

30 Days of Thanksgiving

James St. John

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“Ten Thousand Thanks To Jesus” - Matilda C. Day, 1887

“Give Thanks to God the Lord” - Susan H. Peterson, 1999

“Thanks to God for my Redeemer” - August L. Storm, 1891

“Thanksgiving” - Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of reflection*.1905

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November 1:

Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. -Psalm 106:1

Celebrated Christian recording artist, Steve Green, who traveled for four years with the Gaithers, reflects on God's mercy.

"Looking back on it,' Steve recalls, 'I'm amazed at God's patience and condescending love. In my case it is certainly true that He seems to delight in choosing the least likely to be used in His Kingdom. I was full of zeal and determined to get it all right, but blind to much self-righteousness and pharisaical pride. Thank God for His mercy!...That's why I desperately need Jesus,' Steve says. 'In the end it will be clear that He alone is the hero of not only my story, but of all our stories.' "

Steve came to realize that his dependence on his obvious gifts, his own righteousness and his 'fame' meant little in the eyes of God. When he realized his error, he fell that much more deeply in love with the Gospel...the goodness, grace and mercy of God expressed through Jesus.

Take the time to reflect on God's goodness and mercy today. Consider if He chose to give us what we deserve, rather than showing mercy through His Son, Jesus.

Many of us can recount the times when God's goodness and mercy has shown up in our lives. Even through the veil of current difficulties, we can see the light of His promises in His Word and our own experiences bear witness to His goodness. Give thanks!

November 2:

Ten thousand thanks to Jesus,
Whose life our ransom paid,
Whose blood a full atonement
For all the world has made.
Let every heart adore Him;
Let every creature sing
Ten thousand thanks to Jesus,
Our Savior and our King.

(Ten thousand thanks,
Ten thousand thanks,
We'll praise Him o'er and o'er;
And for the life with Him to live,
Ten thousand thousand more!)

Ten thousand thanks to Jesus;
How gladly would we give
Ten thousand lives to Jesus,
Had we so long to live.
Ten thousand tongues shall praise Him,
Ten thousand songs ascend
To Him, our blest Redeemer,
To Him, our dearest Friend!

Ten thousand thanks to Jesus
For blessings every hour;
Ten thousand times ten thousand,
For love's redeeming power;
And when we hear His welcome
Beyond the rolling sea,
His love thro' endless ages
Our sweetest song shall be!

November 3:

I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving. - Psalm 69:30

I love to sing! I especially love to sing songs of praise to God. I guess that is why I enjoy reading the Psalms so much. There are so many expressions of thanksgiving and praise within this collection of songs that were memorized and sung by the Israelites.

Praise and thanksgiving are the major themes of these songs. Oh, sure, there are times when there is “lament,” complaining to God about circumstances...even asking God, “Why?”. BUT rarely is there a psalm of lament that does not end with praise and thanksgiving.

There is something for us to learn here, you know? First, it is wholly appropriate to “lament.” God can take it. He can handle your complaint, your grief, and your questions. He is not threatened at all. In fact, I believe that God delights in our turning to him in all circumstances...even when we believe we have reason to complain or question. It is another expression of trust, really.

Like David and the other Psalmists, we have an open invitation to come before God, even to bring our laments. Guess what? I believe experience will show us that our laments, complaints and questions will turn to praise and thanksgiving. That is exactly what happens in the Psalms and it has always proven true in my own life.

Take time to praise God in song, today. Magnify Him with Thanksgiving. Do you have reason to lament? Share it with Him. I believe it will not be long until He will turn it around. Give Thanks!

November 4:

...neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. - Ephesians 5:4

I came home one summer afternoon from fishing with friends to many questions from my mother. "Did you catch many fish," she asked? My answer nearly floored her. "We just caught a bunch of little (blank)." "What did you just say," she inquired, not believing her ears. I repeated my previous answer. To make a long story short, I was repeating a word that I had heard many times that day, not really knowing what it meant, repeating it in my mother's hearing, in ignorance. My mother educated me as to the meaning and told me to never use that word again.

There have been times in all of our lives when we have said and done things in ignorance. We did not know any better. There are still times when we may say something or do something, not having all the facts, unintentionally hurting someone and making a bad situation worse.

This scripture is just one indication, that words have always been a struggle for believers. James describes the tongue as "a fire." We can do great harm with our words, sometimes without even realizing it, but oftentimes with premeditation. We are guilty.

Paul gives a key to avoid such guilt. Rather than using our tongue for evil, use it to thank our Creator and Savior for our blessings. Once, we were in darkness, but now we are children of light. We cannot claim ignorance. So, let us commit ourselves to using our tongue as a tool of thanksgiving and blessing, rather than cursing. Give Thanks!

November 5:

At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, Because of Your righteous judgments. - Psalm 119:62

Psalm 119 is a song of celebration of God's Word. It is said to have been required reading and memorization for every child in Hebrew school and in the Hebrew has many elements that lend itself to easy memorization. I had difficulty memorizing the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution in school. Nevertheless, this song was meant to inspire a deep-seated commitment and love for the Word of God.

We live in an age where even those who fill the pews of our churches have little respect or appreciation for the Word. We rarely open the Word during our busy week. We do not ponder what God has for us there, and are often weak under fire because of it. We certainly do not reflect the attitude of the psalmist here. When was the last time you woke up in the night for anything, much less to spend time thanking God for His Word?

We stay up late to watch the game, finish a favorite movie or spend time on Facebook. We rise early to hunt, fish, be the first at the yard sale. We inconvenience ourselves to fulfill all sorts of desires. Then, when it comes to the Word, we are too tired, too busy, or too preoccupied with other things to make time for it.

It often wonder about our priorities. The psalmist was so thankful for the Word, he was willing to interrupt his sleep and make it a priority. How about us? Does our attitude toward the Word of God communicate our gratitude for this precious gift God has given? Give Thanks!

November 6:

Many times, giving thanks to God is related to singing. Though we cannot include the music, these great hymns of thanksgiving are an inspiration for this season.

“Give Thanks to God the Lord”

by Susan H. Peterson

Give thanks to God the Lord; upon his name now call.
Make known among the people on earth what he has done for all.
Sing praise to him, now sing; his wondrous acts proclaim.
Rejoice, all you who seek the Lord; come glory in his name.

Look to the Lord's great strength; remember all his deeds.
His judgments are in all of the earth; he is the Lord indeed.
His cov'nant e'er will stand; his oath he'll ne'er forget.
A thousand generations pass; God's word continues yet.

Sing to the Lord, all earth; his saving power proclaim.
Declare his glory to every race; his marv'lous deeds now name.
For great is God the Lord, most worthy of all praise.
He made the heavens and the earth; fear him and give him praise.

Give thanks to God the Lord; his goodness now declare.
He saves, delivers from every foe; his love endures fore'er.
Give thanks unto his name and glory in his praise;
Praise to the God of Israel for everlasting days.

Give Thanks!

November 7:

*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; -
Colossians 4:2*

Earnestly – done with deep sincerity or with deep conviction.

Vigilant – watchful and alert, with expectation.

This prayer trio of being earnest, vigilant and thankful is a common theme of the Bible when instruction on prayer is given. Let's think about them individually, then how they depend on one another.

People of prayer, who treat prayer as more than something we are obliged to repeat before a meal or before bedtime, understand what it is to “continue,” or persist in prayer with sincerity and conviction. They also understand the prayer of genuine faith is lifted to God with the assurance and expectation that an answer will come. Prayer without expectation is no prayer at all.

However, all the conviction and vigilance in the world is nothing in prayer without thanksgiving. You don't have to search the scriptures long to realize that thanksgiving is a key ingredient in everything that characterizes what it means to live by faith in God.

So, how's your prayer life? Is it a constant feature of your daily walk, or just hit and miss? Is it characterized by conviction and expectation or weakened by your circumstances? Most importantly, is it defined by your thankfulness? It is like a three-legged stool, you know? Give Thanks!

November 8:

I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. - Psalm 139:14

Have you ever seen the Bodies exhibit? One particular feature of the exhibit demonstrated how interdependent our body systems are, showing the profound affect an unhealed broken leg could have on multiple areas of the entire anatomy of our body. Not only did that remind me of how often we are called the Body of Christ, shown to be interdependent on one another, but it also reminded me of how fabulous a creation we really are.

I have met many people over the years that have a difficult time looking in the mirror and thinking to themselves, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." They have been reminded of their physical faults one too many times by cruel classmates or have been demeaned and shamed by their own family because they do not meet some expectation of physical attractiveness.

As the father of children with special needs, both physical and neurological, I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears how cruel this world can be. I have heard the emotional cries of my little girl when she realized she was different from others. I have seen the stoic indifference of a little boy who has been victimized by bullies who tease.

The Scripture reminds us today, as I have reminded others, we are a valued and special creation of Almighty God, not just the result of genetic recombination. You are fearfully and wonderfully made! Give Thanks!

November 9:

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. - 1 Corinthians 15:57

Every four years, the world witnesses the epitome of earned victory. Olympians train and compete for years to become one of the few men or women to ever step on the track or enter the pool at the summer Olympics. We watch in wonder as time after time, superior athletic ability and training means broken records and gold medals.

Many times, we watch as the unexpected happens. The superstar, whom everyone expects to win, misses the mark and fails to win the gold medal. The star's failure becomes an illustration of how often, even those of superior performance and training will fall short.

The same is true of us. We realize our human weakness through our inability to perform to perfection. That is why the truth of this one verse is so very important. Our victory is given, not earned. God has graciously given us our victory over death, hell, sin and the grave through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Genuine faith confesses this truth: God, it is only through your grace and mercy that I stand. It is only through your provision that I have true victory. It is only through the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus, that I win this race.

Even in the midst of trial, we have this victory. Even when it seems the world is falling apart around us, we have this victory. Even when our own strength fails us and we fall short, we have this victory. Like Paul, I say, "Thanks be to God!" Give Thanks!

November 10:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. - Colossians 3:15

We often hear people talk about being called. I am sure you have heard many speak to the fact that they are called to preach or called to teach. Still others give witness to a call to foreign missions or to plant churches here at home. Did you realize the Bible says that we are all called to a variety of things?

In this particular scripture, it says we are all called to peace. In fact, Paul encourages us to allow that peace to rule in our hearts. It is interesting to me that he places that in the context of our abiding together in the Body of Christ. All too often, our abiding together is anything but peaceful.

So, there are three things that are key for us in this scripture:

1. Our calling: Peace
2. His ruling: Peace
3. Our Unity: Peace

Imagine the difference it might make in our personal walk, and more importantly, the life of our church family if we would but submit ourselves to this truth. We are called to peace, submitting ourselves to its rule in our hearts and finding the unity that this peace alone can bring.

Never forget, as Paul is careful to state, this peace BELONGS to God. He has graciously shared it with us, His children. And for that, we are called to give thanks. Give Thanks!

November 11:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God - Philippians 4:6

No doubt, if you are prone to worry and anxiety, you are probably finding this particular verse an “easy preaching, hard living,” kind of thing. A struggling world and national economy, terrorist threats that seem to multiply with each passing day and continuing conflict in many nations around our world become reasons to worry.

To bring it closer to home, you may be seeing your personal economy impacted, today. You have been laid off. Your business is suffering. Your home has been lost to foreclosure. Any of the above is enough to send the best of us into an anxiety attack.

So, what is God really expecting here. At the heart of it is dependence. Humble dependence on God means, first, that you trust that He knows your need. Then, you believe that He is in control. Last, you understand His will is always in your best interest. In light of those things, you cannot help but thank God.

Notice, this is not about denying the reality of your pain, your suffering or your need. Make your requests known to God. Cry out to Him. Pray. Pray. Pray. Give Thanks!

Then, what? Well, the promise is “the peace of God will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus.” Wow! I cry out to God and give Him thanks then I experience His real peace. Why in the world would I be anxious, then? Give Thanks!

November 12:

Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! - Psalm 105:1

We have recently heard a great testimony of God's grace and transforming power in the life of a brother, Grayson Norris. He stood before us, giving witness to the powerful way in which God has delivered him from the bondage of a 10+ year drug and alcohol addiction. Even if you don't know Grayson, you cannot help but rejoice to hear the words, "I am FREE!"

The testimonies of God's people really charge my batteries. I cannot wait to hear how God is working in others' lives. It is no wonder there are so many places in Scripture where we are commanded to tell about the works of the Lord in our lives.

In Psalm 105, God's people are told to give thanks, to call upon the name of the Lord and testify! The rest of the Psalm does just that. It stands as a reminder to God's people of His divine intervention on their behalf.

Think today about how God has intervened in your life. His deliverance and provision are complete...and you are a living breathing testimony of that. Have you shared that testimony with anyone, recently? Have you taken the opportunity to stand and give thanks to God for what he has done? Yours may be the testimony that God uses to create a time of breakthrough for someone else. It just may be that there is someone waiting to hear your story...to give them the inspiration to believe God is more than able to deliver and provide for them. Think about it. Give Thanks!

November 13:

Give thanks in all circumstances because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 5:18

On June 5, 2011, Lauren Graham's life was changed. She was anticipating the beginning of her junior year of college, when she was involved in a tragic automobile accident that left her in a coma for weeks.

On June 5, 2014, she wrote a blog entry about finally graduating and the lessons she had learned. One of those lessons: "The more grateful we are, the more we find to be grateful for."

On September 5, 2014, in a blog about her "first real job," she confessed her frustration about the difficulty of the job search. She followed that up with this:

"The one thing that I was trying to encourage myself with was the truth that God is sovereign and He is working in all things for good. I knew that God would open the door to the place He wanted me at the time He wanted me to be there."

Even in the days when we face uncertainty and pain, we have reason to thank God. When the month is longer than our money or when our patience is shorter than God's timing, we have reason to thank God.

Like Lauren, we must gain perspective about what God is doing through our circumstances. In her case, she realizes a deeper dependence on God through this time.

Give thanks to God, today, for where you are. He is there, at work, accomplishing His will. Give thanks!

November 14:

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. - Psalm 100:4

How are your Sunday mornings? Do you wake up late, rush to get ready, toil with the kids and your spouse, arguing in the car on the way, finally to arrive with little thought about having a thankful heart?

If you are like many people, Sunday can be a stressful time rather than a restful time. If you are like many people, you come to “church,” wondering what there is here for YOU. If you are like many people, you think more about what you are going to have for lunch AFTER church than what you are doing DURING church.

David’s reflection on how we approach our time of corporate worship and fellowship often brings conviction to my heart. Do I neglect to prepare my heart for this time? Have I come with a heart overflowing with thanksgiving and praise, prepared to bless His name?

You might want to ask yourself those same questions. They might just totally change your worship experience the next time you go to “church.” In fact, if we consider our very lives a living and holy sacrifice, as we are instructed in Romans 12, I would say that this thanksgiving and praise should not just be a “Sunday go to meeting” attitude but a daily exercise of our faith in the living God.

From that perspective, every door, be it at work, school, home or anywhere, might be considered “entering His gates.” Are we entering those gates with hearts of thanksgiving and praise? Give Thanks!

November 15:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; - Hebrews 12:28

Edward Spencer was a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois, who was part of a life-saving squad. During the winter of 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and he waded again and again into the frigid waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later, at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever thanked him.

You might be able to identify with Edward Spencer. In fact, considering we are becoming an ever-increasing ungrateful society, you have probably done many things without receiving a word of thanks. Many propose that this is because so many have an entitlement mentality.

It is interesting to me that the writer to the Hebrews here equates giving thanks with acceptable worship. Have you ever considered that ingratitude toward God for what He has given you as a hindrance to your worship? He further elaborates that thankfulness equates with proper reverence and awe of God.

When you consider what God has done, what He has given...you cannot help but be filled with awe. When you think about what we deserve, as opposed to what God has chosen for us, this "unshakeable kingdom," you cannot help but have an attitude of gratitude. Why then do we skimp in our thankfulness to God? I suspect that in some way we may have a sense of entitlement. Give Thanks!

November 16:

...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, - Ephesians 5:20

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it. Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!"

John answered, "I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life." "But you must!" implored his companion. "The bull is catching up to us."

"All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'"

In the depth of despair and the negative circumstances of life, it is difficult to imagine "giving thanks always for all things." I have yet to hear someone say, "Thank you, God, for cancer." It is easy to look at those extremes when we read this verse without reading it in context and determine this is an impossible expectation.

I have good news. Paul is talking about corporate worship, here, not a hospital room. In context, we're together singing, making music, exhorting one another with "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." In context, we are to be thankful for all the people and the way God is using them in our lives.

We are to give thanks in every circumstance, without a doubt. I don't necessarily think that means we are to thank God for cancer, do you? Give Thanks!

November 17:

I will give you thanks, for you answered me, and have become my deliverer. - Psalm 118:21

Many Old Testament stories relate to God's deliverance. In the case of David, the probable author of this psalm, many of those stories of deliverance involve doing battle. The same is true in this psalm.

We see a picture of the psalmist being surrounded by his enemies, comparing their number to a swarm of bees, under aggressive attack from every side (vv. 10-13). During what seems like a hopeless situation, he calls on the name of the Lord, asking for strength and victory. The Lord hears and delivers.

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt surrounded by the enemy, under relentless attack, to the point of hopelessness? Have you ever been in a situation that seemed without a solution, only to have cried out to God and seen him deliver?

The psalmist recognizes, as we must, that when deliverance comes we cannot allow the opportunity to give thanks, praise and glory to God to pass. It is an opportunity to encourage the faith of others. It is an opportunity to teach our children. It is an opportunity to remind ourselves on whom we depend. It is an opportunity to celebrate God's faithfulness.

The psalmist declares in verse 17, "I will not die, but live, and I will proclaim what the Lord has done." That should be our commitment. Declare. Remind. Teach. Testify. Then, declare His thanks and praise again! Give Thanks!

November 18:

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. – 2 Corinthians 2:14

Have you ever walked by a lilac bush in full bloom and caught the scent on the wind? Have you ever toured a rose garden, where all of the roses are bloomed out and fragrant? Maybe you remember an early summer day, when you were young and the fragrance of the honeysuckle enticed you to pick the flowers and drink of the nectar.

I love the image Paul paints in this verse in 2 Corinthians. The knowledge of God is a fragrant aroma, blown about the world in the life of thanksgiving demonstrated by his children. If you have ever experienced anything close to what I described above (lilacs, roses and honeysuckle), you can understand the image.

The foundation of this “diffusing” is the wind of thanksgiving. Like the breath of wind diffuses the fragrances of flowers, or good cooking, our thanksgiving motivated by our love for our God diffuses the knowledge of God to the world and to one another.

So, what are we thankful for today? Read the verse again. The glorious victory (triumph) that God has given us through His Son, Jesus, is our reason for living...and our reason to be thankful. Of course, that depends on us following his leadership, as indicated in the verse. He leads us in triumph. Oh, the glorious thought. When we walk in step with God, we have no reason to fear, no reason to fall, and no chance of defeat. I cannot help but praise and thank Him in light of that. Can you? Give Thanks!

November 19:

Psalm 107:1-15 -

107:1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
and his loyal love endures!

107:2 Let those delivered by the Lord speak out,
those whom he delivered from the power of the enemy,

107:3 and gathered from foreign lands,

from east and west,

from north and south.

107:4 They wandered through the wilderness on a desert road;
they found no city in which to live.

107:5 They were hungry and thirsty;
they fainted from exhaustion.

107:6 They cried out to the Lord in their distress;
he delivered them from their troubles.

107:7 He led them on a level road,
that they might find a city in which to live.

107:8 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his loyal love,
and for the amazing things he has done for people!

107:9 For he has satisfied those who thirst,
and those who hunger he has filled with food.

107:10 They sat in utter darkness,
bound in painful iron chains,

107:11 because they had rebelled against God's commands,
and rejected the instructions of the sovereign king.

107:12 So he used suffering to humble them;
they stumbled and no one helped them up.

107:13 They cried out to the Lord in their distress;
he delivered them from their troubles.

107:14 He brought them out of the utter darkness,
and tore off their shackles.

107:15 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his loyal love,
and for the amazing things he has done for people!

Give Thanks!

November 20:

I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever. - Psalm 86:12 (NASB)

There is a famous poem by Robert Frost that I remember studying in high school literature class. It is titled: "The Road Not Taken". The final lines are:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

In this poem, Frost reflects on the choices we must make in life, symbolized by these two roads in a wood. Like him, we choose every day the path we walk. We choose how we will handle the various circumstances that come our way. We choose our way.

The psalmist says, "I will give thanks...And will glorify." Like all other paths we walk, the path of thanksgiving is a decision of our will. All too often, the path of thanksgiving is the "one less traveled by." Even among the people of God, we often take the well-worn path of self-interest and complaint, rather than the one of thanksgiving and glory to God.

Today, two roads diverge before us in life. We have a decision to make. Our speech will either be blessings or cursing. Our heart will be filled with thanksgiving or ingratitude. Will you take the one less traveled by? Let us commit together to thank God with our whole heart and glorify Him forever.

Give Thanks!

November 21:

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. - Colossians 2:6-7

Jesus was a man of action. I am sure there are times that are not recorded in Scripture when Jesus “got away.” We read about those times. Probably the most memorable being when He went away to the top of the hill after feeding the five thousand. The disciples had gone ahead of him in a boat, only to be caught in a storm, during which Jesus walked to them across the water, stilled the storm and brought them immediately to land...just one of many awesome works.

As Christians, we are called to be people of action. Don't you find it interesting that we are so often admonished to “walk”? In fact, this particular passage is filled with action. We have received Christ and have been taught. So, we are expected to walk in Him. How? Well, we are to be rooted. Like a tree, we are to drive our roots deep in Him, through His Word and prayer. The result of that is an ongoing spiritual growth...being built up in Him...and becoming firmly established in our faith. What a summary of what Christian discipleship is about!

In the English translation, “abounding in thanksgiving” almost appears as an afterthought. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The image that I see here is of a fountain, having been connected to the wellspring of life, Jesus Himself, overflowing with gratitude for the precious gift that has been given. Oh the privilege to be counted among the brethren, growing in faith, having been rescued by Jesus! We have no greater reason to Give Thanks!

November 22:

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; - Psalm 92:1

I heard a preacher say once, "I just can't be good." He then went on to relate the story of his failing to resist the temptation to eat the crust off of a pie cooling in the window as a child, along with the severe punishment for eating that crust. Years later, now an evangelist, staying as guest in someone's home, he faced the same temptation. There were two pies sitting and cooling for later. He found himself alone and severely tempted to eat the pie crust. Before he knew it, he had eaten the crust from both pies. He described himself as being "consumed by the crust, because it was so good."

I don't know about you, but I find myself consumed by many things. Most of the time, those are "good" things, like fresh-baked pie crust. Nevertheless, they become a hindrance to experiencing the better things of God, like thanksgiving and praise. Please don't misunderstand. I see nothing wrong with enjoying the good gifts that God has given us...family, fellowship, food, etc. However, when they consume all of our "productive" time, we must evaluate and adjust our priorities.

The Psalmist proclaims two things "good" in this verse. Giving thanks to the Lord is good. Singing praises to God is good. Notice that God is the object of both of these activities. In my own life, I would have to confess that the most precious memories I have involve God as the object. Sure, I have had some great times doing other things, especially enjoying good food (with gratitude to God). Those things cannot compare to the sweetness of giving thanks and praise to God, though. Give Thanks!

November 23:

The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him. - Psalm 28:7 (NASB)

David was a military genius. We often focus on five smooth stones and a sling, and forget about the continuous string of victories David led. His military prowess led the Israelites to sing songs that included lines like: "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." They recognized David's military superiority, even to their own king.

Going back to the smooth stones and a sling, however, we see the root of David's success. Remember what he said to the defiant Goliath on the field of battle? "You come to me with sword and spear, but I come to you in the Name of the Lord, My God!" David was assured of victory because he trusted God.

Psalm 28 is one of many psalms that tell the same story. It begins with a plea, "I cry out to you, God. Rescue me, or I am surely going to die!" (Pastor James paraphrase, there.) So, David is basically saying, "God, I am depending on you. Without You, I am dead!"

Obviously, whatever battle or conflict David was pondering as he wrote this psalm was one that ended in victory. I love the central part, "My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; therefore, my heart exults." That is a beautiful picture of faith, folks.

When I trust in God, I am helped. My heart is full of joy! I cannot help but sing a song of thanksgiving! I don't know about you, but I need to practice that more. Give thanks!

November 24:

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed - Romans 6:17

Other than being “dead” in our sins, there is no richer description of our utter helplessness in the face of our sin than slavery. The slave could not own anything, but was owned as property. The slave could not reap the benefit of his work, but was forced to work nonetheless. The slave had no legal standing, without any real hope of that changing.

BUT...God, that is one of my favorite progressions in the Bible. “But thanks be to God...” There is just something astounding in this whole transaction. We were dead, but God, being rich and mercy, made us alive. We were slaves of sin, but we were bought and paid for with a great price. God paid that price. He made our redemption possible. He made our freedom from that enslavement to sin possible.

I cannot help but suspect that as you read those truths that your heart beats a little faster. Your mind begins to revisit that time when you first realized your desperation. You realized how hopeless you were. BUT God, being rich in mercy opened your eyes to His provision through Jesus Christ.

Whether it was at an altar in a church, behind the wheel of a car, kneeling by your couch or your bed, you know what it means to realize the end of desperation and hopelessness that come through God alone. You have been delivered from the domain of darkness and stand in marvelous light. Thanks be to God that you became obedient from the heart! Give Thanks!

November 25:

I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people. - Psalm 35:18

On October 20, 2011, I had the privilege to participate in the Crossroads Pregnancy Center Banquet. A client of the center stood by the side of her client assistant and gave thanks to God for the love, acceptance and counsel that she had received. Another client assistant shared her personal story about how God had led her to step out of her comfort zone to share His love with clients coming to receive help at the center. In those precious moments, as these ladies shared their heart and gratitude, God showed Himself.

We too often underestimate the power of thanks and praise “in the great assembly.” In those times, when God’s people witness the intersection of God’s glory with the lives of ordinary people, powerful things take place.

1. The unbeliever sees the truth lived out.
2. The immature see the reality of faith.
3. The weak are made strong.
4. The discouraged find courage again.
5. The suffering experience hope.

It is time for each of us to become more committed to sharing our God appointments and interventions. When we do that, we will see more of God’s glory revealed in and through us.

Prior to the start of the banquet, one client expressed some fear about standing in front of such a large group. I am glad she overcame. I left the banquet changed because of it. Give Thanks!

November 26:

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall dwell in Your presence. - Psalm 140:13

“Thanks To God”

by August L. Storm

Thanks to God for my Redeemer,
Thanks for all Thou dost provide!
Thanks for times now but a memory,
Thanks for Jesus by my side!
Thanks for pleasant, balmy springtime,
Thanks for dark and stormy fall!
Thanks for tears by now forgotten,
Thanks for peace within my soul!

Thanks for prayers that Thou hast answered,
Thanks for what Thou dost deny!
Thanks for storms that I have weathered,
Thanks for all Thou dost supply!
Thanks for pain, and thanks for pleasure,
Thanks for comfort in despair!
Thanks for grace that none can measure,
Thanks for love beyond compare!

Thanks for roses by the wayside,
Thanks for thorns their stems contain!
Thanks for home and thanks for fireside,
Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain!
Thanks for joy and thanks for sorrow,
Thanks for heavenly peace with Thee!
Thanks for hope in the tomorrow,
Thanks through all eternity!

Give Thanks!

November 27:

We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. - Psalm 75:1

The Psalms are an earthy, often dramatic look into the heart of men and the mind of God. The psalmists often appeal to recognizable and familiar features of nature to attempt to describe God. Various Psalms observe the awesomeness of a mighty river, a waterfall or a raging storm and reflect on the greatness of God reflected in His creation.

This same theme is not lost in the New Testament. In fact, Paul appeals to the general revelation of God in creation and says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

As believers, we often allow our circumstances and attitudes of the day to determine our level of gratitude. When times are easy, we are thankful. When times are tough, we have difficulty being thankful. That is our human tendency, which cannot be denied. That being said, it should not be ignored either.

Ultimately, it comes down to choice...again. Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to find joy and gratitude...even when we are hurting or in the midst of trial. My encouragement is this: take a look around. Observe the mighty works of God, even in the details of the fall colors or dormant season of winter and be thankful. Our God is awesome, even when compared with the expanse of the universe. Give Thanks!

November 28:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men - Timothy 2:1

I sometimes find myself singing:

Count your blessings name them one by one!
Count your blessings see what God has done!
Count your blessings. Name them one by one.
Count your many blessing see what God has done.

The blessings of God are often divided into three general categories. There is TIME and TALENT, which we certainly understand as blessings from God. The last, TREASURE, is where I think we often trip up. Very often, we assume treasure to only include material possessions. You know, the things we can place in a list of “assets” on a loan application. I believe we neglect to include the PEOPLE God has gifted into our lives and forget that we cannot live without them. Those relationships are what we should TREASURE the most, investing and sacrificing, navigating the difficulties and conflicts that are sure to come, depending on God’s wisdom to nurture and value those people.

This single verse can have significant impact on our TREASURE. Intercessions, prayers and supplications is not a formula for results but an illustration of the intensity of our prayers for people. We are to “go the extra mile” in prayer for others. Then...giving of thanks. How gracious, my God are You for planting these treasured people in my life! Forget the stuff, it will pass away. People are the real TREASURE! Give thanks!

November 29:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you - Phillipians 1:3

Larry P. was my high school Sunday School teacher who took a chance and hired me for a summer to work alongside him. Rick B. was a volunteer youth leader who challenged me to a deeper, more committed discipleship. Peggy L. was another youth leader who laughed and loved her way into our group's trust. Rick U. helped me realize I had a gift to share with the church that needed to be nurtured and developed. Each of these people, when I remember, give me reason to thank God.

How about you? Do you have a "thank my God upon every remembrance list"? Write a few of those names below:

Now, think about why these people have given you reason for thanksgiving. I would venture to guess your list will include: they loved me; they helped me; they paid attention to me; they believed in me; they were a friend.

Now, the challenge is this: Go out and be that person for someone else. Demonstrate your gratitude to God for those who love by being loving; for those who helped by helping; for those who believed by believing. You can do it. God will help! Give thanks!

November 30:

Thanksgiving (a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox)

We walk on starry fields of white
And do not see the daisies,
For blessings common in our sight
We rarely offer praises.
We sigh for some supreme delight
To crown our lives with splendor,
And quite ignore our daily store
Of pleasures sweet and tender.

There's not a day in all the year
But holds some hidden pleasure,
And, looking back, joys oft appear
To brim the past's wide measure.
But blessings are like friends, I hold,
Who love and labour near us.
We ought to raise our notes of praise
While living hearts can hear us.

Full many a blessing wears the guise
Of worry or of trouble;
Far-seeing is the soul, and wise,
Who knows the mask is double.
But he who has the faith and strength
To thank his God for sorrow
Has found a joy without alloy
To gladden every morrow.

We ought to make the moments notes
Of happy, glad Thanksgiving;
The hours and days a silent phrase
Of music we are living.
And so the theme should swell and grow
As weeks and months pass o'er us,
And rise sublime at this good time,
A grand Thanksgiving chorus.