

A Heart of Thanksgiving

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[0:00] Good morning. While I can't be with you here in person this morning, I wanted to be with you in spirit to share a thanksgiving message as we reflect on this long weekend and what it means.

Will you pray with me? Father, thank you for who you are. Thank you for your goodness, your mercy, your faithfulness, and your love.

Thank you for everything that you've already done in our lives and for the things that you will do that are yet to come. Even when we can't understand our circumstances, help us to trust you.

Teach us to give thanks in every situation and to believe that you're working for our good. Give us thankful hearts, thankful homes, and thankful lives.

And it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Welcome here for this Sunday, October 11th, 2026. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here and also there.

[1:04] As you hear this, Michelle and I have likely kicked off our 16-plus hour journey back home. We leave London and head to Amsterdam for a brief stop, then on to Toronto where we have another brief stop, and then back to Edmonton.

Happy Thanksgiving, folks. I pray that you'll have an amazing long weekend of time spent with family and friends, and please have some pumpkin pie for us. Our sermon this morning is titled, A Heart of Thanksgiving, and we're anchored in Psalm 100, verses 1-5.

Again, that's Psalm 100, verses 1-5, where we read, Shout for joy 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. Enter the gates with thanksgiving, 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.

[2:19] What does thanksgiving mean to you? Does it mean time spent with family and friends? Sharing a good meal or two and relaxing with the people that you love?

Friends, those are all very good things. Maybe it means, I don't know, being thankful to your pastor that he recorded this message. I'm mostly kidding. Whatever thanksgiving, the day, or the term means to you, I want to suggest that it means more than just saying thank you.

Thanksgiving is an attitude of the heart that recognizes God as the source of every good thing in our lives. We often thank God when everything is going well, but biblical thanksgiving means so much more.

See that man doing his work in the background? There we go. Live video is never what you expect it to be. There he goes. Wave, everyone. So thanksgiving really is an attitude of the heart.

We thank God when things are going well, right? I think that is quite easy for us. But we can also give thanks when our circumstances are difficult because our confidence isn't entirely and ultimately dependent on our circumstances.

[3:34] Our confidence is in God. Psalm 100, our passage for this morning, gives us three powerful reasons why we should live with thankful hearts.

First, we need to give thanks for who God is. Maybe that seems obvious. Psalm 100, verse 3 says, Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us and we are his. Our first reason then is for thanksgiving is then simply who God is. God is our creator.

He's our shepherd. He's faithful and loving and merciful and powerful and good above all things.

Sometimes I think maybe we focus a little too much on what God has done or what we want him to

do that we forget to start by thanking him at the very beginning for who he is. That's the most important place that we need to start. Because our circumstances may change, but God's character never changes. He is constant and dependable and reliable. [4:45] When we have everything we need, he is God. When we have little, guess what? He is still God. When we understand what's happening, he is God.

And when we don't have any idea what's going on, he is still God. I can't be away and not give you homework. Sometimes you get a substitute teacher and they either give lots of homework or none compared to the regular teacher.

But I am here, so I'm going to give you, as usual, some homework. Here's some things I want you to think about. Take time every day to thank God specifically for his character.

Thank him for who he is. Instead of only saying, Lord, thank you for my job, for example, say, Lord, bigger than that, thank you for how you provide for me and that you do provide for me and I can see it and recognize it.

Instead of only saying thank you for healing, say thank you that you are faithful. Maybe you've been praying or someone else has been praying for you that you would be healed or that your pain or challenges in your life would go away or that some sort of provision would show up.

[5:59] We can be thankful that God is faithful, not just for the details of what he has done, but for much more than that. Because when our thanksgiving, I believe, is anchored in who God is in his character, we can praise him then even when our circumstances are difficult.

Because, again, our praise and thanksgiving to God cannot, should not, be dependent on our circumstances. Ask yourself this.

Am I thankful for God himself? Or am I only thankful when God gives me what I want? Those are hard words, I think, and yet we can probably recognize, each of us, ways that we have done that. Been thankful to God when he has given us what we want versus starting with who he is. Second, this morning, I want us to give thanks for what God has done.

That's also important. So giving thanks for who he is and then for what he has done. Psalm 100 verse 4 tells us this. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

[7:10] Give thanks to him and praise his name. Friends, true thanksgiving should cause us to remember God's goodness. To remember the good things that God has done.

I think that we can be so focused, become so focused on today's problems, that we begin to forget or just automatically forget yesterday's miracles.

Yesterday's provision. What God did for us as recently as yesterday. Sometimes we forget those things and it's important that we don't.

I encourage you to take some quiet time to think about all the times or how many times God has brought you through situations.

And some of those situations, maybe you thought you would never get your head above water. Maybe situations you would literally never survive that God has shown up and gotten you through.

[8:08] Because I guarantee we all have stories like that. Times when God opened doors. When he provided when you had a need.

Even if it was a need you didn't realize you had, God still showed up. And maybe he even showed up through someone else. Or through you to help someone that you didn't even know had a need. Maybe God protected you when you didn't even know you were in danger. Has that happened to you? Maybe you recognized it after the fact. Or maybe you never recognized it and won't this side of heaven, if ever.

Maybe God forgave you and you recognized that. Maybe when you failed at something. You went to God in prayer and thanked him for who he is.

Thanked him for his faithfulness. Asked for his forgiveness. And you recognize that he will forgive you. He will restore and continue to restore that relationship.

[9:08] Friends, maybe he gave you strength when you were weak. Either emotionally, spiritually, possibly even physically for many of us. God showed up and gave you the strength that you needed.

So recognize what God has done in your life. How he has shown up for you. My friends, he's done it before. Whether we recognize it or not.

So you have absolutely every reason to trust that he will do it again and again. More homework. This is what I'd like you to try.

And it doesn't have to be easy. But it also doesn't have to be hard. I want you to make a spiritual record of God's faithfulness to you. Well, what the heck does that mean? What does that look like? I don't even understand, Pastor Kent. Well, write down answered prayers. The ones that you can remember. The ones that you can recognize. Remember the times when God provided.

[10:09] When maybe you didn't pray for something. Maybe you didn't specifically pray for provision for anything. But God showed up. I want you to tell your friends and your family what God has done for you.

Tell them. Share that story. Share your story with others. To encourage them if they are already a follower of Jesus. Or to show them that God is faithful.

And he can work in their lives just as he works in yours. So this week, I want you to write down five things that God has done for you. Maybe you're already thinking, oh, Pastor Kent, three points, five things, all these homework things.

What do I do? Just do your best. That's really all. And again, I'm not going to check your homework. I promise that. This is a long weekend. It's Thanksgiving. I just want you to be thinking and reflecting on these things.

So write down five things that God has done for you. Then I want you to spend some time thanking him for each one specifically. You might just discover that while your problems are real, and I'm not saying your problems will not exist or will miraculously all just disappear.

[11:19] But while your problems continue to be real, I want us to all remember that God's faithfulness to us is even greater. Our third point this morning.

I think we need to give thanks for what God is going to do. So give thanks to God for who he is. Give thanks to God for what he has done. And then give thanks in hope and faith for what God is going to do in your life.

In 1 Thessalonians 5.18, it says, Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Notice that scripture, and you've heard me say this before, things along these lines. Notice scripture doesn't say for us to give thanks for bad things or for only the good things.

It says there in 1 Thessalonians 5.18, Give thanks in all circumstances. And there's a difference. Absolutely. And I hope we can recognize that.

[12:25] We obviously don't thank God for sickness or tragedy, disappointment or loss. I didn't turn to God and say, Thank you, Lord, so much for two of our vehicles, our only two vehicles, dying at almost exactly the same time.

But I'll tell you what it did for me, what it did for Michelle and I both, is it reminded us that we're not in this alone. We don't have to solve this problem ourselves.

God will show up, just as he has many, many other times in our lives. Even in those situations, situations where things are difficult or hard or our circumstances are bad, we can still thank God because we're not alone.

He is with us in good times and in bad. And also because we know that he is faithful. We can have faith in him and trust him with our future.

Maybe you've never really considered this, but thanksgiving really is an expression of faith. Did you ever think of it that way?

[13:35] That being thankful, recognizing who God is, recognizing what he's done, recognizing what he will do, is an expression of faith. Well, an expression of faith in what?

A faith in God. So we recognize that we believe him. We believe his promises to be true. We trust him. We know that and recognize that he has shown up.

And we recognize that he will show up again. So maybe you've never really considered that. But I think, as I said, thanksgiving is an expression of faith.

When we say, Lord, I don't know what might happen tomorrow. Do you ever think of that as maybe you're somehow being weak or not trusting?

I don't think so. As long as we follow it up with this kind of perspective. Lord, I don't know what might happen tomorrow. But I'm thankful that you hold tomorrow in your hands.

[14:37] Friends, in doing that and having that fulsome perspective, we're expressing faith. We're expressing trust. And we're demonstrating to others that even in difficult times in our lives, we can still show that we have faith in God.

Show that we believe in God. Trust him. Trust his character. And know that he will show up as he always has. I want to challenge each of us this thanksgiving.

I want us to learn to thank God before we see the answer. Is that a paradigm shift in your mind? Is that difficult to wrap your head around? Well, I mean, the reality is, obviously, when we see the results of something, we thank someone for giving us a gift. Oh, how very thoughtful. Thank you. This is not the kind of tie I would normally wear. I prefer bow ties. You know, that kind of thing. Or a toaster. I've always wanted a toaster. And I don't even eat toast. Maybe those kinds of things.

[15:41] Right? We're thankful for something that is right before us. That appears to us. And we have it. And it's tangible. But I think it really shows faith on our part.

If we're able to say, God, you know I have a need. God, I trust you with that need. You've been there for me before. You've provided and shown up before. Thank you for what you have yet to do. And you see how that's different? It's not saying my thankfulness is conditional on. It's not a control over or dependent on, is what I should say.

Dependent on what God will do. So, you know, I trust you, God. I have faith that you'll show up as you always have. But I'm just going to wait here and see what you do before I thank you for being able to see that you've acted.

Nope. Don't do that. Real faith, my friends, shows that we trust God with his result. We trust God with what he is choosing as the right path and the right provision for us in our time of need.

[16:50] So thank God before he has shown up. Before you see the answer. And then here's another one. You know how I feel about waiting.

Waiting can be hard. But waiting is important. Waiting is formative for us in our lives. And certainly in our discipleship journey as we grow closer to Christ and trust him more and more.

So thank God while you're waiting. While you have prayed. While you have truly, honestly surrendered something to him and said, Lord, you know what I need?

I trust your will to do it in your time according to what is best for my life. And then wait. And while you're waiting, as I said, thank him.

Thank him for the fact that he is at work. Now, do we always see God at work? No. But we can always trust that he is because he says that he is. Right?

[17:48] So our belief in God's character, if we say that with our mouths and we believe it in our brains, then we can trust it in our heart as well. So, and then thank him while you're praying.

While you're waiting for something to happen. While you're waiting for God to show up. Prayer is not a one-time thing. So we don't say, Lord, we need new vehicles. So I'm just going to wait here. And thank you for what I hope you're doing to show us the road to new vehicles. But thank him in prayer. So while you continually give things to God.

I mean, that's the reality is that it's not always easy to leave things with God. It's not always easy to trust because maybe we have an overinflated sense of self-importance.

No, if I sit and wait and pray for God to do something and don't act myself, then I'm being lazy. I'm being an unfaithful follower of Christ if I don't do my part.

[18:49] Friends, that's a slippery slope. Because once you believe that you need to do something for God to work or God to act or God to provide, you're putting yourself above God in that equation.

Which is never a wise choice. Another thing that I want us to think about is thanking God while the door is still closed. Like, for example, if you've applied for a job or you're waiting on test results or something like that, medical test results.

If a door is still closed or seems to be closed, you know, there isn't a clear path forward. There isn't a clear answer that you're hoping for, that you're waiting for, that you're expecting.

Trust him. Be thankful that he's at work and be thankful that what the ultimate outcome is, is going to be God's will and God's best for you.

So why do we need to do those things? Why do we need to thank him while we're waiting? Thank him while we're praying? Thank him while the door seems to still be closed?

[19:53] Well, there's no clear path forward and we're struggling with that. Thank him while the situation is uncertain, right? When we don't know what's going to happen. As I said earlier, when we don't know what the future holds, we can still be thankful because he's at work.

And so why? Why all of those things? And why, as I said earlier, why is thankfulness a sign of faith? Well, faith says this.

Faith says, I may not see it yet or I may not see it at all, but I know God is working. See there, that's what faith says, is that I may not see the result yet.

I may have asked and I've left it with him. I may be seeking to trust him as hard as that might be.

But I know that God is working on my behalf. I know that he's with me and I'm not alone.

Friends, your thanksgiving, my thanksgiving, our expression of that, can really become a bold and unshakable declaration of trust.

[21:04] It's a declaration and demonstration, no question, of faith, but also of trust. So we've looked at Psalm 100 this morning, verses 1 to 5.

We've spent some time reflecting on the nature of God, the nature of trust, the nature of faith, and what it looks like to be thankful beyond just mere gratitude, but recognition of character and consistency and dependability of God.

And so I just want you to remember, first of all, if you need to listen back to this sermon or watch this sermon again and think about the homework, I do encourage you to do those things.

I do encourage you to write out answered prayer and consciously thank God for it. And I do want you to think about praying in gratitude to God of what he has done that you recognize.

And also, again, pray for things that he has done that you didn't even see happen, ways that he, again, protected you, provided for you.

[22:15] Maybe he used someone else or even you to bless someone else in a situation, and you didn't see it. You didn't see what he did, the actual details and steps of what happened, but you can thank him that he was at work.

So, again, spending time in Psalm 100 this morning, it creates a really beautiful perspective. That passage and hopefully what we've talked about this morning, a beautiful picture of a thankful life.

Because we give thanks for who God is. We give thanks for what God has done. And in some ways, most importantly, we give thanks for what God has yet to do.

Friends, those things demonstrate faith and they demonstrate trust. Thanksgiving isn't just a date on our calendar. It's not just a holiday.

It's not just a time when you can unabashedly consume mass amounts of turkey and pumpkin pie with less judgment than normal. It's not just a long weekend.

[23:25] Friends, Thanksgiving should be a lifestyle. When we look around, we can find things to complain about. Maybe you can relate to that.

I know that I sometimes catch myself complaining rather than being thankful. But I think when we look up rather than around, we find reasons to give thanks. You may not have everything you want, but you have a God who has never failed you and you likely, if you thought about it, have everything you need.

You may be facing a difficult season right now, but friends, God is still faithful. You may not know what tomorrow holds, but you know who holds tomorrow.

I read that quote recently and I love it. You may not know what tomorrow holds, but you know who holds tomorrow. So friends, let your heart say, Lord, I thank you for who you are.

I thank you for what you've done and I thank you for what you're going to do. Now, here's your final homework assignment. This one I may check. No, I won't.

[24:33] Here's your final homework assignment and you thought the flock can play when the pastor's away. Well, you were wrong. You were wrong. This week and every day, if you remember it, I want you to practice a three-part Thanksgiving challenge.

And you've heard me say this several different ways throughout this message, but a reminder is good. Thank God for one thing about who he is.

Thank God for one thing that he has already done in your life. And thank God for one thing you are trusting him to do. Do this for every seven days.

And as you do, there's kids coming in behind me. As you do, you'll begin to discover that Thanksgiving doesn't necessarily change your circumstances, but it will change your perspective in vital and fundamental ways.

In the midst of your circumstances. Maybe you can wrap your head around that. My brothers and sisters, my dear friends, happy Thanksgiving. Amen?

[25:37] Amen.