



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Reflecting on
Our Richness
in Christ

**MIDWEEK
SCRIPT**

Gratitude for
the Richness
of God

2019

November

Session 1 – Reflecting on Our Richness in Christ

At the beginning of the year, our Chief Apostle introduced us to the theme, “Rich in Christ.” Hopefully, we’ve become more familiar with this theme by delving into its meaning throughout the past months. Have you considered what it means to be rich in Christ?

Let’s look at a few verses from Hebrews 10: *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching* (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Do we *hold fast the confessions of our hope*? Our hope is not based on just wishing or waiting for something to be realized, but instead, our faith is based on absolute certainty in Christ. Our hope in Christ is sure, and He is our anchor. *He who promised is faithful.* God’s faithfulness to us is a richness in itself. It is a mystery that we cannot understand, that He loves and cares for us. The writer of Hebrews reminds us in chapter 8 of what God has promised His people: *I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts... I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins... I will remember no more* (Hebrews 8:10-12). This promise also belongs to us and gives us hope.

Those who are rich in Christ are part of the community of believers. Our new life in Christ unites us with others; we need each other to become more like Him. As we are commanded by Christ to love our neighbor as ourselves, we work towards creating an atmosphere of love in our congregations, so that all belong and feel the love of Christ. As members of this community, we recognize that the unity of our love for Christ and our neighbor is our greatest strength. Instead of criticizing or consuming without contributing, we should appreciate, encourage, and *stir up love and good works*.

Do we see the impact of true fellowship in the community of believers? Perhaps we feel discouraged by a lack of growth or enthusiasm in our congregation. Do we just give up? Or can we find purpose and meaning in serving each other?

Those who are rich in Christ receive the blessing of God. Proverbs 10:22 says, *The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.* What does this mean? When we are rich in Him, we learn to share and serve each other, which brings us joy in Christ. As members of the community, we shouldn’t be consumed with ourselves, but rather see, think, and focus on each other.

When we try and create our own wealth, it means nothing. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 13: *There is one who makes himself rich yet has nothing, and one who makes himself poor yet has great riches* (Proverbs 13:7). When we focus on that which is spiritual and seek the kingdom, we find wealth. Jesus taught, as recorded in the Beatitudes: *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:3). Richness is discovered not by earthly gain but by crushing our old nature and humbling ourselves, thus becoming *poor in spirit*. As Jesus reminds us in a later chapter of Matthew – *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you* (Matthew 6:33). When we focus on the kingdom, God will provide us with what we need.

We demonstrate the richness we have in Christ by giving ourselves to the mission. What is our mission? In part, it is to reach out to all people to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we serve in the mission of the church, we discover that we are called to share ourselves with others. We share our experiences of faith to show how we have been transformed. Sharing of ourselves demonstrates the power of Christ to others. We may sometimes feel inadequate in our knowledge of the gospel, or may be afraid to talk about Jesus, but by giving ourselves entirely to the mission, we can experience how God powerfully provides through us.

As we prepare our hearts this month for Thanksgiving, consider these thoughts and expressions concerning our richness in Christ. Be thankful for your community of believers. Be grateful that you can share and encourage each one. Be thankful that God has given you the ability to serve and help one another. And finally, let us be thankful for the blessings from God that make us rich in Christ.

Session 2 – Gratitude for the Richness of God

Welcome! As we continue our review of the 2019 theme from our Chief Apostle, “Rich in Christ,” I would like to lead us into Thanksgiving with the opening thought from the year-beginning service concerning the richness of God.

Let’s stop for the next few moments and really consider what attributes of God we’ve perceived in our lives. We started the year worshipping God, and now looking back over the last 11 months with gratitude, we continue to worship Him for what He has done for us. Nothing is impossible for Him! Have you experienced this in your life? Often we do not see it in the moment, but when we look back over months or years, we become keenly aware of what God has arranged and accomplished in our lives. In Romans 11, Paul exclaims: *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out* (Romans 11:33). How true this is! We cannot understand His ways or His wisdom, but we know He is faithful, and so we can put our trust in Him.

Besides wisdom and knowledge, God is also rich in kindness, patience, and grace. I challenge you to spend this time leading up to Thanksgiving searching for evidence of these characteristics of God. They can be found in Scripture, especially the Psalms, and also in your life. Was there a special moment in a divine service where you felt the fullness of His grace and forgiveness? A trying time when a family member permitted you an extra measure of patience? A surprising act of kindness from a stranger or friend? God often uses the people around us to show us His love and His presence.

We also see the richness of God revealed in each Person of the Trinity. In His love, our heavenly Father desires to share the benefits and the riches of the kingdom with us. Jesus came to earth to make that possible. As Paul states in the 8th chapter of 2 Corinthians: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich* (2 Corinthians 8:9). The Holy Spirit reveals to us the wealth of God’s glory and helps us understand how to share in it already today. Again, Paul explains: *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with the might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:14-19). Through the Spirit, we are granted strength, faith in Christ, and an understanding of the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge! This is a richness that can speak into our lives – that can help us in times of struggle, loss, or pain.

So what does this mean for us?

Let’s look at one more verse from 1 Timothy 6: *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...* (1 Timothy 6:17-18).

We should not boast in the riches of this world, or in our own accumulation of things, but rather, in the richness that God has shared with us. When we realize all He has given us, how could we not share it with others? This should be the hallmark of our gratitude – that we are *rich in good works, ready to give, and willing to share*.

Let’s focus our attention on those around us this month and also into the season of Advent. What good works has God put in front of me as opportunities? To whom can I offer my time, my presence, my patience, and my love? With whom will I share what I have been given, whether material things, or things such as hope, comfort, and strength?

Although this year is coming to an end, we can continue exploring what it means to be rich in Christ by being generous with the treasures God has shared with us, and by worshipping Him for what He has done in our lives. I wish you a blessed season of Thanksgiving.