PREACHING & TEACHING

Sermon on Thankfulness

Preaching notes on thankfulness for any Sunday, not only the November one. Three texts, the difference between gratitude and denial, and what to do with the verse that says give thanks in all circumstances when the circumstances are genuinely bad.

topic notes · 4 segments

Topic notes. For a full Thanksgiving framework with the service built around it, see the Thanksgiving sermon page.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Search interest in this subject peaks sharply in November. If you are publishing as an episode, release by the last week of October.
- Gratitude preached as an obligation produces performance. Everyone in the room can tell the difference between a congregation that is thankful and one that has been told to sound thankful.

01. Three texts, three costs

choose one

[the first one is harder than it looks]

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Give thanks in all circumstances. Note carefully: in all circumstances, not for all circumstances. One preposition, and an enormous amount depends on it.

Psalm 100. Short, corporate, and about a whole people rather than an individual mood. Good if your congregation has been fed a diet of private spirituality.

Luke 17:11-19. The ten healed and the one who came back. The richest option and the one the Thanksgiving page builds on in full.

02. In, not for

the distinction

[the difference between gratitude and denial]

Nobody is asked to be thankful that their marriage ended or that someone died. The instruction is to find something to give thanks for while inside the circumstance, which is a different and much more possible thing.

Preaching for rather than in turns gratitude into denial, and a congregation asked to be grateful for a bereavement will simply stop telling the truth in church.

03. The trap

avoid this

[the list]

The gratitude list as an application. It is the obvious ask and it works for the people who are already fine. For anyone in a hard year it reads as an instruction to catalogue what they still have, which is not comfort.

04. An angle worth taking

if you want it

[thanks as a public act]

In scripture thanks is almost always said out loud, to someone, often in front of others. It is a speech act rather than an inner state. That reframes the application entirely: not feel more grateful, but go and say it to the person, this week, out loud.

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