

Attitude Of Gratitude

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. Hey, and as always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thanks so much for tuning in today. We are excited about getting into the Word of God, but most of all, letting this Word get into these hearts and transform you and me more and more into the image of Christ.

Now go ahead and grab your Bibles, if you would. Turn to Luke chapter 17. And I want to tell you a story about a godly farmer who was asked to dine with a very well-known and educated man that he had met a couple times.

They met at a local restaurant, and the conversation was going well when the food came. So the farmer, like he always did, bowed his head, said a prayer for both of them, and he gave thanks to God.

Well, when the prayer was done, the farmer looked up, and the man is just staring at him with this smirk on his face. And he said, you know, that's a pretty old-fashioned thing to do.

[1 : 04] It's not really customary nowadays for well-educated people to pray before they eat. And honestly, it was very embarrassing. Well, the farmer said, I'm really sorry. I'd never embarrass you on purpose.

It's just really important to me to say thank you to the one who gives me everything I have. But he said, you know, there are some on the farm who never pray before their meal.

Well, the well-educated man kind of sat up and puffed out his chest a little bit, and he said, really? Well, they must be the sensible and enlightened ones. Who are they? And that's when the farmer said, well, they're my pigs.

Hey, before we jump into our new series next Sunday, I wanted to share something that God's put on my heart here lately. It's also a good reminder for us to chew on with Thanksgiving coming up next month, pun intended.

But I've realized that I'm not anywhere near the thankful person that I want to be. In fact, one person I really admire who does a pretty good job in this area is Danny Wolford, our former lead pastor who retired from full-time ministry back in 2020.

[2 : 12] Such a grateful and positive guy. In fact, I think he even used to be an officer in the Optimist Club here in town because of his attitude of gratitude.

But, you know, if I were to be in a club that described me a little better, it would be called the Realist Club. Because that's what us pessimists prefer to be called, okay? But on a more serious note, as we open up God's Word today, I hope your prayer is the same as mine.

I hope that we can come before the perfect Word of God, asking our Father to help us see with spiritual eyes all the blessings that we have to be thankful for this year.

So let's look at Luke chapter 17. Go ahead and look at verse 11. That's where we'll start. Just stick with me. We're going to read about a story here, so it's going to go for a little while.

But Luke 17, starting in verse 11. Now, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him.

[3 : 18] They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have pity on us. When he saw them, he said, go show yourselves to the priest. And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him, and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, were not all ten cleansed?

Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner? And then he said to him, rise and go, your faith has made you well.

Leprosy was a disease that was transmitted by encountering someone who had it. And because of the infectious nature of this disease, people with leprosy were made to leave their families, leave everything they had behind, and they would live in a leper colony with others who had it.

And basically, because the disease was incurable in Jesus' day, it would eat away at them from the inside out, causing, I mean, I know this sounds really gruesome, but body parts would literally fall off until it would take their life.

[4 : 31] It was like cancer in some ways, except for leprosy was contagious. Now, could you imagine going along in your life with your spouse, with your kids, maybe like you are today, when suddenly you start to notice some spots on your skin?

Then you go to the doctor, you find out that it is your worst fear, it's leprosy. You're told you can never come in close contact with your family again. Could you fathom the absolute heartbreak, even depression, that you would feel?

See, those were the people that Jesus came upon in this story. And who knows how long these ten had been living with this disease, how close some of them were to death, even how long it had been since they saw their loved ones, hugged their kids, kissed their wife, fist-bumped their friend. But somehow they had heard about this Jesus guy who was healing the sick, causing the blind to see. And out of desperation, I mean, their last drop of hope, they come toward Jesus yelling, Jesus, have pity on us.

In other words, Jesus, please don't look at us like everyone else does. Please don't treat us like we're garbage, like we're scum of the earth. Please heal us. You're our only hope to be made whole again.

[5 : 45] You're our only hope for this life. And Jesus, being full of compassion, says to all ten of them, go show yourselves to the priests. That means God loves you, you're restored.

Go show yourself to the priests that you are healed and offer thanksgiving to God for what he has done. See, that was the custom of their day. And it says that as they went, they were healed.

In other words, Jesus changed everything. Now, if you feel comfortable doing so, right where you are, in your home, your car, if you can, raise your hand for me if you are a cancer survivor.

Well, God bless you if you are. And I bet it was one of those most joyous days in your life when you heard the doctor say that your cancer was in remission.

When you heard him or her say those words, you are cancer free. Well, that's probably the joy that these guys felt when they realized, wow, I'm healed.

[6 : 49] Now, here's the part of the story that I want you to get. Jesus healed all ten of these men. I'm sure they all went before the priests and they were free to go back to their families. I'm sure these men ran as fast as they could to see their loved ones.

They scooped up their kids in their arms, gave their wife a big, fat, juicy kiss that we can't talk too much about in this church broadcast. But one of these men didn't do that, at least not right away. One of the men in the story ran as fast as he could the other way to find Jesus. And when he found him, he threw himself at his feet, thanking his Savior with everything inside of him for this new life he now had.

He worshipped Jesus. He wanted him to know how grateful he was to be healed. And you know, that makes me wonder how each of us have responded to God's love and mercy in our lives.

Every one of us, before we come to know Jesus, has a self-inflicted disease called sin. Sin separates us from a perfect Heavenly Father. And sin leads to death in this life and eternally.

[8 : 01] But when we come to this realization and we surrender our lives by faith to Jesus, when we're baptized into him, he heals us from our sins. He welcomes us into life abundant on this earth, life eternal when our days are done.

We are filled with the Holy Spirit. But I have to ask this question because honestly, it's screaming out at us. Who do we represent from this story?

Are you the one who was healed? And because of God's goodness, you've decided to spend the rest of your days praising him? Now, I'm not talking about church attendance, even though the Bible tells us why that's really important.

I'm not talking about holding an office such as minister, pastor, elder, deacon, praise team member, whatever. Those are all good things. I'm talking about the hard part.

praising God with your life, worshiping the Lord with your actions, the motivations of your heart, even the words that come out of our mouths. Are you a person who has said, Lord, here am I, send me, use me.

[9 : 07] Let me love people like you've loved me because of your goodness, because of your grace. God, I want to be used by you however you choose. Thank you, Jesus.

Are we like too many people who come to Jesus to find healing and then you go off and you do your own thing with the side dish of Jesus when it's convenient and life starts to fall apart again?

These are some tough questions. And as I was working through this message, I didn't have any time to look at your heart because I, listen, I need to look at my own.

I had to look in the mirror. I had to be honest. I've always, I have a ways to go in this area. And I decided that I want to live a life that screams out to Jesus, thank you.

I heard someone call this, instead of thanksgiving, they called it thanks living. Letting your life speak for itself. Letting your life show that deep gratitude.

[10 : 07] Whew, man, we're getting too deep. Let's calm that down a little bit by looking at a couple Greek words here. The word gratitude comes from the same root word as the word grace.

A person who has begun to accept how gracious God is becomes a grateful person. Thanksgiving is from the same root word as the word think. So to think about God accurately is to thank God continuously in the midst of life.

Colossians 4.2 puts it like this, devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. So guys, here's what it comes down to. A person who's truly thankful to God for his grace is someone who decides to live their life 100% sold out for Jesus.

And the best way to say thank you to him is to live such a radical life of gratefulness that it impacts every single person around you. Now let's kind of shift gears here.

We've talked about the importance of being thankful. Now let's look at a few reasons why God's word says that we need to be thankful. And here's first. Be thankful for God's blessings.

[11 : 18] Be thankful for his blessings. Now, even though this may be a little hard for us to understand because it was written back in 1779, I want to read to you the very first national Thanksgiving Day proclamation made by George Washington.

Here's what he said. Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and to humbly implore his protection and favor. Whereas both the houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.

And then he says, Now, therefore, I do recommend next to be devoted by the people of the states to the service of that great and glorious being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, and that will be, and that we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks for his kind care and protection of the people of this country.

Now, there's no doubt why this country has stood strong for hundreds of years. It's because we were founded on Jesus Christ. We were founded on his word and giving thanks to him for his blessings.

[12 : 53] And even though we've been running furiously away from the foundation that this country was started upon, this church family right here will never stop thanking God for his blessings.

You know, when I served at a church in Rush County, my first ministry for eight years called Plum Creek Christian Church, we had a part of our service where we would ask the congregation, like in the middle of the service, to speak up their praises.

And it was always refreshing just to hear God's people be thankful. And I have to share someone that I'm thankful for. You know, in the 29 days, Bethany and I, my wife, will celebrate 17 years of marriage.

And you know, it's hard to put into words how thankful for her I am. She's amazing. I'm not the easiest person to live with. I'll admit that. But she has loved me fearlessly.

And for that, I praise God. In fact, she will officially receive her sainthood when we hit 20 years. But hey, 1 Chronicles 16, 34, give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

[14:06] His love endures forever. Thank God for our families. Thank God for your home. Thank God for the freedoms and the sacrifices of our military and their families.

Thank God that he lets us be a part of his mission here on this earth. Thank God for this church family and so many other Bible-believing churches across this nation and world. Each one of us has so much to be thankful for, even if you come here today and your health is failing you.

Maybe you find yourself in the middle of a storm that just keeps raging. Thank God that he loves you enough to never leave your side, never forsake you and walk with you through that storm.

Thank God that he's your rock, your redeemer, your strength, no matter what you face.

Thank God that he has purposes for our struggles and our suffering that maybe we can't quite see. Our God is so good. So be thankful for everything God has given you.

Second thing I want you to see today, be thankful for God's foresight, for his foresight. You can even use the word providence. You know, over and above all things that happen, God is at work guiding, directing, and bringing about his purposes.

[15:20] Listen, we don't always understand. And there are a lot of things I shake my head on. I don't get. But I know that my God is always at work. And Job, when his life had fallen apart, when he had lost all his possessions and most of his family, the only one left was nagging at him.

But he said he learned one thing. The purposes of God will not be thwarted or frustrated. You know, my mentor, a man named Steve Abernathy, he passed away back in 2015.

And he used to say to me, as a young minister, I'm so thankful God put him in my path. He would speak so much wisdom into my life. But he used to say to me, when I would be venting about my frustrations and my ministry and blah, blah, blah, and just being a baby, whatever, he would say to me, Ray, you need to remember, no matter what happens, God is still on his throne.

If we can embrace that powerful truth, then we'll always be able to give thanks in any situation.

Even approach the hardest trials of life, level-headed with peace in our hearts.

See, Hebrews 12, 28 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.

[16:38] Years ago, a man by the name of Jack Hinton went on a short-term mission trip to a leper colony on the island of Tobago. One of his jobs was to lead singing during the worship times.

One Sunday, they were close to finishing the service, and there was a time for one more song, and he asked, Does anyone have a request? That's when this woman, who had been facing away from them the whole service, she turned around.

And listen, in his words, he said, It was the most hideous face I've ever seen. The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone. The disease had also destroyed her lips. And that's when she lifted her fingerless hand into the air, and she said, Can we sing Count Your Many Blessings?

Well, after that song was over, this young man was so overwhelmed with emotion that he just had to walk away. A fellow member of the team followed him just to check on him and said, Jack, I guess you're never going to be able to sing that song again.

But that's when Jack said, You know, I think I will, but I'll never sing it the same way again. Even though we don't always understand everything that happens in this world, and listen, we're not going to on this side of eternity, but know that God is in control working in every situation.

[17:57] Just like it says in Romans 8, 28, And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Thank God for his providence, because he sees the big picture and really does know best. And then third, be thankful in obedience. Be thankful in obedience.

You know, that may sound strong. Basically, be thankful because we're commanded to be thankful. That may sound strong, but let me explain it a little bit. John Henry Joette, a British preacher in the 19th century, said this about gratitude.

He said, Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic. Now, if you're like me, you're thinking, well, what in the world does that even mean?

Well, let me try to break it down for you with the help of a guy named John Yates. He said, Gratitude like a vaccine can prevent the invasion of a disgruntled, discouraged spirit. Gratitude like an antitoxin can prevent the effects of poisons such as cynicism, a critical spirit, and grumbling.

[19:05] And gratitude like an antiseptic can soothe and heal the most troubled spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5, starting in verse 16, Paul says, Rejoice always.

We read this last week, but I want to focus on a different part. Rejoice always. Let me say it again. Rejoice always. Pray continually.

Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Now, do we have any parents listening to this who have tried hard to teach their children proper manners?

When they would ask for something, what is it you taught them to say? Please, right? And when they receive something, then you taught them to say, thank you. Now, let me ask you this. Did your child always act with perfect manners?

I mean, did it just come so naturally that you really didn't have to try? If you're like me, the answer is no. Absolutely not. Because if they did, you wouldn't constantly have to say to them, now what do you say when somebody gives you something?

[20 : 11] It was a habit that you had to instill in them to be thankful. You know, this is exactly what this passage in 1 Thessalonians is saying to us. No matter where you find yourself, good times, bad times, in between, stress of craziness of life, you still have so much to be thankful for.

Now, I want you to notice something in this passage that maybe you've never thought of before.

Paul doesn't say give thanks for all circumstances. He says give thanks in all circumstances.

See, there's a big difference here. If I lose my job because the church gets sick of my red hair and it makes the elders angry like a bull, if I'm struggling to put food on the table for my family, I'm probably not going to say, well, God, thank you so much that I lost my job.

I'm so thrilled about it. Or if I go to the doctor and she says I have this major illness, I'm not going to be like, super, thank you, God, I'm so excited about this.

The word says give thanks in all circumstances. So when I find myself without a job, struggling to pay the bills and feed my family, I will still say thank you, God, for who you are and thank you that you love me enough that you will provide, you will teach me valuable lessons through this time.

[21 : 27] Now, I know that's tough. It's a lot easier said than done, but God is in control and we must learn to lean on him, giving him thanks no matter what comes our way.

God has never failed any of us and he's not going to start now. Let me end this morning with this story about a missionary who came up to a young minister after he delivered a message one Sunday.

He introduced himself and he said, you know, I was a medical missionary for years in India. I served in a region where there was progressive blindness. People were born with healthy vision, but there was something that happened for so many people that caused them to lose their sight as they grew older.

In time, this missionary developed a treatment that stopped the progressive blindness. So people came, as you can imagine, constantly to get this treatment and they left knowing that they wouldn't have to go blind like their parents, like their grandparents, like others around them.

He said, you know, they never said thank you because that phrase was not in their dialect. Instead, they spoke a word that meant, I will tell your name. So wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary who had cured their blindness.

[22 : 42] They had received something so wonderful that they had to proclaim that name. I challenge each one of us here today, listening to this message, to do the same thing.

Because God loved you so much that He sent His Son to the cross to take our place for all the ugly, ugly, ugly sins that we've committed.

Because we've encountered the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. Because we were blind and now we can see we choose to be like that one leper.

Don't be like the nine. Be like the one who dropped everything to run to Jesus and simply cry out thank you. See, it's my prayer that we won't just come this year in about a little over a month on November 28 to say thanks.

That it won't just be one day or a couple days out of the year but that we will live a life that cries out to God thank you. A life of thanks living where I have an attitude of gratitude.

[23 : 46] Will you pray with me? Heavenly Father thank you so much for your word that just speaks truth into our hearts today.

God, I know it's so easy for us to get cynical about things to get frustrated with life to be overwhelmed and to let our negativity and our pessimism come out so easily.

Lord, you know that I battle that as well. But God, I just pray right now as we've gotten into your word and we see who you are that you are good that you are holy that you are righteous that you

are full of love and mercy and grace that you are a God whose justice is perfect. You are a God who is righteous in every way. You are a God who loved us so much that you went to the cross to take our place, Jesus and died for us so that we may discover life on this earth and life eternal as we contemplate everything that you've done for us.

We can't help but to cry out thank you. Even when life isn't perfect even when I'm walking through stuff will you give me an attitude of gratitude so that I can display your love into this world.

[25 : 07] Father, we know that there are people around us every day who we have an opportunity to share your love and your grace with that we can pour ourselves into who need to see an attitude of gratitude.

So Father, place us exactly where you want us to be so we can be lights for you. Jesus, we praise you. We adore you. You are good and we pray all of this in your precious and your holy name.

God's people said Amen and Amen. Hey, I want to give you a quick invitation. I don't know where you are in your faith journey. I don't know if you're just searching but if you're someone who has questions about your faith, questions about what it means to give your life to Jesus, just questions even about our church, we would love to come alongside you.

Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor at First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. We would love to come alongside you and just help you on this faith journey, walk with Jesus, serve Him faithfully, and then someday enter into His glory.

So reach out to us. Here's a couple ways you can do that. You can call us in the office at 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com.

[26 : 31] Hey, God bless you and I hope you have a fantastic week.