

# “My Words are Spirit and they are Life”

By Chris Ulrich

Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Remain standing, please, as Mike A. comes to lead us in a word of prayer.

**Mike:** Bow your heads. Dear Lord Jesus, we just praise Your name, Lord, God. We thank You for all our many blessings, Lord God. Lord, we just pray that you'd prepare our hearts, Lord God, to receive the message that You have for us, today, Lord God, that we can take it out to those around us that don't know Your truth, and let it shine all around that they may come to know You and Your name. Prepare and anoint Brother Chris, Lord God as he preaches Your message and help him say the things You'd have him to say, and put on his heart. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Amen. Thank you; you may be seated. Good to see everybody this morning, here, this weekend after Thanksgiving, here, and, as many of you know, our theme for this month has been giving thanks to the Lord, and our passage for the month:

**Ezra 3:11** *And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.*

We thank God for that. We thank God to know, in this day and age, and this has been one of those months where we've had five Sundays, so, I'm going to take a little time; I'm going to recap some of the messages. And, the very first week, our Associate General Pastor, Pastor Hubert Ulysse, was here, and he preached on a sermon about, “Last Words.” I mean, it was interesting, and was from the Book of Second Peter, chapter one. Much of it talks about Apostle Peter making our calling and election sure, among many other things. But, I think many of you—I've heard this rehearsed a lot—one statement he made was that “True faith sweats.” That comes from James, about faith without works is dead (James 2:20). We have to make an effort. We can't just—we're not going to just plop into Christianity we're not going to just float downstream and whatever way the world is going, we have to make an effort. The next week was Parrish Lee, he had talked, and he talked about being thankful. And, one of the strong points he made was that thankfulness is part of our praise, and he asked a challenging question. He asked, “Is it wrong to be unthankful?” He backed it up with Romans 1:21, and it is wrong to be unthankful. The third week, Jessie Rairdon, he talked about the Sacrifices of Thanksgiving, and one of the strong points he made was that God wants us to give thanks willingly and not grudgingly. Andy Giebler, he had the sermon this last week, and there was also several testimonies. And he recapped a lot of those testimonies and said, “Hearing those words—” and many of you were here last week, and he just stated that, “Hearing other people be thankful makes me be more thankful myself,” and I appreciate that. I know Andy and his wife are not here today, they're downstate with family, but, I have to say that is a reinforcement, when you get around people in fellowship, when you get around people who are true believers. It is uplifting, it is something that is strengthening, it is something that sustains us.

There's a couple of points this morning; this isn't going to be a long message, but I do have a couple of points:

- Man does not live by bread alone. That might sound a little ironic, coming right after Thanksgiving...
- A Spiritual thanksgiving

## 1st Point – Man Does Not Live By Bread Alone

Because Thanksgiving is over and hopefully everyone is well fed—I know most of us are—and definitely got time together with family and loved-ones. I know we had a great gathering at Grandwood, and many of you that spent time with your family and friends... I was over at the USO for a couple of hours after that, and then I was at—Amy had invited myself and Brent down to her family in Palatine; I appreciate that. I really had three Thanksgivings, so I definitely had my fair share. But, you know, this isn't about just eating. I know that I do look forward to this time of year. I know that I've got a lot of good childhood memories, and I've got a lot of good recent memories. But, I'm not here to talk about how much we ate, or who won the football games, or any of that. I think it's more appropriate after we have a physical thanksgiving that we talk about how man does not live by bread alone. The title of the message today is, "My Words are Spirit and they are Life" and it comes from the book of John. You don't have to turn to it, I'm just going to read it here, and these are the words of Christ:

**John 6:63** *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

This might seem like a little bit of an unusual passage to highlight, especially after Thanksgiving, but I want to reiterate that this isn't about being remorseful for having a great meal. But today's message is specifically about being thankful for the spiritual things we receive from God.

Now I want to pre-empt that thought with the understanding that when we're in a desperate physical condition, and I think we all can relate to this, all we can think about is putting food on the table, all we can think about is getting a healing touch, all we can think about is grieving the loss of a loved one. You want to see someone who is starving get angry? Tell them about how great the meal was that you just had that they weren't invited to. You want to see someone who is sick or injured get mad? Tell them how great everybody else is feeling, "I'm feeling great," and there's no real care, there's no real support. Weep with them that weep. You want to see someone's blood boil who just lost a loved one? Just tell them, "Oh, that's the cycle of life. That's the way things go in this life." But that's not the way it's supposed to be. I'm going to ask if you would turn with me, and this reiterates a little bit about that faith without works is dead. We have to do something. We have to make an effort.

**James 2:14-17** *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

Now, it's true, we can't feed the whole world. I mean, we're not going to be able to. I don't think anybody here is wealthy enough, and I know that even those who are the wealthiest people, there's just not enough. And, when we look at it from that standpoint, there is an imbalance. There is an imbalance in the world. I mean, it seems like there should be enough resources to go around, but there is injustice. We're going to get into that a little bit more. But I also want to read from the Book of Mark. These are the words of Christ, and I believe it doesn't let us off the hook, but it does put it in balance as far as what perspective we need to have when we deal with a lot of people who are homeless, or separate, or panhandling, or whatever else the case might be. And Christ simply says this:

**Mark 14:7** *For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.*

I wanted to go back to back with those verses so we have a balance and know how to handle many of those situations we'll come across even in this day and age. It's not like it's just all of the sudden something new, Christ said, "The poor you have with you always." That's not talking about something that's just back then, that's talking about something that's always going to be, in perpetuity. We live in an unjust world. We live in a world that hasn't ended up the way that God intended for it to be. But, I'm going to get into that a little bit later, about we know God, and we have an understanding, and I'll also share this: In one of the testimonies last week—I don't know if Damien is here—Damien and Maris had shared a testimony, and one of the points that Damien had mentioned was, everybody has a chance. So, if people want to think that God is unfair, the Bible says that the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). That's the chance we get. It might not seem like it's real fair to the world, but we're not looking at it from the standpoint of the world; we're looking at it from the standpoint of okay, we have something to look forward to in eternity. That's for sure. It's true that we can't always help or feed or console or heal everybody else that's down and out, but there are times we will have extra and can help.

**Deuteronomy 8:1-10** *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which He hath given thee.*

This is still applicable to today, even though it's Old Testament—and I know we know that, but I want to reinforce that. But, if you look at where it talks about where man does not live by bread alone, so, it's a matter of understanding that it's not just about eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, which Christ talks about in the New Testament (Luke 17:27). It's not all about the flesh, it's not all about the outward things, it's not all about the things of this life, but God's going to give us those things, but we have to have the order of those things right. If look at those things that we just read—I mean, I was getting hungry just looking at it. Wheat, barley, pomegranate trees, I have to say, is there anybody else here who eats pomegranates? Good. Have you ever looked inside a pomegranate, I mean, it's like, it's about as intricate of a fruit, I would say, as I have ever seen in my life. I mean, it takes time to peel it apart, and get all the seeds out of there. I'm not saying to start a study on pomegranates, but Alex and I were talking a couple of weeks ago about it, as I was tearing a pomegranate apart, "Yeah, these go good on oatmeal and cereal and yogurt, and things like that," and I said, "Let's look up how many times the word pomegranate appears in the Bible." It's twenty-five times! And then we were looking up other fruits, like oranges: None. Apples: a few. Pineapples: None. I mean, I'm not, again, this is not about

pomegranates, but, it's more about putting it in the perspective that we have to understand that it's not just all about the flesh. It's not just about the outward, and, again, this isn't about, "Oh, I feel remorseful about having a great Thanksgiving meal." That's not it at all. It is about priorities and it encapsulates the period of time of forty years of wandering in the wilderness, after the miraculous exodus from Egypt. One of the powerful lessons is that God will sustain us as much as the physical food we eat and that lesson is pertinent to us. And this passage doesn't mention anything about fasting. Now, fasting is important; I get it. I believe in it. But, if you look at the progression of the passage, you'll notice that the physical blessings begin because of the priority of putting God first. God says, "Put Me first." Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). So, it's not a matter of looking at it like, "Okay, I'm just going to try and get all these things first, and then I'm going to trust in God." Then we've got the cart before the horse.

## 2nd Point – Spiritual Thanksgiving

Like I said, I know we just finished Thanksgiving and hopefully had a good time. But the other working title for the message was, "A Clean Heart and a Right Spirit." And I know we did that song this morning, t I want to read:

***Psalms 51:10*** *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

I imagine that there's many of us who have read this verse hundreds, maybe thousands of times. There's some here that have read it only a few times, but, be that as it may, in the song—and I appreciate you doing it—and it is part of the lyrics. But a clean heart and a right spirit has nothing to do with eating turkey or eating pie or eating sweet potatoes. But a clean heart and a right spirit aren't physical manifestations, they are purely spiritual. Yes, we have a heart, but it's talking about that spiritual heart. There's Greg. I appreciate what you shared, and I appreciate you and Alma's efforts this week, because that was a great time. It really was. But these are spiritual things, a clean heart and a right spirit.

This is a little bit lengthy, but please listen up and take heed.

***John 6:48-63*** *I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

So, what kind of message is eating my flesh and drinking my blood and the flesh profits nothing, right after Thanksgiving? It doesn't sound very fun, it doesn't sound very appetizing. Like I said, the second point is about a spiritual thanksgiving. Think about what we just read for a minute and hopefully the emphasis is heavy on the spiritual blessings. This is our daily bread. And it has nothing to do with wolfing down turkey.

So what are some of the spiritual blessings we've received? I'm not asking if we got a new job, although that's a good thing. I'm not asking if we got a new car; that's a good thing, too. I'm not even asking if you just got married or had children and those are definitely good things. But have we received a peace of God that passes all understanding? (Philippians 4:7) A joy that is unspeakable and full of glory? Have we received an ability to forgive and be forgiven? Have we received the gift of being born again and being alive in Christ? Because that is the big difference, being born again and knowing God in this day and age, and whatever day and age, for that matter. But it is something that's going to separate—Paul talked about come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing (2 Corinthians 6:1). These words are spirit and they are life. And, while we're on that, I know it is a physical manifestation, but, when you think about the breath of life, and I know it's been mentioned before-- Parrish mentioned it just a couple of weeks ago, but, I got to thinking about that it is one of those things where, especially if you have emphysema, which I don't, but if you ever had struggles, if you ever had maybe where you were very congested...

I've got to share a very brief story here: I have an older brother that, you know, when we were growing up, he always treated me so well, like—anybody else here have older brothers? I'm sure they did as well. Yes, yes. So, this was right around the time that the movie 'Jaws' came out, mid-seventies, and I was just learning to swim, and, by that time, I'm really not wanting to go back in the water, so, when I did, when I did, he would always do the "Duh-duh. Duh-duh. Duh-duh-duh-duh-duh..." Then he would swim over, and he's bigger, and he's older, and he would dunk me under, and I would come up, "Waah! Waah!" And, it was like, he did that constantly. I mean, it was like, I was afraid to be around the guy. But, it was one of those things where it was like, I still hate to be underwater. I mean, even in this day and age, it's like, if I'm under water for more than ten or fifteen seconds—that's why I could never be a Navy diver—I'm up, and I'm like, (breathing hard). Greg, thank you. Thank you. One person for me to... You have older brothers? Oh, okay, I got you. Well, that's good. But, that breath of life. That's something that, it's a physical thing, but it's also a spiritual manifestation. I mean, you can't see breath, except for when it's cold, and that's just condensation, anyway. So, it's not really that, but it's something that, it's something to be thankful for. We have to look at, not just what are the physical blessings, but what are some of the spiritual blessings?

There's a TV commercial that came out recently for IBM; there's a guy, Bob Dylan, that he was a pretty popular musician for a long, long time. And the computer and Bob Dylan are having a conversation. He walks in with his guitar, and sits down, and the computer starts talking to him, and basically says, "I'm familiar with your songs and your lyrics, and I can read 800 million lines per second." And Bob says, "Oh really?" And then the computer tells him, "The theme of most of your lyrics is that time passes and love fades," to which Bob says, "That's pretty much right." If you stop and let that sink in for a minute, that's kind of depressing. But in God the end of this life is not the end of the story. Time does pass, and the love of this world does fade. The Bible says that life is just like a vapor (James 4:14), and it's like the grass that withereth, and the flower that fades away (Isaiah 40:7). But, in God that love does not pass; that love is there, and that's something to be thankful for. And you know, maybe we hear this every year and maybe even every day, but being thankful never gets old. Being thankful is going to keep spiritual meat on our bones. It's going to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. And being thankful is going to keep us on the straight and narrow.

The ushers are going to prepare for communion, and I'm going to close here, in a minute, but one last thing before I close, and I believe we can all relate to this. The truth is there are plenty of things that

happen in this life that I would venture to say that none of us are thankful for. Hear me out. Because, now, most of you might be probably thinking, "Did I just hear that right? Did you just say that there are things that happen in this life that none of us are thankful for?" Yep, that is what I said. "Isn't this month about being thankful and things along those lines?" Yes it is. But, think about this: Death, and tragedies, and illnesses, and sicknesses, and job losses, and the list goes on. I just had a little situation the other day, that some of you are aware of, and I'm not going to go into massive detail, but I've got a pretty good-sized hole in my roof. Now, this happened the day before Thanksgiving. "Oh, this is great!" So, then it was rainy Wednesday, and all day Thursday, and I've got the scars on my leg and my arm to prove it. You know, I had to fight with the shingles up there. Just one of those kinds of things where it's like, "You know what?" You know, I was in kind of a little bit of a dark place for a few hours, and I just have to admit. And I'm not very happy about it, either. I mean, I went down to State Farm yesterday, and got a claim started, and I've got a couple of roofers that are going to, hopefully, call me back. You know, they don't do Wednesday and Thursday, and they're off Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Thank God that it's been dry, and I appreciate the help that I've gotten from others here. Mark L., you were very helpful when we went up there in that crawl space. But, you know, stay with me because this last point is key. This is where the line is drawn and the confusion about being thankful or not gets clarified. I'm thankful to know God that gives us the power to be able to deal with these things. Because that is the difference. I'm thankful to know a God who gives us the power to be able to get over the hump, to be able to get us through tragedies, to be able to get us through illnesses, to be able to give us a hope that's eternal, and something that's after this life. I don't think that Corrine and Lena, are they here this morning? Well, I know that they lost their mom earlier this year, Sister Hardy, and then they lost their sister, just about two months ago. And that's not an easy thing to bear. I know that others of us have had job losses, or they've had sicknesses. I know that Jesse G. has dealt with very major surgery here recently, and he's been in the hospital now, for rehabilitation. That's not something that, I would say, if you asked him, he would say, "Oh, I'm just so thankful this happened." But I'm thankful, and I know he would say this, too—I know Parrish, when he had visited him, he expressed that—I'm thankful to be able to know God that gives us the power to be able to deal with these situations. I'm thankful to know the only true God and Jesus is His name and that the life in this world isn't meant to last forever and God's got something greater for us on the other side. And being thankful to know God trumps all.

Thank you very much for your time.