

Who Am I...Thankful!

John 6:1-13

November, 18, 2018

How many of you are familiar with "to do lists?"

How many of you are like me and keep lists in order to get things done?

How many of you are familiar with a "honey do" list?

There is one more list I want to ask you if you are familiar with and if you keep one.

How many of you have a "To Give Thanks" list?

I want to encourage you, between now and Thanksgiving Day, to start a "To Give Thanks" list. Write down everything and everyone you are thankful for in your life. Don't generalize, be specific. List all the people in your family. List all the food, running water, electricity, etc.

During this past week I asked volunteers and folks who came to Refresh and the food pantry to write down on this white board something or someone they are thankful for.

Let me read some of their responses...

Any body want to shout out something else to add to the "I am thankful for.. list?"

I want to add three things to the Who Am I...Thankful list today. I would imagine these three were not on your list...two of the three were not on mine.

The three "Who Am I thankful" are:

1. The Unpredicable.
2. The Insufficient.
3. The Leftovers. (This was the one I had on my list!)

These three "Who Am I...Thankful" come from our bible reading and more specifically from one of Jesus' disciples by the name of Philip.

Jesus was exhausted from all the demands on him so he decided to take a break. He crossed over the Sea of Galilee, which is like a large lake, and went up to a mountainside retreat. The gossip communication line connection was lit up. The people found out where he and his disciples were and over 5,000 people flocked to hear him and watch him perform miracles.

Jesus looked out at the crowd of over 5,000 people and felt compassion for them. He asked Philip where he could get enough food to feed such a crowd. If any of the disciples knew where to get food it would have been Philip because he was from Bethsaida, a town only about 9 miles away from where they were located. This is where we find our first of Who I Am thankful for..

UNPREDICTABLE!

We are told that the reason Jesus asked Philip where he could get enough food to feed such a crowd was ***"to stretch Philip's faith."***

Jesus was **stretching** Philip's faith in order to **strengthen** Philip's faith!

You and I have to realize that often life is unpredictable and even absurd. God will also allow us to be put into the unpredictables of life in order to stretch our faith which will in turn strengthen our faith.

When was the last time you gave thanks to God for the "unpredictables" in your life?

How many of us really like to be stretched in our faith? Most of us are quite comfortable without change, must less the unpredictables of life.

The Apostle Paul knew about the "unpredictables of life." He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked and put in prison for his faith in Jesus. I don't believe he had any of those on his "to do list." And yet, Paul gave these words of thanks to the Christians in Thessalonica:

"...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus..." (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV)

Give thanks for the "unpredictables?" Most of the unpredictables are not good unpredictables. How do we give thanks in all unpredictables? How do we give thanks in all those things or situations in life that stretch our faith?

Paul was not teaching that we give thanks to God **for** everything that happens to us. What Paul was teaching was that we are to give thanks **in** everything. Evil doesn't come from God, so we should not thank Him for evil. But when an unpredictable bad thing does show up in our life we can be thankful knowing that God is there with us.

When the unpredictables, the stretch our faith moments of life, happen we can learn to say, *"Thanks for the unpredictable Lord. Now help me to see how you are wanting to stretch me in my faith and love for you. How are you wanting me to grow from this unpredictable?"*

Instead of being skeptical or critical of the unpredictables of life, embrace them with thanks and begin to watch and learn what God is wanting you to see and do.

Put the "unpredictables" on your I am thankful for... list!

The second, Who Am I...thankful for is the **INSUFFICIENT!**

Philip could do the math and the numbers just were not adding up!

He calculated the size of the crowd and the cost of food and realized it would take up to 8 months of wages to feed the crowd. Philip's math was coming up with a number that was insufficient. There were insufficient funds in Philip's account to feed such a crowd.

When Jesus asked Philip and the disciples to feed the huge crowd, they knew what they had between them was insufficient. Andrew brought what he found, a boy's lunch of 5 pieces of bread and two fish, to Jesus. The disciples focused on what they didn't have. In the disciples' hands this was a drop in the bucket. When placed in the hands of Jesus the insufficient became sufficient!!!

How do you respond when you are faced with an "insufficient predicament?" You know there are "insufficient" funds in your account. All you seem to have to offer is a fish sandwich, a drop in the bucket.

The situations we face in life where we seem "insufficient" are simply opportunities for God. The disciples did what they could do, they gave Jesus what they had and put the people in groups as Jesus had asked them to do. Then in answer to Jesus' prayer of thanks God took the insufficient and made it sufficient.

When facing a seemingly "insufficient" moment in life, a seemingly impossible task where the numbers just don't add up; do what you can do, then pray and let God bring His sufficient.

What's your 5,000 challenge? What is your "insufficient?" You can do the math and try to crunch the numbers to work for you.

But when they still add up to "insufficient" do what you can, offer what "drop in the bucket" you may have, then pray and be faithful to what God is asking you to do.

His grace is sufficient for all our "needs!" (II Corinthians 12:9)

Be thankful for the "insufficient." Trust God's sufficient grace to provide for your needs and not your wants.

Put the "insufficient" on your Who Am I thankful for list.

The third Who Am I thankful for is **LEFTOVERS!!!**

They were definitely on my thankful list. I enjoy leftovers... especially the Thanksgiving leftovers! Anyone else enjoy the leftovers?

Can you imagine what Philip and the other disciples experienced that day when the unpredictable, the insufficient led to leftovers! To watch the food continue to multiply as they handed it out to the people. The baskets never went empty. God stretched their faith and provided more than enough. There were leftovers!!! I wonder who got the leftovers? Maybe they made up "to go" boxes for the people!

Nothing was wasted!

The people were a part of a great miracle that day...the miracle of learning to be content...to be thankful for what they were given. I don't think anyone that day asked if fish and bread was all they had to offer.

Again the Apostle Paul taught a valuable lesson on being content while in prison. He wrote how whether he had a lot or a little he had learned to be content. (Philippians 4:10-14) How could he be content? He learned to see life, the predictable and unpredictable, the insufficient and the sufficient from God's point of view. He was able to focus on what he was to do and not so much on what he thought he should have or was entitled to in life. He had his priorities straight: to be thankful to God in all situations...to trust God in all he needed and to celebrate life in Christ.

As a thankful person we learn to **relish** what we have, even if they are leftovers, than **resent** what we don't have or think we are entitled to have in life.

We become truly thankful when we realize that the **unpredictables** are ways God uses to stretch our faith and to grow us more into Christ-likeness.

We become truly thankful when we place our "**insufficient**" in the hands of God with prayers of thanks and discover his grace is sufficient for all our needs.

We become truly thankful when we gather the **leftovers** and give thanks for being a part of the life Jesus has called us to live.

During this time of the year, we call "Thanksgiving," we focus on all the blessings we have in life. We take time to give thanks to God for them.

But thanks should be in our daily life.

We need to make thanks and giving more than a seasonal thing.

Thanks and giving should be on our daily "to do" lists.

This attitude of gratitude for the unpredictable, the insufficient and leftovers in life changes our whole attitude towards life. We tend to become more positive, gracious, encouraging, loving and thankful.

Who Am I?

Thankful for the unpredictable...the insufficient and the leftovers!

What's on your "Who Am I thankful list?"

