**Thank You Notes—Thank You for Generous People**

**Philippians 4:10-23;**

**Ephesians 5:2; Romans 12:1-2**

**July 23, 2023**

**DAILY DEVOTION**

Find a rhythm in God’s word this week! Follow this 3 day plan on your own or with your group!

https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/34377-cs-lewis-one-rule-for-giving-generosity

**INSPIRATION**

O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem

By that sweet ornament which truth doth give.

The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem

For that sweet odor, which doth in it live.

The canker blooms have full as deep a dye

As the perfumed tincture of the roses,

Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly

When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:

But, for their virtue only is their show,

They live unwooed, and unrespected fade;

Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;

Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made:

And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,

When that shall vade, my verse distills your truth.

In his Sonnet 54, Shakespeare uses the beautiful scent of a rose to illustrate that we can produce beautiful things beyond our “lovely youth.” The canker blooms produce beautiful scents, but only for a season and then “die to themselves.” However, despite “their sweet deaths,” roses still produce the “sweetest odors made.”

**ICE BREAKER**

1. Science tells us our sense of smell may be the strongest sense to trigger memories. What smell brings you good memories of childhood? Do you have a favorite fragrance today (i.e., a specific perfume, blooming lilacs, a musty bookstore, a warm bakery, a favorite dinner)?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, with the rose being 10 and the canker bloom being 1, would you say your faith is more like a rose (active in ministry, generous, lasting) or the canker bloom (transitory, needing more depth)?

**DEEP DIVE**

**Read this out loud**

An excerpt from the message this week:

“We talked about this already—Paul could have seen his imprisonment as a setback for sharing the Gospel. It actually was an advantage. He had a captive audience every day to share Christ. His prison was his mission.

Paul wanted them to know that their gifts to the ministry really mattered. Can you imagine how thrilling it was for that church to know that their gifts were making a huge difference? I think that is good to know, right? I know we give our gifts to God, but we also want to know, “Is this making a difference?” “Is it advancing the Kingdom?”

That is why I love to give to StoneBridge. I see life change take place here all the time.”

**Read Philippians 4:10-23 and then answer the following questions:**

1. Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi while he was in prison, likely in Rome, for preaching the gospel. What is Paul’s “secret” to being content in any circumstance? Explain how Paul’s circumstances supported his message.
2. The church in Philippi was not a wealthy church, its gifts to Paul were sacrificial. What motivated this church to support Paul again and again? Explain the “ripple effects” these gifts had, in terms of spreading the gospel to different areas.
3. What does Paul mean by wanting the gifts he received from this church to be “credited to your account”?

**Read this out loud**

An excerpt from the message this week:

“A living sacrifice is a choice I make, all the time. The choice to be kind, to be patient, to be generous, to be humble, to be loving. My life as a worshiper of Jesus is one of sacrifice, which sometimes means giving to God and to his work.”

**Read Ephesians 5:2 and Romans 12:1-2 and then answer the following questions:**

1. What phrase in Philippians 4:18, used to describe sacrificial gifts, is also used in Ephesians 5:2 to describe Christ’s sacrifice? Why would Paul use such warm terms as “a fragrant offering” to describe Jesus’ sacrifice? Explain how Jesus’ ministry, like the rose in the poem above, produces the “sweetest odors made” despite his death.
2. Explain Paul’s point about worship in Roman’s 12:1-2. What is a “living sacrifice”?

**Additional Study**

If you have time during your Small Group or you want to study more about the message topic, read and consider the following passages:

* Romans 3:25-26
* Philippians 4:4
* Exodus 20:17

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Explain how being content can help you be more generous. Write down how each of the following items can help you be more content:

* Be thankful
* Do not compare myself and my things to others
* Serve consistently

1. Consider your prior giving to StoneBridge or another faithful ministry and write down some positive ripple effects it had on others through that ministry.

**PRAYER**

1. God our Father, we are thankful for Jesus. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were only for a time, to cover our sin, but Christ’s sacrifice is permanent and provides life. His sacrifice is truly a fragrant offering.
2. Help me to be a living sacrifice, to be more thankful and generous, and to spread the gospel with acts of service.

**SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY**

Establish a regular rhythm of serving together! Below are some service opportunities.

* BENSON – Local Mission Partner is ABIDE. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* MILLARD - Local Mission Partner is Heartland Hope. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* FREMONT - Local Mission Partner is LifeHouse. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* OMAHA - Local Mission Partner is Open Door Mission. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
* Or get to know your community! Seek out service opportunities in your area.