Every Good Gift - Part 3

Called to Give Thanks

## (Psalm 100:1-5)

We are in week three of our message series “Every Good Gift,” talking about the power of thankfulness. With this week being Thanksgiving it’s certainly appropriate that we would give God thanks for every good thing because the Bible tells us,

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

And so, we want to give God thanks because he is the giver of all good things. Every good thing we have comes from God, he is completely good, he is constantly good, and he does not change like shifting shadows. In other words, God will never not be good, never be less than good, because everything God does is good all the time.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above” and so we must acknowledge that he is worthy of our thanks and praise because just as he gave the Israelites bread from heaven in the wilderness, he gave his son Jesus to be our bread from heaven. He gave us salvation and a Kingdom that can’t be shaken, and so we join with the psalmist saying,

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalms 118:1).

We give thanks because God is our provider, he gives us his word to direct us, he gives the Holy Spirit to guide us, and he gives us his perfect peace.

Today I want you to know that as followers of Christ, we have been called to give thanks, because this is God’s will for you. The Bible says,

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

And so, we want to walk in the will of God, we want to get into the habit of giving thanks, because it changes our perspective. When we recognize the goodness of God, we refuse to let what we want to rob us of the blessings that we already have. And so, we’re going to daily count our blessings, and we’re going to turn each blessing back into praise, just like David did. He said in Psalm chapter 103,

“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, that I’m going to praise my God with every breath, forever and ever.” And so, he chose to give thanks, not forgetting God’s goodness, because he recognized that he wasn’t who he once was, he’d been changed because of God’s good gifts.

In the same way, as followers of Christ, we should have a different perspective from the world, because of God’s good gifts. Just consider for a moment that God gave us his Son, he gave us his forgiveness, he gives us grace upon grace, he gave us the Holy Spirit, the gift of his indwelling presence, the Kingdom and eternal life. And so, the Bible tells us in Psalm chapter 100,

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Psalm 100:1-3).

And so, today we’re going to give him thanks and praise, because we’re looking forward to spending eternity in his presence, and it’s our giving of thanks that opens the door into his presence. That’s what our key verse tells us in verse four, this is the foundational truth of this message,

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 100:4-5).

And so, this is how we enter God’s house, coming into his presence, we enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. It’s our giving of thanks that opens the door, not our yelling and screaming for more, not our grumbling and complaining about what we don’t have, but our thanks and praise for every good and perfect gift.

You see, it’s our giving of thanks that not only expresses our gratitude for his gifts but also acknowledges that he is our provider. In fact, the Bible says,

“(God) hasn’t left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:17).

In other words, you’ve been blessed, you have more than enough, as the Bible says, he has provided you with plenty. And so, I’m hoping that you will recognize this, internalizing this, realizing that not only is God your provider, but that he has given you more than enough.

Now certainly there is somebody somewhere who’s going to say, “Well, you don’t know my situation.” And maybe not, but we have been blessed, most of us in this community have way more than enough. Most of us have enough food to eat at least one meal today and maybe even have enough stored up for tomorrow. Not to mention the fact that most of us have more than one bedroom, maybe even a closet with a few sets of clothes, and even air conditioning, running water, and a toilet that flushes. And so, if you still have doubts that you’ve been blessed, let me encourage you to take a mission’s trip, leave the country, and see some other people in the world, because I believe you will come back with a different perspective.

We are blessed, our thanks brings us into God’s presence, and it’s important to understand that he has blessed us for a purpose. In other words, God has an agenda, he has a purpose for blessing his people, and I want to show you this in second Corinthians. The apostle Paul was writing to a group of people who were very poor, but they were very generous, and he said in chapter 9, verse 13, because of your ministry,

“Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else” (2 Corinthians 9:13).

I wonder when the last time was someone praised God because of your generosity. We have more than enough and our giving thanks for his blessings opens the door to his presence, but his purpose for blessing us was so that we could be a blessing to someone else which in turn would bring glory and praise to him. In other words, he gets a double return for his blessing, because our blessing blesses someone else, and there is this cycle of giving thanks, giving glory and praise to God. In fact, Jesus said,

“It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

And so, knowing that every good and perfect gift comes from above, recognizing that we’ve been blessed to be a blessing, our lives are transformed as we give thanks to God and praise his name, because our giving of thanks opens the door to his presence.

And then, number two, our giving opens the floodgates of heaven. You see, as believers our giving acknowledges that God is our provider, it expresses our gratitude for his gifts, which in turn opens the floodgates of heaven. And so, we need to understand that giving a tithe to God, giving the first fruits, is a biblical principle found as early as Genesis chapter 4. The Bible says,

“In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord, but Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor” (Genesis 4:4-5).

In other words, Cain brought some, but Abel brought the first and the best, and Jesus affirmed the giving of 10%, giving a tithe in Luke chapter 11. Here in the New Testament, Jesus was speaking to some corrupt religious leaders who made sure that they gave their tithe to God, but they weren’t being nice to others. He said in chapter 11, verse 42,

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone” (Luke 11:42).

In other words, Jesus says, “Yes, you should give God a tenth of everything, but what else does the Lord require of you?” He said, “you neglect justice and the love of God.” And God has showed you what is good, you should also act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

And so, Jesus acknowledges that giving a tithe is important, because it’s holy, and it belongs to God. Today, we need to acknowledge that tithing is not really giving, it’s merely an act of faith, returning to God what is already his. And so, giving a tithe is not an act of generosity, it’s an act of obedience, because God said in Leviticus chapter 27, verse 30,

"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30).

And it’s the Hebrew word, “maaser,” which means a tenth, that is translated “tithe.” The Lord says, “A tenth of everything from the land” belongs to who? Does it belong to you? No, the Bible says, “It belongs to the Lord, it is holy to the Lord.” In other words, it is set apart, it is his, which is why he tells us in Malachi chapter 3,

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse” (Malachi 3:10).

And so, he says you need to bring it, you need to give it back, not part of it, but the whole tithe because it is his.

In fact, the language here is very strong, God says that if you don’t bring the whole tithe, you’re actually stealing from him. He says that when you come to worship without bringing the tithe,

"You rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8).

In other words, he says, you need to bring it, you need to give it back, because the tithe belongs to God. It’s his, and so it’s not really giving, you could say it’s returning. It’s returning to God what is his and it is the baseline for all believers.

Bringing the tithe is giving for beginners, this is how we trust in the Lord with all our heart, leaning not on our own understanding, but in all of our ways acknowledging him (Proverbs 3:5-6). It’s returning to God what is his and the Bible says that it opens up the heavens. God says, “Test me in this,” in Malachi chapter 3,

“See if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

Now, I know for many of you this is a review, because you’re already tithers, you have already tested him, and you have found him to be faithful. If you’re like me, you have seen his faithfulness for decades, and you know that the tithe is for beginners, it’s only a starting point, it’s a baseline, and it gets really fun when you go beyond the tithe. That’s when it gets exciting, because we start with the tithe, and then we give offerings.

If you’re not there, this is the beginning point, this is where you start walking in faith and experience the promise of Jesus. He said,

“It’s more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

And so, our giving of thanks brings us into God’s presence, our giving of his gifts opens the floodgates of heaven, and number three our giving of thanks gives us the freedom to give joyfully, extravagantly, generously, and sacrificially.

As we enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise, our lives are transformed in his presence, because the Bible says,

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

And so, it’s as we come into his presence, giving our thanks and praise, that there is an element of freedom, there is this grace that is given. The Bible says it this way in second Corinthians, chapter 9,

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

It’s this principle of sowing and reaping that is not just a principle of nature, but it’s an eternal principle of God. When you sow generously, you will also reap generously, and so verse seven says,

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

And it’s our giving of thanks that gives us the freedom to give like that, not reluctantly or under compulsion, but cheerfully. The Greek word that is translated cheerfully literally means “hilariously.” And so, just as you excel in faith and in love, see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

That’s what one woman did in the gospel, she had been forgiven by Jesus, and she was so full of thanks and praise in his presence that she lost control. The Bible tells us that she gave the most generous, extravagant gift that you could ever imagine. This story is recorded in Mark’s gospel, chapter 14, when Jesus was in Bethany reclining at the table. Verse three says,

“A woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head” (Mark 14:3).

“Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly” (Mark 14:3-5).

Now, just think about that for a moment, think about what you make in a year, and then think about giving it all to Jesus. This woman is so filled with gratitude when she sees Jesus that she worshiped him, giving him this extravagant gift, and literally pouring it all over him. Some of those present were offended, because they considered it to be a waste, but Jesus tells them in verse six that they missed the point.

"Leave her alone, why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Mark 14:6-9).

You see, sometimes your giving of thanks needs to be expressed joyfully, generously, extravagantly, and sacrificially. Sometimes you’ve just got to give like that to express your gratitude, because honestly that’s exactly the way God gave to us. He so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, he poured it all out, and so you and I have to consider how we’re going to respond to his gracious gift.

I don’t know about you but sometimes I just want to shout for joy, I want to give him extravagant praise. In fact, I like the way Psalm 100 describes it in verse one,

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his…” (Psalms 100:1-3).

I wonder if there’s anybody in here, anybody listening who just wants to worship and celebrate, giving joyfully, generously, extravagantly, and sacrificially, thanking God for every good and perfect gift?

In fact, last Wednesday we saw Jesus agonizing over the nearness of the cross as he was praying in the garden the night of his arrest. And I’m so thankful that he stayed the course, that he gave himself completely to the will of the Father, being willing to offer himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The spiritual struggle was intense, but he was victorious, and he said to his Father with resolve,

“Not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36).

He modeled for us complete surrender to the will of God, being willing to do whatever God wants to do in our lives, even when it is difficult and even when it requires that we give of ourselves sacrificially.

You see, Jesus didn’t give what was left over, he gave the very best, he gave what he wanted and what he needed. And my prayer is that we’re able to learn to give like him, giving in such a way that we can feel it, because it cost us something. I love the way David said it in second Samuel, chapter 24. He said,

"I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24).

In other words, he really wanted it to be a sacrifice. He didn’t just want to give out of his surplus, out of the overflow, but he wanted to give in such a way that he could feel it, giving so that it was really a sacrifice.

My prayer is that we would learn to give like Jesus, giving like David, and that we would do whatever it takes to give joyfully, extravagantly, generously, and sacrificially. That we would give thanks to him and praise his name even when it hurts, even if we have to downsize, even if it’s less money, even if it costs us some friends. But doing whatever it takes to fulfill the will of God in our lives, knowing that whatever it costs, it’s opening the door to his presence and his provision and that he has something far better for us. The psalmist said in verse five,

“The Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

And I’m so thankful for his goodness, for his love, and his faithfulness. I’m thankful for Jesus’ faithfulness in Gethsemane, his willingness to give himself sacrificially, and it’s because of his obedience that we’re here today. It’s only because of Jesus that we’re saved, we’re forgiven, we’re righteous, and we’re restored. We are the sons and daughters of God, all because of what Jesus worked out in the garden as he wrestled in prayer, committing himself to the will of the Father, going to the cross and offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

I’m afraid that many times that we miss out on the opportunities before us, not realizing that when we hold onto things that we are missing the blessing of giving sacrificially. You see, it’s only as we let go something of great worth that we are able to gain something that is even more valuable. And I believe that there are some of you here of whom God is waiting, ready to introduce you to the blessing of Thanksgiving.

You’ve been called to give thanks and God wants to welcome you into his courts, into his presence, throwing open the floodgates of heaven, so that you know that his love endures forever and his faithfulness through all generations. Would you make a commitment to God today, to choose thanksgiving, to give thanks to him and praise his name, letting go of whatever you need to let go of so that you can step into the freedom of giving. Would you open your heart right now and make that decision as we pray?

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