But he basically trusts me... except when I have scissors in my hand.

I wonder if we do that to God? Do we say: "God I trust you with everything... except...maybe not when it comes to my money. Maybe not my job. Maybe not with my relationships." Today, as we thank God as a church, we're saying to him: "We trust you completely."

We can say "Thank you God for our kids ministry" because we trust God with our kids ministry.

We can say "Thank you God for our mission work" because we trust God is directing us in mission.

We can say "Thank you God for our health" because we put our health in God's hands. We trust him.

And when we trust God, we can learn to be content with what he gives us because we know it's what we need. After Agur prays for neither poverty nor riches, he explains why:

PPT 6 - *9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD ?'*

Or I may become poor and steal, And so dishonour the name of my God.

In other words, God I don't want poverty or riches to get in the way of my trust in you. I don't want to be tempted into worshipping wealth. I don't want anything to get in the way of our relationship. Don't make me rich. Don't make me poor.

It's easy to say to God, "Please don't give me poverty". But can we **trust** God enough to say: "Please don't give me riches. Just give me what I need. I don't want to be tempted with the riches of this world." Can we say: "Please God, **don't** let me win the lottery because I don't want that sort of wealth to change me or my relationship with you.

Can we pray like Agur did?:

PPT 7 –

give me neither poverty nor riches, **but give me only my daily bread.**

If we can, then **and only then** can we be **truly** thankful. We can only be truly thankful if we can trust God and be content.

PPT 8 – THANKSGIVING

III – For example, imagine being at a restaurant, having a nice steak meal, and saying to the chef – thanks for that meal. It wasn't good enough. But thanks for that meal. The steak wasn't big enough. But thanks for that meal. It didn't make me satisfied. But thanks." We can't be truly thankful unless we're content. And we can't be truly content unless we trust.

So let me suggest one way to be truly thankful as Christians who trust God and are content with what he gives us. I call it the...

PPT 9 – “no more” challenge.

Many people today are on the quest for having more... and more and more. A better job with more pay. A bigger house with more rooms. A nicer car. Another TV. Nothing wrong with these things. Unless all we're doing in life is accumulating one thing after another after another. With no end in sight. And we're never content. But what if we sat down and worked out what we need. **And stopped there.** Like Wesley did. It doesn't mean we don't own things. It doesn't mean we can't buy nice things. But it means we actually say “no” to the idea of always wanting more. Rather than think “what can I afford”, think “What do I **need**? What am I **content** with?”

III – *Home loans*: Do you know that the majority of people who go to the bank for a home loan will ask the bank the maximum amount they can borrow and then they'll go and look for the biggest house they can buy with that loan. They don't find out what house they need and then ask for a loan. They borrow the maximum, then buy the biggest they can. It's all about getting the most.

Is that what **we** search for? The **most** we can have? Win the lotto. Buy the biggest house. Is that our dream?

Money is not bad. It's not wrong to have money. It's not wrong to spend money. And we certainly can't judge others for the way they spend it or don't spend it. But if we trust God, we must be able to find contentment in **Him**. Not in what we own. **Then** we can be truly thankful for what he's given us. And what has he given us? Freedom from our sin. A place in heaven. The death of his Son in our place on the cross. He paid the debt we couldn't pay. He rescued us from death by sacrificing his Son. Rather than always wanting more, and more, and more, we must be able to break free from the world's never ending pursuit of wealth and say "Thank you God for what you've given me. It's more than I need. It's more than I deserve. **It is enough for me.**"

Well, we've talked a lot about wealth and riches today. But let me finish with this: Contentment goes deeper than just money. Are you content with your job? Are you content with your family? Are you content being single? Content being married? Content having children? Content not having children? Are you content with your health? Are you content that you have poor health? Are you content with God?

Contentment is about everything in our life. From work to marriage, from health to children, from relationships to possessions. Perhaps it's easy to ask: "Are you content with how much money you have?" Perhaps it's **not** easy to ask: "Are you content with being sick? Are you content being single? Are you content with your job? Are you content with your relationships?"

Are we trusting God in a way that we can be content with our life, even when it's difficult?

Or do we sometimes find ourselves saying: "Thanks God, but it's not quite good enough."

Let me encourage you, especially if you struggle with difficult situations in your life, to ask God just to give you your daily bread and to trust that it will be enough. Let me encourage you to pray Agur's prayer with me now. Let's have a short time to reflect, and then we'll pray together.

PPT 10– Dear heavenly Father, Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Amen.