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When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Did you see that title, did you pick up the book and read it? Millions did. Jewish Rabbi Harold Kushner sought to answer the question that haunts each of us from the time tragedy first touches our life. People who are good and caring, basically decent people, suffer. I suffer, you suffer, our parents suffer, our children suffer.

On this Thanksgiving eve, our ears echo with recent news, Goodyear laying off workers, a special prosecutor being called for to investigate the Iranian Arms Deal, South Africa, always something going on there. Trouble and with it suffering.

When we were young, some of us at least thought good people would be spared all of this. God is in his heaven and all is right with the world. But a factory closes and all its workers are laid off, good parents watch the children they love suffer through divorce, cancer seems to pick us out as if it were simply a lottery.

Suffering, everywhere suffering.

Then along comes St. Paul with these words from God. Have no anxiety about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Have no anxiety about anything. My heart cries out, that is easy for you to say Paul. You did not live with missiles aimed at your home, the threat of human beings making of the earth a fireball. You did not live with people watching and waiting for the opportunity to rob your home, You did not live with the threat posed by a national debt that promises sooner or later to bring chaos to our land. Have no anxiety about anything? Paul you did not know what unemployment was, nor cancer, nor drug abuse. Have no anxiety

about anything?

But were Paul here this day, he would answer, "Where do you think I was when I wrote this letter? I was in prison, soon to be executed. Before that I had been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked. And I say to you who are so often afraid, Have no anxiety about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which far surpassed all human understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Whose is the future? Does it belong to nuclear weapons, to thieves, to death? No, the future belongs to the one ~~we~~ ^{and invites us to} who commands ~~us to~~ ^{we} pray, Our Father. When all that terrifies you has long since passed away, you will still remain, with God. Have no anxiety about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Pray with thanksgiving, in gratitude.

I remember ~~was~~ how thanksgiving was when I was a child. At school and at church came the command, write down what you are thankful for. And I would write, home and church and mother and father, my dog named Bell, air to breathe, the creek ~~that~~ that was a playground for me. Once a year I wrote the list, said my prayer of thanks and the obligation was ~~done~~ fulfilled.

But Paul says, pray with thanksgiving. *in everything, pray with thanksgiving, always ^{with} thanksgiving*
Thanksgiving Not a day but a way of life. That is thanksgiving. To give thanks is what it is to be a Christian.

In Jesus Christ God has done all things necessary for our salvation. All things. Life, forgiveness, salvation these are God's gift to us. There is nothing left for us to do but to say thanks.

We worship, we bring gifts ~~for~~ ^{we can't separate, we do our work, we share meals with friends, all of this is our thanks to God.} for our neighbors, we sing hymns of praise, all to say, Thank you God. Thank you for making me your own, for providing for me so abundantly in life. Thank you for the assurance that nothing in this life, not what happens today, nor what could happen tomorrow shall be able to separate me from your love in Christ Jesus. Thank you for the

assurance that nothing that can happen to me in death, can take me out of your hands and away from your presence.

What God calls us to this day, and each day is to set our heart and our minds on what shall last, ^{lying and cheating, robbing and killing, disease and ineffectiveness, these shall pass away,} whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, ^{glorious and most excellent,} whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, ~~is~~ if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

We all know what happens when we are seduced into looking in the other direction, toward all that is evil, ~~and~~ all that is of death and is passing away. We are afraid. We are anxious. We give death power over us, when Christ has already stripped it of its power.

~~Focus your attention not on evil and death, but on God.~~

Accept God's grace, know no anxiety, but anything that is in your prayer with thanksgiving.
~~Let your requests be made known to God, in a spirit of thanksgiving.~~

And the peace of God which exists in prisons and on battlefields, in cancer wards and unemployment lines, that peace of God which far surpasses all human understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God. Amen.