

Include the Thank You!

Stephen Ambrose's book entitled, *Nothing Like It in the World, The Men Who Built The Transcontinental Railroad 183-1869*, tells of the incredible impact of the connection by rail of the east with the west. It was compared to another event four years earlier at Appomattox Courthouse where Lee surrendered and re-connected the north with the south. So, people were musing that what Appomattox started, the golden spike finished in May 1869. Dr. John Todd the minister who dedicated in prayer the golden spike event that marked "Done," said, "It was the greatest work ever completed." In 1883, a few years later, General William Tecumseh Sherman made his last annual report as head of the United States Army writing that it was, "the most important event of modern times."

With all the hard work, tenacity, and glamour of this endeavor, alas there were also some sad things that transpired during the building of the railroad. Some of the not so shining moments was when many of our Anglo citizens were unkind to the Chinese workers who helped build the railroad. Ambrose writes, "In the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkley, there are Chinese-English and English-Chinese phrase books from 1867. The English speakers learned how to say in Chinese: "Can you get me a good boy? He wants \$8.00 per month? He ought to be satisfied with 6.00. I think he is very stupid. Come at seven every morning. Go home at eight every night. Light the fire. Sweep the rooms. Warm the clothes. Wash the windows. Wash the floor. Sweep the stairs. Trim the lamps. I want to cut his wages." Two phrases that never appear in the English-Chinese book are, "How are you?" and "Thank you."

Does that touch your heart like it does mine? In completing the massive work of the transcontinental railroad, our employers were more than willing to learn orders of command, but left off the kind consideration of asking how one is doing and even sadder, some were not willing to learn the common place decency of learning to say, "Thank you!" Have you and I learned to say thank you? And if we have learned this beautiful expression, do we remember to say, "Thank you?"

The Bible says, *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (I Thessalonians 5:18).

The Thanksgiving season is a good reminder to each and every one of us to remember to be thankful. Let us remember to be thankful for:

(1) The Lord Himself

The Psalmist said, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:4). Again he said, *"LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!"* (Psalm 144:3). The author of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament took the words of Psalm 8:5 from the Old Testament and by the Holy Spirit's direction said, *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"* (Hebrews 2:9). We should give thanks to God who saw man in his helplessness and had mercy upon him and took upon Himself our sinfulness and took all our iniquities to the cross and there paid the full judgment so that we might be saved. Let us be thankful for His goodness! *"O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever"* (Psalm 107:1). When I contemplate the cross, I am inclined to lift my hearts and hands to *"...even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"* (I Thessalonians 1:10).

(2) To the Church

Let me encourage you to give thanks to God for a church home. It is here we receive admonition on how to live for the Lord who died for us. We learn to live and love our spouses and our children. It is a place where children learn to love God and their families. Church is the place where people pray for one another: *"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him"* (Acts 12:5). Church is a place where fellowship is received and brotherhood thrives: *"And*

when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them" (Acts 15:4). Church is a place where we get fed spiritually: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood " (Acts 20:28).

(3) To Your Friends

Paul said, *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"* (Philippians 1:3). Let this season find you grateful. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, "The prettiest flower that ever grew in the garden of appreciation is gratitude and when that flower of gratitude dies on the altar of a man's heart, that man is well nigh hopeless." Nothing can rescue you from a pessimistic and caustic attitude quicker than thankfulness. If someone gave you something of value and you didn't thank them, even if was years ago, go ahead and give them a call, an email, or a card or letter and just say thanks. By the way, this is the blessing of greeting cards. I wanted to say something special to my son, Jonathan and his wife, Lauren after the birth of their baby boy, Miles last week. I went into Redman's Hallmark in the Champion's Village Shopping Center and found the perfect card to send them. A lot of times we may feel we don't have the words. Well, this is where borrowing someone else's helps and sometimes they say it better than you or I could. More than once I have stood in the store aisle with tears filling my eyes because it is just what I wanted to say to someone special.

Take the dive, jump at an opportunity to tell someone you love, thank you. By the way, it is a great opportunity to say to someone who doesn't have warm feelings to you, thanks. God could use your magnanimous spirit to break the ice and re-kindle an old friendship. All it takes is a simple thanks. Let us not be like many of the unkind ones building the railroad, include "How are you doing?" and "Thank you" in your dictionary and frame of reference!

- Pastor Pope -

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