

I. My Notes ... WWC message 11/22

II. Series: Thanksgiving

- Title: Be Defined by Gratitude
- Text: Various
- Quote: We do well to remember that the Bible has far more to say about how to live during the journey than about the ultimate destination. Philip Yancey (Author, *Grace Notes* p. 222)

III. Introduction

- It's that time of the year again where the Holiday Season steps into full bloom. In November, we gather around tables filled with food, family, and tradition. We pause to say 'thank you' for blessings both big and small. But gratitude is more than a polite response to good fortune, it is a spiritual discipline, a way of life that shapes us into Christlikeness. Thinking about the words of Paul, "*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" (**1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV**), is a good reminder of the attitude that we should carry throughout our days.
- In a time of worship, David encouraged all to choose gratitude and even gave us a great reason for making this choice. "*Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.*" (**Psalms 100:4-5 NLT**). These Scriptures remind us that thanksgiving is not seasonal—it is the posture of a heart aligned with God's person and purpose.
- Gratitude is not simply an emotion—it is a formation. When we practice thanksgiving, our hearts are reoriented from scarcity to abundance, from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. Gratitude trains our souls to see God's hand at work even in the ordinary and the difficult. Look at what the Bible has to say about this ... "*Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the*

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7 CSB)

“And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17 CSB).

Carrying the attitude of gratitude throughout our daily walk shapes our prayers, our perspective, and even the choices that we make along the way. Let me give you an illustration to show the point ... Think of the Israelites in the wilderness. Their grumbling blinded them to God’s daily provision of manna. But when we cultivate gratitude, we begin to see manna everywhere—daily mercies, undeserved grace, and the quiet presence of God sustaining us. Jeremiah reminds us of this – *“The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.” (Lamentations 3:22–23 NLT).* The Prophet made this statement as he sat in the hills above Jerusalem, seeing its destruction and devastation. Gratitude opens our eyes to these mercies that are renewed each day.

- During this Holiday Season, beginning as we reflect on Thanksgiving, I invite you to see gratitude not as a holiday ritual but as a spiritual practice that forms us. Gratitude is the soil in which joy, resilience, and faith take root. It is how we become people who live not by fear, but by trust in God’s goodness.

IV. A Viewpoint

- “Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.” — Melody Beattie (Author) ... Gratitude not a fleeting feeling but a shaping force, a choice to help us (believers) interpret our past, live faithfully in the present, and anticipate God’s future for our lives.
- **Psalms 103:1-2** – *“Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.” (NLT).*
- How do you view what is going on right now? Whether it is in situations that surround you or in circumstances we are facing throughout society. Our focus, our duty is to praise the Lord in our actions and attitudes.
- In the difficulties of life, David said “Let all that I am praise the Lord because He is good. Let me be grateful for all that He has done in my life ...” (my

paraphrase). God is worthy of our praise, of us expressing thankfulness for His goodness and grace.

- James (the brother of Jesus) reminds us that we have reasons to be thankful.
- **James 1:17** - *“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” (NASB).*
- It is no secret that life has challenges, that there are problems that arise. They can come up in a moments notice or they can be formed over an extended period of time. Is it possible that there are lessons, there is a change in thinking that might accompany these instances? Looking from a different viewpoint, goodness and grace can be found in the tough times we may face. This compassion, this caring comes from the heart of God. His mercy and grace know no bounds. This is something to be grateful for.

V. A Call to Action

- Paul and Silas were in prison (see Acts 16): they prayed and sang hymns of thanksgiving, even in chains. Gratitude became their practice, not focusing on their circumstance. They could express gratitude everywhere.
- **Philippians 4:6-7** – *“Don’t worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus.” (Philipps NT).*
- Choosing thankfulness is a way to honor the Lord. When there are problems and stresses the place to deal with them is at the “Throne of Grace” (see Hebrews 4:16). We can trust God in our most challenging moments and by doing that we will find peace in the storm.
- John Milton (Author) said, “Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.”
- **Colossians 3:16-17** – *“Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you*

do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (CSB).

- Gratitude is not passive—it is practiced in prayer, worship, and daily obedience. It can be seen in the way we interact, we encourage, and support others. It becomes a rhythm: thanking God in prayer, expressing thanks to others, and living with a thankful spirit.

VI. A Lifestyle

- As I was reading and preparing for this message, I came across a short encouragement about a lifestyle of thankfulness and gratitude.
- There was a woman who began keeping a simple “gratitude journal.” Every evening, before bed, she wrote down three things she was thankful for that day. At first, her list was filled with obvious blessings, family, health, food on the table. But over time, her eyes noticed smaller mercies: a smile from a stranger, the beauty of autumn leaves, even strength to endure a hard day. Months later, when she faced a season of loss, she returned to her journal. Page after page reminded her that God had been faithful in countless ways. Gratitude had become more than a feeling—it was a lifestyle that trained her heart to see God’s goodness even in sorrow. This reinforced the passage in the Bible that she frequently read ... *“The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.” (Lamentations 3:22-23 NLT).*
- One of the stories that I have always connected to in Scripture is the story of the healed leper(s). Jesus healed ten lepers who cried out for mercy. All ten received the miracle of cleansing, but only one—a Samaritan—turned back to give thanks. He fell at Jesus’ feet, praising God with a loud voice.

“Jesus spoke up, “There were ten who were healed; where are the other nine?” (Luke 17:17 GNT). The healed Samaritan’s gratitude distinguished him from the rest. Not just by his race but by his heart. His thanksgiving was not just polite, it was transformative. The story continues ... “Didn’t any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And he told him, “Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.” (Luke 17:18-19 CSB).

- This man's cries of mercy and help were heard. Jesus met the need, without condition. For one man, he was made whole, he found salvation. This came from a choice to express his thankfulness.

VII. Final Words

- As we come to the end of this Thanksgiving reflection, let us remember that gratitude is not just a feeling we experience when life is good, it is a spiritual discipline that forms us into Christlike disciples. Gratitude reorients our perspective, becomes our daily practice, and empowers us with joy and resilience.
- G.K. Chesterton (Author, Apologist) once said, "I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."
- Gratitude lifts our eyes beyond circumstances to the wonder of God's goodness. It is not shallow optimism, but deep spiritual formation that trains us to see grace everywhere. This week, let us not only celebrate Thanksgiving but live it—by practicing gratitude daily, letting it shape our hearts into Christlikeness.
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always