

Text: Ephesians 5:15-20 (CSB). Ministry plan sermon series. **August 12, 2018.**

Give thanks to God for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Why do you worship? Have you ever really thought about that question? I remember teaching a Bible 301 class one time with a guy in his 20s. He grew up going to church. Then like a lot of young adults, stopping going when he was a teenager. In the lesson on worship, we talked about positive, fun, exciting reasons to come to worship: to hear God's Word, to encourage fellow believers and best of all, to receive the good news of God's forgiveness, again and again and again and again. He said, "I was always just told to go to church. No one ever gave me a good reason why. Now I'm excited to go to worship." After this discussion, he started coming to worship very regularly.

This part of God's Word ends our special sermon series where we began, with positive reasons to grow in our faith, positive reasons to worship God, in a group, with other Christians. There's so many reasons here I won't list them all. Besides that would ruin the suspense and you might stop listening. So listen for the reasons why we worship, positive reasons, reasons that want to make us keep coming back, every week!

For one, worship is part of our public walk with Jesus. We need to pay careful attention to how we walk. People are paying attention. Your neighbors see your car leave the driveway on Sunday morning and know you are weird to get up and go the one day you can sleep in. People at work are watching you, to see if you walk different, talk different, live different and if that different is better. And just to say it, "There is a serious hunt for hypocrisy going on." People are hunting for the slightest hint of hypocrisy in your life. If you do the same things as people who don't worship, use the same four-letter words, are in a bad mood, fly off the handle at coworkers the same as everyone else, then why bother going to worship? Worse yet, the hunter has found a target and has every suspicion confirmed.

We need to make the most of the time, because the days are evil. This is another reason to worship, to go to church, our time on earth is short. We need to grow in faith at every opportunity. We need to walk a Christian walk, not so that people will glorify us, but so that people will glorify God. The time is short. The days are evil. That means it's so, so easy to fall into evil ways and follow along with evil ways. We could make a long list and we aren't here to rail on all the bad sins out there that prove the days are evil. But we need to be aware. The gift of God's Word is under constant attack. Maybe people used to believe that, but not anymore! God's precious gift of marriage is under attack. That's what marriage used to be, but not anymore. Worship with other Christians is under attack. People used to go to church, but I have my faith. I don't have to go to church, not anymore! Now, we can complain about the evil days or we can see them for the opportunity they are. We can thank God for the opportunities these evil days present! You go to church? Every Sunday? Yeah, it's great to hear God's Word. It's wonderful to hear every week, "God loves me and forgives me!" It's just so cool to stand with other people and say out loud, together we believe in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. What opportunities these days present to make the most of the time!

We want to worship to know God's will. Maybe it's good to review the reasons a little. We worship to make a public confession. We worship because the time is urgent and the days are evil. We worship to know God's will. Did you catch this in God's Word? It's foolish not to know what God's will is. It's foolish to walk around not knowing what God wants. Well, what does God want? How can we know? Ok.

Honestly, God hasn't told you whether he wants you to buy a blue car or a new truck, or whether it's better to walk to work. God hasn't preordained your life to have chicken for lunch and a salad for supper. But here's what God has made known. Here's what God's will clearly is. 1. That the good news that Jesus lived, died and rose is preached. Sound like what we do in worship? 2. That all people believe in Jesus. Sound like a goal of our worship? 3. That believers live lives according to God's will. Sound like the instruction you receive when you are here in worship? What God wants is done in worship. God's will is carried out as we worship. We have carefully crafted our worship to match God's will. We have used words and songs that are taken from God's Word and have stood the test of the centuries to proclaim the good news, to give and grow faith in Jesus and to give strength and guidance for believers to live according to God's will. Don't be foolish. Put the pieces of God's will together. Understand what God's will is. Worship helps you do that, week after week after week and in a new way, every week. The Word of God that reveals God's will is the same word that fills us with the Spirit. Have you noticed the contrasting pairs throughout these verses? The word but is a little word, but it stands out and the original language uses a strong but, that means, "on the contrary." Go back to verse 15. Don't walk as unwise people. On the contrary, as wise people. Verse 17. Don't be foolish. On the contrary, understand what the Lord's will is. Verse 19. Don't get drunk on wine. On the contrary, be filled with the Spirit. Can you see the sharp contrast between being drunk and being full of the Spirit? Being drunk is a short-term thing. It provides a very temporary high and then a crash. Getting drunk is an earthly thing, that focuses on the here and now. And also, being drunk, a sin in itself, leads to other sins, reckless actions. You've heard the totally stupid thing a person did and just as you are wondering, "How could someone do that?" The reporter says, "The person's Blood Alcohol content was three times the legal limit." Ah! Being drunk leads to a loss of self-control and instead being controlled by the alcohol. Being filled with the Spirit is just the opposite. Being filled with the Spirit is long-term, for all eternity in fact. Being filled with the Spirit has a heavenly goal, a filling you can enjoy forever. Being filled with the Spirit means the Spirit takes control of you, in a good way. When the Spirit takes control, good things happen. People filled with the Spirit are united in love. People filled with the Spirit show random acts of kindness and are reckless only in showing love to those who don't deserve it. And this filling with the Spirit happens through God's Word. God promises to fill us with the Spirit as we hear God's Word. God's Word fills us with the Spirit. And in worship we hear the Word from start to finish. The words at the start of the service, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," are taken directly from the Bible as a reminder of baptism. The closing words of the service, "The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The LORD look upon you with favor and give you peace." Those words are taken right the Bible and fill us with God's Spirit. We worship to be filled with the Spirit and people filled with the Spirit will let the Spirit overflow, speaking to one another in psalms, and hymns and spiritual song, singing and making music in your heart. Notice those words, "one another." Worship is to be done with other people. Worship is not just something between me and God. Worship is something to celebrate with one another. I pray you read your Bible and worship in your own home. One day at church I was singing a hymn. Figured I was all by myself. Then someone who was cleaning popped their head into my office and said, "Nice singing, pastor!" Embarrassed! And why? People filled with the Spirit love to sing and make music, in our hearts. Not just going through the motions in worship, but showing our emotions in worship, singing and hymning and musicing.

But how often and how easily that doesn't happen. Worship is the same old. I'll make it if it rains and the fishing trip falls through, or if there's no camping or a family birthday. It's just so busy over the summer. Well, fall is kind of busy too with the kids getting back to school. And winter, you never know about the weather and spring everything just gets busy again. I mean, every week, isn't that a little much? Once a month is good enough, isn't it? I knew it. We are just going to be shamed and guilted into coming to church.

Not at all. Did you notice what we do at worship. Right up front and center? We admit our sins and hear the best news of the week. The best news ever. "Your sins are forgiven! In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!" Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose. I am sure I am going to heaven. The LORD will bless you and keep you. God has had mercy upon us. Christ is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In the peace of forgiveness, we praise the Lord. I know I'm not saying these in order, but we hear them week after week after week. And we need to hear them week after week after week. It's easy to forget we are forgiven. It's easy to forget God loves us in spite of our sins. Would you be happy if your spouse told you once a week, "I love you"? Would you say once a month is enough? NO! We want to hear it again. We want to never forget. We want to remember.

That's the meaning of, "give thanks." To give thanks means to remember. And God tells us to give thanks. Always. For everything. Always. For everything. Always. For everything. Always. For everything. Not just when the surgery is successful, but when the surgery reveals some new problems. Those new problems will teach us to trust in God even more. Give thanks always, for everything. We give thanks not just when we are healthy, but also when we are sick. God is teaching us patience and leading us to look to his promises, "God gave us his Son, won't he give us everything else as well?" Give thanks always, for everything. Not just when we get a raise, but when we get a cut, or even lose our job. God is showing us he will still provide. Give thanks always, for everything. Not just when a friend you invite to worship actually comes, but when they say no, the first and second and tenth time. God is teaching you to be persistent and never give up. Give thanks always, for everything. This is why we worship, to give thanks always, for everything. Always. For everything.

What a list God has given us! What a slew of positive reasons to worship. Worship is a our public walk. Worship makes the most of the time in these evil days. Worship helps us understand what the Lord's will is. Worship fills us with the Spirit. Worship lets us speak to one another. Worship gives us opportunities to sing and make music, just like we will do in heaven. Worship shows us to give thanks, always, for everything. Worship every week. That's God's goal for you. Worship every week. Worship with thanks. Every week. Worship full of the Spirit. Every week. Worship. Every week. Amen.

Be filled with the Spirit and speak to one another with hymns and spiritual songs.