

Focusing In . . . Oct 08

I was given two opportunities to share this week; one in leading communion and the second in speaking at a Thanksgiving Seniors' luncheon. The two messages converged upon me in these words: "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you'" (1 Cor 11: 23,24)

On the very night that Jesus was betrayed – facing one of the darkest nights of his life with the road of suffering laid out before him – he gave thanks. He gave thanks! Jesus was not simply giving the token grace said over bread before a meal. He held in his hands the symbol of all that lay before him - the brokenness that would be required of him so that forgiveness could be realized– and he gave thanks to the One who was asking this very journey of him.

Living a life grounded in gratitude is so much more than feeling blessed with all the good things and beautiful people in our lives. To "give thanks in all circumstances" is rooted in two core beliefs. First and foremost is the reality that we are totally dependent creatures – dependent on God and on one another. We cannot be truly grateful if we think we can conquer life on our own. A thankful heart understands that all of life is a gracious gift, not deserved or earned, but freely bestowed. Any inkling of thought that we have this right to life snuffs out the flames of gratitude and leaves behind a smoldering bitterness that life is not fair. Jesus and the Father were one and Jesus lived rooted in dependency and trust in his Heavenly Father, no matter what lay before him.

The thankful heart of Jesus was also rooted in the knowledge that "in ALL things God works for the good of those who love him." (Romans 8:28) We may not see it today or tomorrow, but we will one day. In a world where sin abounds, where hate and greed rule many hearts causing innocent suffering and strife; in a world dependent upon its own means apart from God and outside his will and desire; in this very world, God is still working to bring about good. The road that led to the cross, also gave way to resurrection.

To live our lives grounded in gratitude is a choice, but it is not an option. It is a foundational core to living out of the Spirit of Christ and the identifying mark of Christian community. We cannot fully love if we are not grateful for all of life as gift. We cannot freely give without seeing our abundant blessings. We cannot humbly serve without thankfulness that we have one another to depend upon. We cannot worship, we cannot praise, we cannot sing, we cannot dance. We cannot be the people of God without being grounded in gratitude.

By grace alone,

Faye Reynolds

p.s. Next month I will be attaching an information letter regarding the ministries of Women in Focus. If you receive this monthly e-letter but are not part of Women in Focus, you are free to not open it.