

“Do not worry 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 surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Take a deep breath and feel your lungs expand with oxygen. Now, think of something for which you are thankful. It could be anything from a person in your life to a memory or a favorite item. Even if something specific does not immediately come to mind, you still have things for which to be grateful, such as the air in your lungs.

Thankfulness involves our hearts and attitudes. At times, we may naturally feel thankful, but at other times, we may have to deliberately adopt an attitude of thankfulness. It may seem easier to be grateful at times such as Thanksgiving Day when most people are conscious about showing thankfulness. However, as the busyness of the holiday season approaches and the year progresses, it can be easy to let the attitude of thankfulness slip away.

There is an excellent example of this in Luke 17:11-18. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, likely for a major festival, and when he was in the region between Samaria and Galilee, he came upon a village. The village contained 10 men with a skin disease, likely leprosy, which would have isolated these men from society. By religious law at the time, the religious leaders would have declared them unclean. As these men saw Jesus, a walking and talking and living hope to their ever-present stress and struggle, they cried out to him, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Jesus heard them and saw them (repeat), and said, “Go now and show yourselves to the priests.” As the men went, they were made clean. The story tells us then that one of them, one out of ten mind you, when he saw that he was healed, turned back toward Jesus, praising God with a loud voice. The man fell at Jesus’ feet, a true act of humility and honor, and thanked him. The story goes as far to mention that the man who turned back to thank Jesus was a Samaritan, highlighting that someone who was not even considered one of God’s own was the one who acted rightly. How do we know this? Why does it matter? Because Jesus then says, “Were not 10 made clean? Where are the others? Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

As believers and followers of Christ as our North star and compass, our peace and gratitude should not be a temporary state but an ever-present state of worship and thanksgiving towards God. Lest we forget that *it is by God, through Christ, we have life, salvation, and*

hope for the future. No matter our earthly circumstances- death, hardship, illness- the promises of God remain true and strong. God's strength does not waver, and God's mercy and grace are not conditional. God's love is steadfast and endures forever. Our attitude toward God and God's creation can show our gratitude for the opportunities and gifts God has given us.

Having an attitude of gratitude, as we might like to refer to it, accomplishes many things, but two things in particular are perseverance through life (the good, bad, and the ugly) and magnifying God.

Persevere... with thanksgiving!

I think we tend to know this, but still, what if we're not feeling very thankful?

In another of Paul's letters, 1 Thessalonians 16-18, Paul reminds readers that we can be thankful in all circumstances, good or bad. He writes: **"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."**

It is important for us to keep in mind that Paul doesn't say this lightly. In yet another letter, 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, he says; **"Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea... I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers [...] I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked."** Did Paul feel very thankful during these times?

Paul lived through immensely difficult times, and still, he said; **"give thanks in all circumstances."** Even in hard times, or if we have unanswered prayers, having a thankful heart can turn our worries and sadness to praise. One thought for us to consider is the more we make room for giving thanks, the less room there is for the bad. I'm not saying be thankful for the bad situation, but can we learn to be thankful in the midst of it? Thankfulness is a position of the heart, and we can choose this every day, whatever we are going through. Giving thanks is good for us, it helps us carry on and endure life, and we can be thankful whatever we're going through.

Another thing we are able to do *with thanksgiving* is **magnify God**.

David writes in Psalm 69:30, **"I will magnify God with thanksgiving."** When we give thanks to him from our hearts, God is magnified. Gratitude glorifies God.

The word "magnify" can be used in two different senses. It can mean make something appear greater than it is, as with a microscope or a magnifying glass. Or it can mean make something that may seem small or insignificant appear to be as great as it really is. This is what our great

telescopes help us begin to do with the magnificent universe which once upon a time spilled over from the brim of God's glory. So, there are two kinds of magnifying: microscope magnifying and telescope magnifying. The one makes a small thing look bigger than it is. The other makes a big thing begin to look as big as it really is.

When David says, "I will magnify God with thanksgiving," he does not mean: "I will make a small God look bigger than he is." He means: "I will make a big God begin to look as big as God really is." We are not called to be microscopes, but telescopes. Believers and followers of God and Christ are not called to be cons who magnify their product out of all proportion to reality, when they know their God's product and service is far superior. There is nothing and nobody superior to God. And so, the calling of those who love God is to make God's greatness begin to look as great as it really is- like a telescope. The whole responsibility of walking in covenant relationship with God and Christ can be summed up in this: feel, think, and act in a way that will make God look as great as God really is. In being so and doing so, this is what it means to *magnify* God.

We might ask why or how that is? Why or how does giving God thanks magnify God? The answer can be quite simple: When we thank God, we acknowledge and display that God is the giver; God is the benefactor. With thanksgiving, we pay God a high compliment.

I am not sure why but as humans we can struggle with this. Probably because of how we look at our relationships with one another. It is not all the time, but when my kids are frustrated with each other they do not say, "Thank you," very easily. "Noah, can you tell Luke, 'Thank you?'" So, he mumbles, "Thank you." "Luke, can you tell Noah, 'Thank you for saving you a trip'"? So, he mumbles, "Thank you." "Ella Grace, can you say, 'Thank you' to Luke and Noah for getting your stuff for you?" She is still frustrated they blocked the door heading out to school earlier, but she mumbles under her breath, "Thank you." And we all do this. Why? Isn't it because saying "thank you" is a compliment; it magnifies people: You did a good thing for me; I'm indebted to you. When we are upset or frustrated or even angry at somebody (for whatever the reason), we don't want to pay them a compliment; we may even want to belittle them not magnify them; we don't want to accept or to think of them as our benefactor.

We may have come to accept some of this in our human relationships (we are good at justifying our behavior), but when it comes to our relationship with God, we need to do more *with thanksgiving*. When gratitude springs up in our hearts toward God, God is magnified as the wealthy source of our blessing. God is acknowledged as giver and benefactor. And God is worthy of the glory.

Yes, having a thankful heart helps us with perseverance and endurance through life. Yes, having an attitude of gratitude and giving thanks to God magnifies God to the glory God so

warrants. There is more and it is a promise that should alter our ways and our thoughts towards thanksgiving all the time. The scripture we began with today, Philippians 4:4-9, contains an important promise that comes with thanksgiving. Paul said, "Rejoice!" Paul said, "Do not worry!" Paul said, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests (matters of your heart be known to God!" And what does Paul say will be? What can we lean in on and trust will be when we do these things? "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." With thanksgiving we get God's peace as a protection and shield for our hearts and minds. This is where we are going to pick up next week.

Between now and then, the next time you take a deep breath, stop and take a moment to give thanks and look around at all you have, including the beauty of the hope you have in God and the good news of the gospel.

Today, as we conclude our worship together, we are going to sing the hymn, "For the Beauty of the Earth." This hymn is an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God. It is not just a song to be sung. It is a gift we give back to God because of who God is and what God does. Yes, for the creation of the mountains and hills and valleys and flowers and birds and sky and stars. Yes, the hours of each day and the breath we breathe and the life we have. Yes, the gift of mercy and grace given through Christ our Savior. Yes, the church and our brothers and sisters. Yes, our relationships as parents and children. "Lord of all to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise." God is indeed worthy to be praised for all the time, God is good... God is good, all the time.

Let all God people say... Amen.