

# Untitled (18)

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[0:00] I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

! So, from a really early age, my daughter Lucy has said thank you quite often. Pretty sure that she wasn't even two yet the first time that she thanked me for changing her dirty diaper. That was a first. I remember wondering then who in the world this kid is and where she came from. And she hasn't stopped saying thank you since. I gotta be honest with you guys, it's a really humbling thing for me. What do I mean by that? Well, it's really humbling when I realize that my two-year-old seems to have more of a capacity for gratitude than I do. That stings.

When I begin my day with morning prayer, I pray for my needs. I pray for the needs of the people that I love. I pray for my family.

[1:15] I pray for my church family. It's also easy to get caught up in that, not that it's a bad thing to pray about those things, but to focus so much on asking God for things that I forget to say thank you.

Have you ever faced that temptation? I'm seeing some nodding heads, so I'm glad to know that someone here knows what I mean.

I don't think it's any accident that if you look at morning prayer in our prayer book, puts a prayer of thanksgiving right after the time appointed for intercession. I don't think that's an accident.

But anyway, what does my daughter Lucy have to teach me? Where does this come from? I think that she lives, she probably couldn't articulate this, I'm going to bet on that, but I think she lives with an understanding, being a small child, that she is completely dependent on the people who care for her.

Us, on the other hand, when we grow up, I think we tend to believe that we have it covered, don't we? We go to God when we really need something.

[2:29] He's our plan B. But all too often, even then, we forget to thank Him, because we forget just how much we depend on Him for absolutely everything.

You'd think it wouldn't be that way in the midst of troubling times, like the times we're living through right now, but I think what happens is that we simply focus more on our problems than the gratitude towards God that we should live with every day.

In the psalm that we had appointed for this morning, we see David remembering to give thanks. We are reminded of the importance of giving thanks, and reminded of why we give thanks to God.

That's precisely what I want us to think about together this morning. Please look with me again in Psalm 138. So our psalm begins in a pretty striking way.

Verse 1 starts like this, I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart. Before the gods I sing your praise. What a beautiful thing it is to give thanks to God with our whole hearts, and how often do we fall short of that?

[3:53] Now, just a little bit of a rabbit trail here, the whole before the gods I sing your praise thing introduces some interpretive difficulties in the text that I don't have time to cover this morning.

But rest assured, there are no true gods other than the one true and living God. And the important thing that we take away here, actually, is that David is not keeping his thanks a secret.

He is singing it out loud. He is singing his thanksgiving and his praise. And that is convicting. How much time did you spend telling others about God's goodness to you and your gratitude towards him in the past week?

If you're anything like me, I'd say the answer goes something like this. Not nearly enough.

How much time did you spend thanking God in prayer this past week? David is praising and thanking God and proclaiming God's praise before others.

[4:58] That's a pattern that you and I should strive to follow. Why should we give him thanks? So if I were to answer that question in this sermon in full, I would be standing here for the rest of my life.

It still wouldn't be complete. And you guys would have left for lunch a long time ago by the time I finally finish. So I'm not going to try and cover the topic exhaustively. But we see some awesome answers to that question in our song.

Well, this morning I want us to look at some of those reasons why we should thank God. Look at verse 2. I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness.

For you have exalted above all things your name and your word. Well, that verse in and of itself is a lot to take in.

But we give thanks to God, first point, for we give thanks to his name, we give thanks to him for his steadfast love and faithfulness.

[6:09] I have to say I have been loved very well by a number of people in my life. A number of people in my life have cared for me faithfully. My wife Elaine, for example, loves me in a way that I don't deserve and in a way that simply amazes me.

But only God's love has been perfect and perfectly steadfast in my life. Believers, isn't that true of your experience too?

No one else has ever loved you perfectly, right? Only God is like that. So I have been a believer since I was 16 years old.

That has been exactly half of my life at this point. And let me say this. God's love and God's faithfulness have never failed me yet.

God's love and God's faithfulness didn't fail me even before I was a believer. For that matter, I wouldn't be a believer if God wasn't loving and faithful to me before I believed. I just didn't know it yet.

[7:16] Some of you have been believers for much longer than I have. So let me ask you this. Have God's love and God's faithfulness ever failed you?

Never. How awesome is that? So we thank God for his unchanging love and his unchanging faithfulness. What else do we see to thank God for in verse 2?

We see that we should thank God that he has exalted above all things his name and his word.

Okay, so why are we thankful for that?

Does it benefit us that he has exalted his name and his word above all things? Well, the answer to that is that it does benefit us more than we can possibly imagine. Think for a second of what the Apostle Peter says before the council in Acts chapter 4.

He says, This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

[8:25] And there is salvation in no one else. For there is no name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. So brothers and sisters, there is no name under heaven by which we must be saved other than the name of Jesus.

And his name has been exalted and revealed to us. And that means our salvation. Jesus has been exalted and for that we must be thankful.

He was lifted high on the cross to draw you and me to himself, to wash us in his blood, to win for us eternal life, and to save us from death forever.

So thank God that his name and his word are exalted. For me personally, when God, working through his word, opened my eyes to see the crucified, risen, and exalted Christ, it changed my entire life, and it changed my eternity, and when I think on that, the only fitting thing that I can say is thank you.

The exalted Christ was revealed to me, and by God's grace I called out to God.

[9:47] If that has happened to you, you know exactly what I mean. Look at what the psalmist says in verse 3. And the day I called, you answered me.

My strength of soul, you increased. I called to God. He answered me. He not only increased the strength of my soul, he made my dead soul alive.

He answered me. And then again and again as believers, we call to God each day of our lives, and again and again he answers. We are weak, but he is strong.

We thank him that he is our strength. So I'm sure you guys have heard that bit about there being two sets of footprints in the sand of our lives representing our walk with the Lord.

You know where I'm going with this, right? At some point, there's only one set of footprints, and the moral of the story is that point. Those points are the points where the Lord carried us.

[10:49] I think there is a lot of truth to that, but let me offer one correction. I am confident that if I were to look at the sand of my life, there would be only one set of footprints because I am sure that the Lord has carried me the whole way.

He strengthens my soul. He is my strength. Thank you, Jesus. I'm wanting to thank and praise the Lord this morning. What about you? So what else do we see in this morning's psalm that we should thank him for?

David kind of gives us a list, doesn't he? How about the fact that even though we are like a breath and our days on earth are like a passing shadow, God still cares for us forever.

Look at what we read in verse 6. For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar. So there's a common atheist argument I've seen in a number of forums.

There are a few variations of it, but it goes something like this. It is absurd that you believe that God created the vast expanse of the universe, all of the planets, all of the stars, all of the galaxies, and that he actually cares about having a personal relationship with you.

[12:11] You actually believe that. And to that question, I am not ashamed to say, that is absolutely what I believe, and I thank him for it. Yes, little girl.

I believe that God loves lowly believers, and as people who depend on him completely for our salvation and for everything else, all believers are lowly.

So if you're inclined to believe that you aren't much of anything special, that you're nothing out of the ordinary, that no one is likely to take particular notice of you, you should rejoice because the Lord has a special care for you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't doubt for a moment that God had a personal relationship with you in mind when he created everything.

He is high above all things, but he regards the lowly. Thank you, Lord. We see even more reasons to thank the Lord as we go on in this Psalm of David.

[13:23] What about the Lord's protection for us? That hits home for me. Anyone remember a few years ago when I was run over by my own vehicle?

Yeah. If I doubted that I was accident-prone before, that kind of sealed the deal for me. But anyway, what happened? I'd returned home from a meeting at the church.

I pulled into the driveway. I put the van in park. I shut it off. I started getting out. And then somehow the van slipped out of park. The driveway was on an incline going downhill backwards.

So what happened is that I was knocked over. I was pinned under the door. I was dragged about 15 feet down the driveway and into the road. At the end of the day, all I ended up with was some damaged ribs and probably the worst bruises of my entire life.

But around the time that that happened, a Hollywood actor was killed in very similar circumstances. His vehicle also slipped out of park and he was crushed to death.

[14:31] I am blessed to be alive, honestly. Our psalm says that the Lord preserves our life, our lives.

Many of us have stories like that. And we thank the Lord for his preservation of us. But if that's not enough, if you don't have that experience, think about this.

The Lord is so able to preserve our lives that as believers, even death only ushers us into his nearer presence. Talk about our lives being preserved.

After our bodies return to the earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, God is determined and able to gather up that dust to fashion it into new bodies that will be infinitely better than what we started with.

How's that for preserving our lives? If that doesn't drive the fear away and make us grateful to God, I don't know what can.

[15:36] But in case we're still determined not to be thankful, David gives us one more reason. He writes, The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.

Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. The Lord will fulfill his purposes for us. And believers, what do we know about his purposes for us?

I am reminded of what we read in Romans chapter 8. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. So as believers in Christ, where are you and I right now in that description?

[16:47] Well, let's look to the past. God foreknew us. God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son. We have been called to faith in Christ by God's Spirit. Through faith in Christ, we have been justified.

That means our sins have been forgiven. And we stand as not guilty before God because of what Christ has done for us. And the thing is, there's only one more step left in the process, in the plan for us, brothers and sisters.

We are almost there. Those whom he justified, he also glorified.

What does it mean to be glorified? What will it look like when we are glorified? It means that we will be set free from sin and suffering completely and dwell in God's presence forever and we will see his glory and it will never end.

And we're almost there. So we thank God because he will fulfill his purpose for us and we know what that purpose is.

[18:12] Are you thankful? Let's say that you've listened to this sermon this morning and you realize that your heart isn't as grateful to God as you would like it to be.

I'm going to assume that that is the case because I prepared and preached this sermon and my heart isn't as grateful to God as I would like it to be. I think step one for each of us is going to be asking the Lord for a more grateful heart.

Day by day when you go before the Lord in prayer prioritize thanksgiving. for that matter let's let's start together.

I'm going to ask our lay reader this morning Stephanie if we can have a time during the prayers of the people at the end to offer our thanks to the Lord together. Let's start there.

Let's thank the Lord. We thank the Lord as we look over our text for this morning we see so many reasons to thank him.

[19:25] We thank the Lord because he is unchanging in his love and faithfulness. We thank the Lord because he has exalted his name and his word.

We thank the Lord because he answers when we call and he strengthens our souls. We thank the Lord because he cares for the lowly. We thank the Lord because he preserves our lives.

And we thank the Lord because he will fulfill his purposes for us. Thank you Jesus in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.