

Expressions of Thanksgiving

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- [0 : 00] It is the week of Thanksgiving, and that is what we're going to be looking at today in 1 Thessalonians and in the book of Psalms. As we prepare this week for celebrating Thanksgiving as families and together, I would like to set the stage this morning for Thanksgiving not only once a year, not only one day a year, but also throughout the year.
- I'd like to begin, if we look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 18, I believe this sets the stage for us as we think about when do we give thanks?
- For what do we give thanks? And how do we give thanks? In 1 Thessalonians 5, 18, we read, In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- So what's God's will for us? To give thanks. And for what are we giving thanks? For everything, in everything, give thanks.
- For it's God's will in Christ Jesus for us. So we are to give thanks in all circumstances. That doesn't mean we need to necessarily give thanks for all circumstances, but in everything.
- [1 : 17] Because not everything that happens to us is good. But the Bible promises that everything that happens to us, God can take and he can use it for good. He can turn it into something that is good for us.
- For example, it's never good when a loved one passes away. But if they are in Christ, we know that we are going to see them again one day.
- So we can rejoice as the angels in heaven rejoice for the homegoing of one of the saints. So there's something in every circumstance that we can be thankful for.
- Back in the 1800s, there was a Scottish minister who was known for his uplifting prayers, Alexander White. And there was one particular Sunday morning when the weather was extremely awful.
- It was a very, very bad weather. And one of the gentlemen in his congregation was thinking to himself, how in the world is he going to pray today?
- [2 : 23] And is he going to... Certainly he can't think of anything to be thankful for for this kind of weather. And so as Pastor White got up into the pulpit, this, to everyone's surprise, this is what he prayed.
- We thank thee, O God, that the weather is not always like this. Isn't that something to be thankful for? It could be horrible weather. It could be a tornado. It could be something.
- And we thank thee, O God, that the weather is not always like this. Because in everything, we can give thanks to say, God, we thank you that not everything is as bad as this. God, we thank you that this, too, shall pass.
- The pastor at church asked one of... Or the Sunday school teacher asked one of the children, a little girl in church, and he asked, do you say a prayer before your meals?
- And she said, oh, no, we don't. Because mom always cooks really good meals. You know, sometimes people say, well, we thank God for this meal, or we ask God to bless this meal because, you know, it's going to be something that may not be all that great.

[3 : 33] Or how can you bless God, or how can you ask God to bless this candy bar or this junk food? Well, we're to thank God for everything. Whatever God supplies, whether it be a good thing or whether he brings us through a bad situation, we can always be thankful for God in everything.

If we look at 1 Timothy chapter number 4, we're going to be looking at quite a few verses today. 1 Timothy chapter 4, verses 4 and 5. Verse 4 says, for every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving.

Now, we understand there are certain foods that for a long time the Jews were not able to partake of. There were some who were in the New Testament.

There were some who were saying we shouldn't eat this food because it was offered to an idol. And pretty much what Paul is saying is, everything God created is good. And if we thank God for it, we can receive it and don't refuse it because it's something God created.

If it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. So nothing is to be rejected, the Apostle Paul says, if it's received with thanksgiving.

[4 : 56] So our food, so to speak, is consecrated by prayer. We thank God for it. God can use it to nourish our body. So does that mean whatever we eat, we thank God for it.

It can be sacred, like a Twinkie. Or do they still have ding-dongs? I don't know. You can eat it fried. You can eat it frozen. You can eat it all kinds of ways. And if we thank God for it, God consecrates it, and we can eat it.

Well, just be careful. There are certain things that don't be too thankful for. Just don't eat too much of it. Do it in moderation, right? But thanksgiving, and I think this is what the Apostle Paul was teaching Timothy, and this is what we're going to see when we get into the book of Psalms, that we can thank God for anything.

I think it's always right to thank God for everything. Food, drink, pleasure, family, friends, job.

What about illness? Well, in everything give thanks, because God can teach us some things. God can teach us patience. God can teach us how to go through difficult things.

[6 : 07] And the book of Psalms talks about praising God, talks about thanking God. And I believe we can learn from the book of Psalms as we go through and see David pen many of the Psalms, and David was extremely thankful.

But as we look at David's life, there are things that King David went through that no one would want to have to go through those things. But David still thanked God for them.

And I see as we, this morning, as we try to get some insight into our thanksgiving, we're going to look at three things. The first is the reason for our thanksgiving, we're going to see in Psalms, the place of our thanksgiving, and the way of our thanksgiving.

The first thing that we see, we're going to look at, is giving thanks for any reason. Whatever reason there is, we can say that we can give thanks.

And the main thing is, we give thanks because of who God is. He is the main reason for everything that we have. A little boy was kneeling next to his mom one night, saying his prayers, and mom looked at him and said, and she said, son, why don't you speak a little louder?

[7 : 22] I can't hear you. To which the boy replied, but mom, I'm not talking to you. He was talking to God, and God could hear him, whether he was whispering or thinking it silently, God can hear us.

The God of heaven should always be the object of our prayers. See, sometimes people will pray to a dead relative. Some people are praying to saints, or who they think are a person the church canonized, and they're praying to these people.

To whom should we pray? We should pray to our Heavenly Father. We should be praying to God because of who he is. Let's look together at Psalm 7, verse 17, where the psalmist says, I will praise whom?

I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High, giving thanks to God because of his righteousness.

Psalm 136, 2. Psalm 136, 2 says, Oh, give thanks to the God of gods, for his mercy endures forever.

[8 : 44] No matter what gods other people have, God is the God of gods. He's the better God. As a matter of fact, he's the best God. Do you know why? Because he's the only God.

There is no God beside Jehovah, beside Yahweh. He is the only God, so he deserves our praise. We praise him for any reason.

As a matter of fact, it's pretty much unthinkable not to give thanks to God because we owe everything to him. Do we not? Everything we have, we owe to God.

And I think it's shameful for us not to be thankful to him. Think about it, parents. How would you think if your children would never thank you for anything? You know, they would be ungrateful.

Someone said, An ingrate is neither in nor great. And I think we're always in the school of thanksgiving. And it's a school from which we never graduate.

[9 : 44] We should always be engaged in giving thanks. As a matter of fact, I think someone said at one time, If you can't find anything for which to give thanks, then the problem is probably with you.

Because there are some people who are never thankful for anything. There's always something wrong with everything. Now, all of us, whether we'd like to admit it or not, go through periods of time throughout our day when we're not thankful.

Or we are ingrateful or not grateful for something. But when we catch ourselves there, we can say, Oh, I should be thankful. And we can correct ourselves.

So we are to be thankful. We always have a reason to be thankful. A Sunday school teacher asked her a class one Sunday morning. And she said, Kids, what are you thankful for?

And one of the little boys raised his hand. And he said, I'm thankful for my glasses. She goes, Honey, you're thankful for your glasses? And why is that? He said, I'm thankful for my glasses because they keep the boys from beating me up.

[10 : 51] And they keep the girls from kissing me. Right? So he's thankful for his glasses. No matter what they are, we can be thankful. Let's move on to Psalm 28, 7.

Psalm 28, 7. The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusted in him and I am helped.

Therefore, what does the psalmist say is the result of God strengthening him, God helping him, his heart trusted in him. He says, Therefore, my heart greatly rejoices.

And with my song, I will praise him. To be thankful. Simply to be thankful.

Could we all learn how to be thankful? Are there others that we interact with that we think, my, you need to learn to be thankful?

[11 : 52] A number of years ago, an owner of a fairly large department store offered a prize of \$5,000 to anyone, as he put it, who asked the question, how can my business be most speedily and surely improved?

A lot of people sent in answers. Some sent in very lengthy answers. Some sent in some very long and explanatory business models for improving his business.

Do you know who won the \$5,000? It's a fellow by the name of Roy McArdle. And on a postcard, this is what he wrote. Tell your clerks to say thank you.

And the owner decided and realized customer service, simply being thankful, can make the biggest difference.

And it's amazing the different places of business. On our way home yesterday, as we were stopping at the different places, to see the difference between some of the business establishments.

[13 : 03] You stop at a Chick-fil-A, for example. I've never been to a Chick-fil-A anywhere where the clerks behind the counter, those behind the counter, or the hostess, or the person in and out of the dining area did not say, what do they say?

It's my pleasure. Why? Hopefully it is their pleasure, but it makes the person who is there and being served realize, well, I matter to you. And so when you ask, may I have a refill?

It's my pleasure. And thank you. Is there anything else? Versus when we stopped at a couple of the different eating establishments yesterday, we got the feeling that we were a bother to them because they were too busy talking to their co-worker about whatever they were doing this weekend.

And it's almost as if you don't really care to have my business. Are you thankful that I'm here? And do you realize that our business is what's paying, you're providing your paycheck.

So learning how to be thankful. If we can't think of anything, try to think of something. Reframe it and look for a positive.

[14 : 22] And that is what we need to be doing. So first of all, as we think about it, we can give thanks or we are to be giving thanks for any reason, no matter what.

The second thing is, where do we give thanks? We give thanks everywhere. It doesn't matter where we are. So where do you give thanks the most?

At the dinner table. In the congregation, as we are here together at other times, at other places, I think we're to do it everywhere. Look at Psalm 35, 18.

Psalm 35 and verse 18. I will give you thanks. Where does the psalmist say? In the great assembly. I will give you thanks in the great assembly.

I will praise you among many people. Among the throngs of people, the psalmist says, I will praise you. We should praise God when the church gathers together.

[15 : 20] We should praise God in the world. Do you think about that? Do you realize that? No matter where we are, in the grocery store, in the office, wherever we are, we can thank God for something.

If something works out well, we can be thanking God for it. And how do you think it's going to make a difference in those who hear us?

If they don't know Christ, they need to hear God being praised. It's easier to praise God when the congregation is together.

But I think we need to be praising God no matter where. Now, if you praise God out in the world, you might hear a number of things. You might hear an amen. It may be that they know Christ as well.

We were seated at McDonald's. We brought Jasmine out to dinner one evening to eat. And we were about our heads before we ate.

[16 : 20] Thank God for our meal. We prayed out loud. And the man in the booth just on the other side of us, we could hear, was not making fun of us necessarily, but was making some snide religious comments.

Well, you know what? You may not always get an amen, but it really doesn't matter. We need to praise God no matter where we are. As a matter of fact, we can praise God anywhere no matter where we are.

And we should be capable of praising God anywhere we are. I realize that not everyone will do that.

Not everyone will say amen. Not everyone will do that. But regardless of the response, we can praise God anywhere and everywhere. Psalm 105, 1.

Psalm 105, and verse 1. The eternal faithfulness of the Lord. Oh, give thanks to the Lord. Call upon His name.

[17 : 27] Make known His deeds. Where? Among the peoples. Who are the peoples? Whoever we are around. So we can give thanks to God anywhere.

Just as the preacher Harry Ironside one time had sat down to eat a meal, and a man approached him in the restaurant and asked if he could join him.

And to which Ironside said, sure, you can. And as was his custom, Ironside bowed his head and silently prayed for his meal. And after he was done, the man said, anything wrong?

And he says, no. He said, do you have a headache? Ironside said, no. He said, something wrong with your meal? Ironside said, no.

He said, it's as is my custom. I thank God for my food before I eat it. And the man said, oh, I never do that.

[18 : 26] I worked hard for everything that I have. I don't have to give thanks to anyone. He said, I never do that.

I just start right on. I just start right on and eat it. And Ironside said, well, you're just like my dog. He does the same thing.

And it wasn't that quick remark, but maybe letting this man know. Maybe you should be thankful. Because we're no different than an animal if we just simply approach our food and join right in or go right in and eat our food and not take a moment to be thankful for the one who has provided that meal.

So when we pause, when we stop, and when we pray in public or we praise God in public, it may be that we might make the difference in someone else's life. It might be a brother or sister in Christ who is a little timid about showing or sharing their faith in public.

We might bolster their courage and give them the courage to stand up for God out in public. It may be someone who maybe does not know God, and they see someone who is not afraid of praising God no matter where they are.

[19 : 42] And so we can give God thanks anywhere. We can give God thanks everywhere, no matter what. In the assembly, when we gather together, is one place for us to praise God and to thank God.

But as a psalmist also says, call upon his name and make his deeds known among the peoples, among the world, among wherever we are. We can do that as well.

And then how do we give thanks? Well, we can give thanks in every way. Is there one right way to give thanks? I don't think so. I think that we can give thanks in different ways.

I think we can give thanks in a number of ways. Psalm 69, 30. Psalm 69, verse 30. The psalmist says, I will praise the name of God with what?

With a song. And I will magnify him with thanksgiving. So we can sing our praises to God. Now, not everybody can sing. Not everybody can sing as well as others can.

[20 : 51] But we can try and think about it this way. If there's nobody else around and we're just singing to God, he's going to be grateful that you're singing to him.

It is like, has anybody ever seen the American Idol? Have you seen some of the people who audition? And when you hear what some of them say, they could make milk curdle with their voice.

And they will literally say that my mom said, I sing so well, I need to go on American Idol. Only mama could say something like that, probably.

But in the eyes of God, no matter how bad we sound when we sing, in the ears of God, I believe Scripture teaches that he appreciates.

It's something that he loves to hear his children praise him. His children worship him. So we can do it in a song. Psalm 95, 2.

[21 : 58] Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving. Let us do what? Let us shout joyfully to him with psalms. And so we can sing a quiet song.

We can sing a fast song. We can sing a slow song. God just wants us to sing to him. But he also says we can shout to him. How many of you shout when you're watching a football game?

Come on, don't lie. I know you do. I've seen you. I've heard you. Now, I guess what I'm saying is, just as we get excited about certain things, we can get excited about God.

What about a quick amen? Hallelujah. Praise God. We can do it together with the body of Christ. But what about in the world? Nothing wrong with that either.

You might get a funny look. But who cares? Because if we're praising God, then that's what we are concerned about. Look at Psalm 147 and verse number 7.

[23 : 03] Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving. Sing praises on the harp to God. So can we use a musical instrument to praise God? Yes, of course we can. We can sing praises to God.

We can shout praises to God. We can use a musical instrument. Ephesians 5, excuse me, Ephesians 5, 19 and 20.

Let's see what the New Testament has to say. Ephesians chapter 5, beginning with verse 19. Here we see this again.

How often? Always. How often? Always. For how many things? For all things. To whom? To God the Father. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So in Scripture, we are taught to pray to God through Christ. So in the name of Christ, because of what Jesus has done for us, we pray to the Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus, in whose power we have, in whose authority, on His authority that He's provided to us, we can praise Him and we can speak to our Heavenly Father.

[24 : 23] So we can do it. Are we thanking God when we are quoting Scripture to one another? Yes. Can we thank God as we are quoting Psalms and as we're singing songs to one another?

Because that's literally what the Psalms were. They were poetry. They were words put to music and were sung. Most of the Psalms were sung. And so we can praise God in all these ways.

Look at Colossians 3, verses 16 and 17. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, here again, in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

It should be obvious that we should say our thanks. We can sing our thanks. We can shout our thanks. When we sing in church, and I believe we should, we can sing thanks to God.

When we're out in public, we can praise God. How many of you sing in the shower? How many of you sing in your vehicle while you're driving along?

[25 : 41] Yes. People may think you're crazy, but that's okay. And we may be a little bit. But we can sing. We can shout. We can praise God. We can speak to Him. We don't even have to open our mouth to praise God.

Do you realize that? God knows our thoughts. As a matter of fact, He knows our thoughts before we think them. And that can be scary, and that can be encouraging at the same time.

Any way we do it is good. Sing our praise. Give thanks to the Lord. And whatever you do, verse 17, whatever you do in word or deed, He says, we are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

So give thanks. Give thanks when? Always. What are we to give thanks for? In everything. Give thanks. And to whom are we to give thanks?

Give thanks to God the Father. Through whom? Not through Mary. Not through Saint. Whoever. But through Jesus Christ.

[26 : 47] The author and the finisher of our faith. The one who died on the cross in our place. The one who provides the way possible for us to be reconciled back to God. And when, and I close with this, as we think about what God has provided us through Christ, when we think how rich we are in our faith, we should, as followers of Jesus, be the most thankful people on the planet.

Because we have our life, we have our eternity, we have everything to be thankful for, even though we're going through the worst of times and the worst conceivable thing possible.

It's never easy going through it. But when we think, as Paul talked about, he says, this momentary, this momentary affliction is nothing to be compared with the eternal weight of glory that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray. Father, this morning, we thank you. We thank you for your goodness. We thank you for your watchful care over us. We thank you that you have provided us every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

We thank you that you have provided our salvation through the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. We thank you, Heavenly Father, that you have provided us your Holy Spirit.

[28 : 17] We thank you that you have provided us forgiveness and that you have cleansed us from the guilt.