

Pastor's Note

Hello

Last Week I began talking about the importance of living a "Thank You Life" before God. Your life is God's gift to you; but what you do with it is your gift to God. Thanksgiving isn't just a holiday; it's a lifestyle. God wants you to live it as a lifestyle. If you live your entire life as a Thanksgiving gift or a thank you gift back to God for all the things he's done for you, it's going to increase your happiness and satisfaction. It's going to give life more meaning and significance. Psalm 50:23a (CEV) says, *"The sacrifice that honors me is a thankful heart."* What God wants more than anything else in your life is an attitude of gratitude.

There's absolutely nothing better for your health than the emotion of gratitude. The attitude of gratitude. So this week we're looking at why you should live a thank you life before God. Why should you live your entire life with a sense of thanksgiving and gratitude to God? I talked about the first reason last week so you'll want to check your e-letter from last week and catch up on that. This week I'm going to give you five more reasons. Let's get right into it.

B. You should live a "Thank You Life" because of what God has done!

Not just because of who he is but because of what he has done. The difference between who he is and what he's done is the difference between praise and thanksgiving. Here it is: We praise God for who he is. We thank God for what he's done. Does that make sense? We praise God for who he is and we thank God for what he's done. Psalm 52:9a (NCV) says, *"I will thank you God forever for what you have done."* What has God done for you? He's done millions of things. Millions and millions of things that you can be grateful for. Here's five:

1. He created you. You ought to be grateful for that. Psalm 148:5 (CEV) *"Let all things praise the name of the Lord, because we were created at his command."* So you should say, God, thank you for making me. Right?

2. He saved you. He created you and he saved you to live with him forever. Psalm 9:14b (NCV) *"I will praise you and rejoice because you saved me!"*

3. He answers your prayers. That's a reason to thank God. Psalm 118:21 (CEV) *"I praise the Lord for answering my prayers."* If you've ever had any prayer answered, that's a good reason to be grateful to God.

4. He gives your life direction. He gives you direction for life. Psalm 16:7a (TEV) says, *"I praise the Lord, because he guides me."* How does he do that? He guides you through the Bible. He guides you through spiritual teaching. He guides you through circumstances. He guides you through godly friends. There are a lot of ways God guides you in life. He gives you an idea. He gives you an impression. He gives you the Word of God. God guides you all the time. Be thankful for that.

5. He died so you could be forgiven.

Colossians 2:13-14 (NLT) *"You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. [You can be grateful for that.] He canceled the record of the charges against us [Hang on a minute. Can you imagine if someone called you up and said "I just canceled all the charges on your credit card?" Would you be grateful? Oh, yeah. If somebody called you up and said I just paid off everything you owe; you're debt free. Would you be grateful? Yes, you would. Then it says...] and took it away by nailing it to the cross."*

That's what Jesus did for you. He forgives all your sins. He cancels the record that contained all the charges against you. He took it and he destroyed it. In other words he tears up the bill by nailing it to the cross. That's what Jesus Christ did on the cross. And God does not want us to forget what it cost to pay for our forgiveness. Forgiveness is free but it's expensive. It cost Jesus his life. And he never wants us to forget that so he gave us the symbol to remind us. It's called communion, or the Lord's Supper. It's also called the Eucharist which is a Greek word for thanksgiving. The Eucharist literally means thanksgiving.

C. You should live a "Thank You Life" by telling others the good news!

Isaiah 12:4 (TLB) tells us this, *"Thank the Lord and praise his name! Tell the world about his wonderful love!"* One of the ways you can show your gratitude to God is you tell someone else. When something good happens to you, you want to pass it on. You have something better than the cure for cancer. You know how a person's life can have every sin forgiven. You know how they can get a purpose for living and meaning in life. And you know how they can go to heaven. Where else are you going to get that? Nobody else offers that. And if you know that good news and you work next to a guy for twenty years and you never tell him, that's not gratitude. That is the ultimate ingratitude to say "I'm forgiven. I have a purpose for loving. I have a home in heaven. But you can go to hell!" It's the ultimate criminal act in society. To know the cure and not share it.

One of the ways we show our gratitude to God is by telling other people the good news. If you don't tell your story, and by the way you're the only authority on you because God comes into everybody's life in a different way. I can't tell your story. You can't tell my story. If you don't tell your story of how God came into your life, about how Jesus Christ changed you, that story will never be told. Nobody else is going to tell your story. We're moving into the Christmas season. People around you are more open to coming to church at Christmas than any other time of the year. Who are you planning on bringing? Bring someone. Don't come by yourself. Share the good news. It's one way of showing gratitude to God.

D. We should live a "Thank You Life" by giving an offering back to God

Thanks and giving go together. It's called thanksgiving. We are giving thanks. Your offering is another way of expressing thanks back to God. You give thanks by giving. Look at this verse, Psalm 50:14 (NCV) *"Give an offering to show your thanks to God. Give him what you promised."* If you're serious about thanking God for your life, for all he's done for you, you ought to give him an offering. Thanks and giving go together. The Pilgrims weren't the first to come up with Thanksgiving. They copied it. Did you know that? They copied it from a several thousand year old tradition. The Pilgrims didn't invent Thanksgiving. God invented Thanksgiving. In fact he commanded it to his people the Israelites. In Deuteronomy 16:10 (TEV) it says, *"Celebrate the Harvest Festival, to honor the Lord your God, by bringing him a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing He has given you."*

How has God blessed you this year? If he's blessed you a lot you ought to give a lot. If he didn't bless you at all don't give anything. If he blessed you a little you give a little. You give in proportion to the way God blessed your life this last year. The level of your giving shows the level of your gratitude. You can say I love God but if you never give him anything you don't really love him. It's like if I tell my wife, I love you, and I write her notes that say I love you. But if I never give my wife anything, I don't really love her. Because you can give without loving but you cannot love without giving. You spell love GIVE. And one way you show your love to God, show your gratitude, is to give in thanks. It's interesting, God says when you give to him in thanksgiving it makes other people grateful. 2 Corinthians 9:11 (NLT) says, *"Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. [That says when you give, God gives to you then you can give more generously. Then he gives more to you. It's a*

cycle.] *And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.*" It is a cycle.

E. We should live a "Thank You Life" because of what God has promised

What God has promised? God is not finished doing good things in your life. He's going to do more. The rest of your life he's got more in store for you. He's got good plans for your future. How do you know what God has in store for your life? They are in the promises of the Bible. Do you know how many promises are in the bible? About seven thousand. You say, I don't even know them. That's like having an insurance policy and not knowing what's covered in it. God has made over seven thousand promises to you in the bible. Psalm 71:22a (NLT) says, *"I will praise you... because you are faithful to your promises."*

Have you ever thanked God for his promises to you? Have you ever said, God thank you. Thanks for the promises that you've made. God didn't have to make any promises to you. He didn't need to do that but he did. He made all kinds of promises to you. Have you ever said thank you God for your promises to me? Let me just show you a couple or three out of the thousands in the Bible. Here's one in John 11:25 (NLT) Jesus promises, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live again!"*

Are you thankful for life after death? Hello? Are you thankful for life after death? Have you ever thanked God for life after death? Have you ever thanked God that this is not the end? He who believes in me even though he dies he will live again. Thank you, God. Thank you that this life isn't all there is because I've really messed up a major portion of it. Another of God's promises is that he says while you're here on earth he's promised to take care of all your needs if you will trust him and put him first in your life. Look at Matthew 6:33 *"God will give you everything you need [That's a promise.] from day to day if [Here's the condition. If...] you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern."*

Nothing is more important than the kingdom of God. What's the kingdom of God? It's God's plan for the world and God's plan for your life. If you say God I want your plan in the world and I want your plan in my life and I want it more than anything else. More than fame or fortune. I want to be what you made me to be and do what you created me to do. I want to fulfill the kingdom of God in my life. He says if you do that I'll take care of all your needs. Are you grateful for that promise? That's a promise to be grateful for. Thank you God that I don't know what's going to happen in the future. I don't know what's going to happen to tomorrow. I don't know

what's going to happen next week or next month. But I do know this. God has promised to take care of all my needs. That I can be thankful for because I've put the kingdom of God first in my life.

Another great promise is this. God says that no matter what you go through in life He will always be with you. Hebrews 13:5b (TEV) *"I will never leave you, and I will never abandon you!"* Maybe you have been abandoned in life. I'm sorry. You may have been abandoned by your parents. Dad or Mom got a divorced and then rarely saw you. You may have been abandoned by a boyfriend or girlfriend or a husband or a wife or a friend or a business partner. That hurts to be abandoned. God says there's one thing you can count on: He will never, never, never abandon you. That is a promise you can be thankful for. It doesn't say I'll never abandon you if you always do the right thing. This is a promise that is unconditional. He says I will never abandon you.

Have you thanked God for that? Thank you God that no matter what I go through you're never going to abandon me. You're never going to leave me. You're never going to reject me. Because I've placed my life in your hands. How do I show my thanks to God who says, I'm going to take care of you and I've made these promises to you. How can you show thanks to that God?

E. We should live a "Thank You Life" by serving him with the abilities He gave us!

You shouldn't just say you're grateful to God. You should show you are grateful to God. And how do you show you are grateful to God? By serving him. That's how you show gratitude to God. You say, I can't even see God. How can I serve him? How do you serve God? The Bible tells us. You serve God by serving others. God says when you serve other people in my name it's like doing it to me. He says even if you just give a cup of cold water to a little kid who's thirsty but you do it in the name of Jesus. You say, God I'm giving this little kid a cup of water because I'm so grateful for all you've done for me. God says that counts. We don't just say we love God. We don't just say we're grateful. We show we are grateful by serving God. The Bible says this in Hebrews 12:28b (TLB) *"Let us please God by serving him with thankful hearts."*

You don't serve God out of duty. You don't serve God out of guilt. If you're a Christian, you're not guilty. You've been completely forgiven. You don't serve God out of pressure. You don't serve God out of resentment. You don't serve God out of conformity. You serve God out of gratitude. Question: Are you doing anything in your life out of gratitude to God in unselfish service? Do you have any time in your life that you are

volunteering to serve God by serving others just because you do it out of gratitude to God? Or are you living a self-focused life that leaves no time to volunteer for anything.

Are you kidding me? Do you think God put you on this earth just to live for you? He put you on this earth to learn to be unselfish. Is there any time in your week or your month that you are unselfishly serving somebody else in Jesus' name? If not, you've got a problem. And the problem you have is ingratitude. You are not grateful enough to God for all he's given and done for you. Your birth, your life, your salvation and all these other things. I highly recommend you find a place to serve and do something totally unselfish. You don't get paid for it. You don't get noticed for it. You just do it because you're grateful to God.

In this church that's a lot of people. We have members of our church who volunteer in many different ministries. And you don't even have to do it here. Just find a place and do something unselfish. If you have no volunteer service in your life you are living a limited life. You're living an ungrateful life. God says we serve with a grateful heart. Finally the last way we can show our gratitude to God is

F. We should live a "Thank You Life" by living each day as a thank you gift!

Colossians 3:17 (NIV) *"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, [Whatever you do. Does that include taking out the garbage? Yeah. Changing a diaper? Yeah. Taking a meal to somebody who's sick? Yeah. Whatever you do. Does that mean the stuff you do at work? Yeah. Whatever you do whether in word or deed...] do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God."* I want you to make your life a Thank You Life to God. God you've saved me, you've created me, you're going to take me to heaven. I want to live my life here on earth as a Thank You Life to God.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV) says this, *"Give thanks in all circumstances, [most circumstances. No, it doesn't say that. It says give thanks in... ALL circumstances.] for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus!"* People say I want to know God's will. There it is right there. You do that and you'll get step two. God doesn't show you step two until you do step one. And step one is this: Give thanks in all circumstances. Notice the word in. It doesn't say for. It doesn't say give thanks for all circumstances. You don't have to be grateful for a flood that destroys your home. You don't have to be grateful for a chronic illness. You don't have to be grateful for a death in your family. In fact that would be masochistic. God does not ever say be grateful for everything that happens because there's a lot of bad in

the world. There's a lot of evil in the world. But it says even in the evil times give thanks. In all circumstances.

Why? Because you know who God is. Because you know what he's done and you know what he's promised to do in your future. Your life might suck right now. Everything seems to be going wrong. You can give thanks in the situation because you know who God is. He's a good God. And you know what he's done when he sent Jesus to die for you. And you know what he's going to do because of his promises. Give thanks in all circumstances.

Finally Colossians 2:7 (TLB) *"Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done."* Will you make that your prayer this week? Say, God this week may my life overflow with thanksgiving and everybody around me see how grateful I am. I dare you to commit your life to do this every day for the rest of your life. Let my life overflow with gratitude. You'll be happier, you'll be healthier, you'll be more satisfied with life, your life will have more significance, all those other things, if you develop thanksgiving as a life style.

Thanksgiving is the only holiday we're taking to heaven. We're not taking Christmas to heaven. We're not taking Easter to heaven. We're not taking Veterans Day or the Fourth of July or Valentine's Day. But Thanksgiving is going to be a major holiday. It's going to be part of every day in heaven. Let me give you a sneak peek of what it's going to look like. Revelation 7:11-12, In heaven, *"All the angels will be standing around the throne and all of us will fall on our faces before the throne and worship God. We will say 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and forever! Amen!'"* I can't wait for that day. God wants you to practice thanksgiving now. So you become a pro at being grateful. Live a Thank You Life!

Blessings,

Scott

