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## Growing into Thanksgiving

*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”. – I Thessalonians 5:16-18*

Dearest Friends and Family,

It’s hard to believe, but next year will mark my 4<sup>th</sup> year as Director of inCommon Community Development. What an amazing honor it’s been to serve in this role; I’ve learned and grown more than I can recount from the experience. In many ways, and as I always relay to my staff community, this has been the best job I’ve ever had and I love every day I get to go to “work” (mostly ☺). These past few months, however, things have felt a bit more rough. Due to a wide-variety of old and new pressures (witnessing friends return to poverty, organizational funding, staff transitions, etc.), I’m feeling more stressed than I have in some time. We’ve all been there – it’s just my turn to be there right now.

In the midst of all this, I can see God’s clear purpose: to press me deeper into a life of thanksgiving that endures despite circumstances. I’m learning it’s only from a place of thanksgiving that I can truly offer my life in gift to God and to others.

Over the past year I’ve been practicing prayers of thanksgiving during my commutes home (so as to reflect on the positives points of my day and hopefully, as a result, come home to my family with a positive disposition). I first noticed my “thanksgiving disability” during one of these commuting prayers as I caught myself

saying, “Father I’m grateful for today, *but* I would have been even more grateful if...” Essentially what I was saying was, “I’m grateful *but I’d be more grateful* if you did more of the things I wanted you to do the way I wanted them done today.” It was a startling revelation of my true heart and my distance from being a person living into thanksgiving.

This revelation propelled me to contemplate the difference between thanksgiving and happiness. Is thanksgiving only limited to the things that make us happy, or should it encompass everything that



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God does in our life – particularly when He doesn't answer prayers the way we want them answered (often because He has a bigger, better plan)? Passages such as Proverbs 3:5 (“Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding”) and Isaiah 55:9 (“As the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts”) seem to point to the latter.

In the midst of the struggle I'm learning true thanksgiving comes from the deep satisfaction of knowing, no matter what, God is with us and for us. Relative to this, everything else takes on a dull hue.

All this is easier said-than-done, but I am already beginning to see how simply changing my perspective on what true thanksgiving is re-positions my response to the circumstances of life. As I sit here today, almost all points of stress and crisis brought on by the past months remain. However, and maybe more than ever, I'm finding reason to be thankful in Jesus. Because He's already suffered through the worst storms of life on our behalf, He's the perfect companion to walk with us down life's bumpy path.

May we all find ourselves with thankful hearts in the perfect presence of Jesus this Thanksgiving.

Kingdom Come,



1. For the continued transformation in the people and neighborhoods we serve.
2. For additional “Companions” (those who serve as mentors/disciplers/friends in CommonLife relationships).
3. For our support needs: great thanks to those of you who have responded to our previous requests; currently we're still looking to recover approx **\$600+/month in new monthly commitments**.

PLEASE PRAY...

