Give Thanks

# (Hebrews 12:28-29)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. I am so thankful that you chose to be here, to celebrate together with us today, because Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays of the year. You know, it’s so positive and uplifting as we give thanks to the Lord; for he is good, and his love endures forever (Psalm 107:1). And so, today I want to share with you a message entitled “Give Thanks”.

You know, I wonder how many of you are like me and you getting tired of all the negativity. It seems like some people have the spiritual gift of grumbling and complaining, negativity has almost become an art form in our culture today. What really amazes me is how blessed we can be and yet how ungrateful we often are. And I know personally for myself, I didn’t need to be taught to be covetous of what someone else had. In fact, I didn’t grow up with much, but I did grow up wanting more, wanting better, wanting faster, and I wanted it right now.

This morning, would going to look at giving thanks, because I believe as we pursue a heart of thankfulness it will unlock many other positive qualities. You see, thankfulness makes us generous, thankfulness makes us encouraging, and so when we are thankful we become more helpful, kind, and loving. You see, when we recognize the grace that we’ve received, it transforms our hearts from one that is entitled, to one that is grateful.

And so, we want to give thanks as the author of Hebrews says, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:28-29). In other words, he’s encouraging us to embrace the promised kingdom, because it’s coming, it’s present, it’s active, he says we’re receiving it. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is urging us to personally receive it and be thankful recognizing that every good thing we have comes from God.

## 1. For Every Good Thing

And so, number one we want to give thanks for every good thing, choosing to be thankful, because we understand as the Bible tells us in James chapter 1, that,

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father” (James 1:17).

And he’s faithful, he’s the giver of all good things and so we give him thanks. Just as we’re receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, God gave Noah a plan, the resources, and the ability to build the ark. He gave the Israelites bread from heaven in the morning and fire to guide them by night. He gave David a stone to kill Goliath. He sent a fish to swallow Jonah and take him safely to shore. He gave a young teenage girl named Mary the courage to say yes to Jesus. And so, we give thanks because God is our provider, he’s our protector, and he’s our strength. He’s is faithful God and he gives us his word to direct us. He gives the Holy Spirit to comfort us, guide us, and counsel us. He gives us his perfect peace, health to bless us, and family and friends to love us.

Therefore, we give thanks, because every good thing we have comes from God. And we recognize that God is completely good, he’s constantly good, and he’s unchanging. Our God will never be not good, never be less than good, because everything our God does is good. Every good and perfect gift is from above and when we embrace this reality, when we recognize this truth, it changes our attitude and helps us to be thankful for everything.

## 2. With Everlasting Praise

And number two, therefore, we give thanks with everlasting praise. You see, as we choose to give thanks, we’re refusing to let what we want, rob us from the blessings that we have. Instead, we’re turning every blessing into praise and therefore every blessing becomes an act of worship before God. David said it this way in Psalm chapter 63, he said to God in verse four,

“I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you” (Psalms 63:4-5).

As we get into the habit of giving thanks it changes your perspective. For example, consider anything that you take for granted every single day and pretend like you’ve just lost it. Then, as the loss, the absence of that thing begins to sink in, maybe your health, your family, your job, or your car, imagine that you got it back. You found it and suddenly you start praising God because you’re so grateful. “God, I thank you for my car, it barely runs, but at least I’m not walking. God, I don’t like this stupid job, but I thank you that I’ve got a job, I’ve got a family and we’ve got food on the table. God, I thank you for my health, my friends, my kids and my spouse.

You see, when we recognize that we’ve got a really good God, we refuse to let what we want rob us of the blessings that we already have. Therefore, we’re going to daily count our blessings, we’re not going to forget all his benefits, and we’re going to turn each blessing back into praise. That’s what David did in Psalm chapter 103, he said,

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgives all your sins

and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's” (Psalms 103:2-5).

In other words, David says, God is so good to me, he’s filled my life with so many good things, therefore I’m going to praise him. Because I’m not going to forget all of his benefits, I’m going to be thankful, and I’m going to let all that I am praise my God forever and ever. And so, David remembering God’s mercy, his goodness and his faithfulness, number three, gives thanks for God’s amazing grace.

## 3. For God’s Amazing Grace

You see, David recognized that he was not who he once was, that he’d been changed because God intervened. This is the same idea that the apostle Paul conveys to us in Ephesians chapter 2. In verse one he tells us,

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

And so, Paul just like David, reminds us not to forget all his benefits, because at one time you were dead, at one time you were living for the desires of your sinful nature and you were separated from God. He says, just like the rest, you were without Christ, you were dead in your sins and actually deserving of God’s wrath.

Now, I know in our culture today this isn’t a popular teaching, but it’s biblical, and if you’re here, if you have a pulse, then you’re a sinner. You see, each and every one of us are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, we come from a long line of sinners, it’s our family lineage, and it goes all the way back to when they first sinned in the garden. You see, it’s not just your father or grandfather, but you and I, we’ve inherited our first parents, we’ve inherited Adam and Eve’s sin nature, and so by nature we’re not good, because the standard of good is the holiness of God. Therefore, by nature we’ve fallen short of his standard and we’re deserving of wrath.

And so, if we’re going to be thankful, if we’re going to worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, we need to acknowledge that we’ve done wrong, because considering that we stand guilty before a holy God is the starting point to receiving his amazing grace. In other words, if we don't see ourselves as a sinner, we'll never see our need for a Savior. But the good news is that Jesus didn’t come for the righteous, he didn’t come for those who are healthy, he didn’t come for those who had it altogether, but he came for those who were sick and hurting, he came for sinners.

Jesus came for those of us who are broken and hurting, those of us who recognize that time and time again we’ve fallen short of God’s glory and we need a deep spiritual cleansing and healing that only he can provide. Jesus came to set sinners free and by his wounds we are healed. That's why David reminds us, not to forget his benefits; Christ who forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases, and who redeems your life from the pit of hell. That’s why the apostle Paul reminds us in verses one through three, this is where you were, and this is who you were, but then in verse four he says,

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ…” (Eph 2:4-6).

He says, but God, who loved us so much that even though we were dead because of our sins, God gave us life, he raised us up with Christ.

Today, we give thanks for God’s amazing grace, remembering what God has done for us in Christ. You see, for centuries in the Old Testament, the people of God would gather together and celebrate the Passover once a year. And in that celebration they’d take an innocent one-year-old lamb and they’d sacrifice it. They’d take the blood from that lamb and they’d apply it, brushing it over top of the door of their house and putting some on each side. As they were doing this, they were remembering that moment in time when the death angel passed over them in Egypt and their firstborn son would live because they were covered with the blood, they had a temporary sacrifice for their sins, the sacrifice of an innocent lamb.

Now, fast forwarding into John’s gospel in the New Testament, we’re told that one day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and he identified him saying,

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

In the Old Testament, they would take the blood of the lamb and put it over top of their doors and it would drip down to the bottom. And so, it was a very vivid picture, hundreds of years before the cross of Jesus, foreshadowing the blood that the lamb of God would shed for the forgiveness of sins.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus hanging on the cross as the Lamb of God who was slain for the forgiveness of sins. We see him being mocked and suffering as a crown of thorns pierced his scalp and his hands and feet were nailed to the cross. The gospel of Luke records the eyewitness testimony that Jesus cried out to heaven,

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

And this is exactly what Paul was telling us, “You were dead in your transgressions and sins… but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5). And so, in anguish on the cross, the Son of God looked up to heaven and declared, “It is finished” (John 19:30). And then, calling out with a loud voice he said,

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” And when he had said this, he breathed his last” (Luke 23:46).

Because of his great love for us, Jesus gave his life, just as he told us, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

For three hours the whole world went dark, the earth shook and rocks split until all was still. Before sunset Jesus body was taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb as a few of the faithful looked on. There was evening and morning, evening and morning, but when the women went to the tomb, they found the stone had been rolled away and they didn’t find the body of Jesus. Luke tells us that,

“While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” (Luke 24:4-6).

Paul tells us, because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, forgave us our sins and made us alive with Christ. And so, even though you were dead in transgressions, God intervened, and by his grace you have been saved. That’s what Paul tells us in verse eight,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

In other words, you were, but God did. It’s by grace through faith. It’s not by works, but by grace. Not by religion, but by grace. Not by your human efforts, but by grace. Not by your perfection, but by grace.

We find this grace so beautifully illustrated in John chapter 8, when the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. They asked him, “Teacher, in the law of Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. They kept questioning him until finally he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone." At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time until only Jesus was left with the woman. He straightened up and asked her, "Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. Then Jesus said in verse 11,

“Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11).

One time, Jesus told a story about a father who had two sons, one of the sons said, “Father, give me my share of the estate.” In other words, I want what’s mine, and so, he went out and wasted it all on sinful living. After he’d spent everything, he began to be in need, and he came to his senses realizing that even his father’s hired men were better off than he was. And so, he determined that he would go back to his father, confessing that he’d sinned and throwing himself at his mercy. He got up and returned home not knowing that the father had been watching, praying, and hoping that his son would return. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him, ran to him and welcomed him.

“The father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again…” (Luke 15:18-24).

When Jesus was crucified, hanging on the cross between two criminals. One of them hurled insults at him saying: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal recognizing that he was being punished justly said, “We are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong" Jesus said to this man who was completely guilty, who couldn’t be baptized, couldn’t join the church, but with grace,

“Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Jesus said, “You were, but today by grace.” You were, but God. And some of you know exactly what I’m talking about. You were dead in your sins, you were hurting, you were broken, but you’ve been changed by the grace of God. And I know that there are others of you who are recognizing that there is something missing in your life. In fact, you’re desperate for something more, you’re desperate for a but God moment. You see, you were, but God in one moment, with just one prayer can change everything.

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