

Text: Various

Title: Thanksgiving for What?

Truth: We can follow the pattern of Jesus and give thanks in everything because God has been so gracious to us.

Date/Location: November 23, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

We know that in everything we are to give thanks (1 Thess. 5:18), and we read of examples of people who give thanks always for other Christians (1 Thess. 1:2), and whatever we do we should do in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God through Him (Col. 3:17). We know the direction of our thanks is to be toward God (Col. 1:3) because He is the one Who is the source of the good things for which we are thankful. We know that lack of thanksgiving is a mark of godlessness (Romans 1:21). And we know we are supposed to give thanks, and we have implored all of us to be thankful people. We even know the mental and physical health benefits of gratitude because we studied a bit about that a year ago.

But what exactly is there to be thankful for? If we have fallen to cynicism, we begin to think that the world is filled with bad things, bad events, bad people, bad governments, bad politicians, bad institutions, bad churches, bad money, bad men, bad women, bad diseases, bad management, bad philosophies, bad weather, and other bad stuff I cannot mention or maybe even think of!

I. Jesus Thanked God

- A. Matthew 11:25 – for God’s revelation, in the context of judgment, repentance. God has shown this to simple people, not the high and mighty.
- B. Matthew 15:35/John 6:11 – for food for a large crowd who would receive the miraculous supply from a few bread and fish.
- C. Matthew 26:27 – again, for food and drink, and especially around the Lord’s Table/Passover seder. If Jesus gave thanks for sustenance, then so should we. Doing so regularly at all our meals reminds us that we depend on God for everything.
- D. John 11:41 – thankful for God hearing prayer, but more than that so that people would believe that God sent Jesus. The resurrection miracle He was about to perform would be an opportunity for people to believe.

II. Plenty for Which to Thank God

There is so much for which to give thanks that you might not know where to begin. Just start somewhere and see where it leads! Write a journal of mercies, or a list of things God has given you. I am going to give thanks to the Lord in this message, not just for or from myself, but from our larger church family and even human family.

Thankful for our children. Any children God has brought into our lives whether nieces and nephews or neighbors or at church. Thankful for every giggle, smile, funny talking, precious moment. Thankful to see them healthy, and grow, and become young adults, and wiser, and discerning. Thankful for their questions that make us

grow in our walk with God. Thankful for their challenging us so we can become more like Jesus. Thankful to be put in a place where we can model what God is like to our kids. Thankful for the responsibility of having children because it makes us more *responsible*...and forces us to trust God more...and stretch ourselves beyond the limits of our self-centeredness.

Thankful for illness that reminds us how blessed we are when well. For wellness.

For work to occupy our time, our bodies, and our minds, allowing us to be productive and help others and offer things to God.

For our church family. For words of encouragement, praise. Even for words of correction to keep us on the straight and narrow and out of sin.

For material things that make our lives easier. Machines to make our work easier. Technology and computers make our communication easier and more enjoyable, and our writing and reading too. Transportation. Large and luxurious homes and apartments. For the good sense to declutter and remove things, as it helps us loosen our grip on the things of this world. And the good sense to pass on things to others or throw them away when we cannot be good stewards of them. For things inherited and given to us that we do not deserve and did not earn.

For money earned, and the ability to earn it. For the opportunities to give, more blessed as they are than the opportunities to receive.

For our aptitudes, knowledge, opportunities to learn. For discernment. For institutes of learning where good

knowledge is taught, where religion, morality, and knowledge are elevated.

Thankful for the restraining hand of police, government, laws, parents, and the general civil society that allows us a measure of peace and prosperity. For the work of productivity being on balance more than the work of destructiveness.

For our missionaries, who are willingly away from family on all the holidays to serve the Lord and to serve us. For people who have “addicted” themselves to the work of ministry to that extent.

For the fact that we have peace in our country, and not war. For general prosperity, despite the attempts to run us into the ground with debt.

For God’s care in times of trouble, which our world certainly faces just now in many ways. That God does not leave His children when they suffer, though He may seem silent.

For friends to talk to. To give and receive encouragement.

For things to keep us busy. For work. For good sleep when we get it. The our good tasting food.

For being able to go out and come in. To go outside and do the dreaded yard work! Wait until you cannot do that, and then see if you are thankful for what you used to be able to do.

Thankful for people who labor to make large-scale injustices right, like Frederick Douglas and Martin Luther King Jr.

For love of spouse. For love of family. For love of church family.

Especially for God's own Son who died to set us free. Hope in the face of death. Heaven. Forgiveness of sin. Hope for a restored creation with good people, good society, good agriculture.

We are thankful for God creating the world and all that it is in it. The beauty of the inanimate creation—sky, sea, mountains, rivers, seas, stars, clouds. And then the plants, trees, vegetable gardens in full fruit, flower gardens in full bloom. And then the animate creation—the way of the beaver, the majesty of a stallion, the intricacy of the hummingbird, or butterfly, the complexity of a human baby, the strength and resourcefulness of a man, the beauty and kindness of a godly woman. All of this created by God. Life itself, something hard to define and its inner workings not understood.

God's guidance, sustenance, His plan for the world and our future.

Thanks be to God that he revealed Himself to me, an entirely unfitting candidate for His mercy of His self-disclosure which saved me. Thank God that He does not show favoritism toward the rich and powerful but lowers Himself to people of low estate, low station. That God hears our prayers. That there is a coming resurrection of the dead. Thank God for ample evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He arose from the dead, and that He is the one who will judge the living and the dead. Thank God for proof of resurrection in Lazarus and the widow of Nain's son, and Eutychus, and Jesus Himself.

We give thanks for our thrice-daily (or more) food, but not just the food (Matthew 15:36, Luke 22:17). We give thanks to the Giver of the food, the sanctifier of the food, the one who wisely created the food for our use, enjoyment, health, and strength. We thank God that a much smaller portion of our time is spent getting or paying for food than what many humans have had in centuries past.

Thank God for His word. Thank God for Jesus...and the Holy Spirit.

Thank God that we are not self-sufficient and that He has helped us to understand that, because if we were self-sufficient, we would miss out on the most important Person there is, God Himself, who is the source of all true joy and happiness. Thank God for *that*.

Thankful to God for God himself—for all of his attributes, all of his power, all of his mercy and grace, all of his provision, all of his wisdom.

For the air we breath, for the breath and heartbeat we just experienced.

Thankful for every step of progress of God's good news in Christ throughout the world, and in my life, and in your life. Every church that starts, every church that stays faithful, every Bible book that is translated or preserved, every discipleship class taught.

We are thankful for God's plan, and for our individual sanctification. We are thankful that God is kind and just, punishing evil and rewarding good. He brings conviction, gives warnings, granted us our five senses to experience His world, provided the shining sun, rain and snow in

their seasons, waking grace this morning, the rainbow, and many beautiful sunsets and dawns. He allows us to make new friends, have long talks with old ones, the clean feeling of a shower (and running water for the shower!), a freshly pressed shirt, clean bed sheets, unexpected blessings along the way, an enjoyable hobby, a good hug, accomplish a long-sought-after goal, and all of *you*.

Conclusion

Every good gift is from above, James 1:17. We certainly have enough “material” to abound in thanksgiving toward God (Col. 2:6-7).

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