

Living with an Attitude of Gratitude

Psalm 100

Slide 1

I believe, as Christians living in the United States in 2021, we have more things than we can even fathom for which to be grateful.

Which reminds me of the wealthy Texan who was in the habit of giving his father unique gifts every Father's Day. One year it was hang-gliding lessons.

The year before it was the entire record collection of Slim Whitman's Hits, autographed by the singer himself.

But this past year he outdid himself. He purchased a rare South American bird called The Translator.

This bird could speak five languages and sing the "Yellow Rose of Texas," in any key. It cost ten thousand dollars, but the son felt this would be a Father's Day gift his dad would never forget.

So, a week after Father's Day he called and asked, "*Dad, how'd you like the bird?*" His father responded, "*It was delicious.*"

Slide 2

We have so much that sometimes we can't see the value in all that God has given us. That's ingratitude.

Francis Schaeffer once said, "*The beginning of man's rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart.*"

Nowhere is that sentiment more eloquently expressed than in W. E. Henley's famous poem entitled "*Invictus*," which in Latin literally means *Unconquered*.

It's a testimony to the unconquerable human spirit. The imagery is that of a person standing at the gates of hell, unafraid because he's sufficient unto himself. The final stanza says,

*"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

This summarizes the sentiments of our day. It's an attitude which sees oneself as the source of health, happiness, and prosperity. In fact, even as a Christian, we're influenced by this sentiment.

We live with the ever-present danger of thinking that what we are or what we have is the sole result of what we've done.

This attitude runs against scriptural teaching and is inconsistent with the Spirit-Filled Life.

Those of us who know Jesus, who have been born again, washed in His blood, and given the gift of eternal life, should never give in to this sentiment because we have so much for which to be grateful.

In Psalm 100, we're given an admonition to thank the Lord for Who He is and what He's done. We're even told how to thank Him and when and where to thank Him.

Listen this first verse of Psalm 100...

Slide 3

Psalm 100:1, *"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth."* The King James Version says, *"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands."*

Kaufmann Kohler states in the Jewish Encyclopedia that no language has as many words for joy and rejoicing as does Hebrew.

In the Old Testament, there are thirteen Hebrew root words for joy found in twenty-seven different words, and these words were primarily used in religious worship.

Because they recognized God as the source of joy, it was only natural for the Hebrews to incorporate these words in their religious rituals.

In contrast to the rituals of other faiths of the East, Israelite worship was essentially a joyous proclamation and celebration. The Israelites regarded the act of thanking God as the supreme joy of their life.

Therefore, pure joy is joy in God as both its source and object. The psalmist says in Psalm 16:11, *"You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures."*

We're to express our gratitude to the Lord in an audible and public manner... *"to make a joyful noise."*

This word "noise" used here in verse 1 means *"to break forth with,"* or *"to burst."* It's the imagery of someone who's so full of emotion that they're unable to contain themselves.

If you've ever watched a professional sporting event, you've seen the emotion people express when someone makes a good play. They get excited; they get enthused.

Our word "enthused" comes from a Greek word which means to be possessed by God.

If that's the case, then there are very few people in Churches today who are possessed by God because they show so little enthusiasm.

Slide 4 - He is worthy of service

Psalm 100:2, *“Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.”* We must understand that when we worship God this implies that we’re serving Him.

As such, service implies three things:

- **Humility:** You can’t serve someone unless you have a humble attitude.
- **Fidelity:** Service implies faithfulness; otherwise, it would not be service but betrayal.
- **Activity:** You can’t serve someone if you don’t do anything.

Many people think that service to God is confined to those in vocational ministry, but scripture tells us that all who know Him as Lord and Savior are ministers or servants.

When God gave the Law to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28:47, He told them they’d be cursed if they didn’t serve Him with joyfulness and gladness for the abundance of all things.

Unfortunately, many people who claim to know Jesus as Lord and Savior live lives devoid of joy or gladness because they’re focused on the wrong things.

Some serve Him out of greed. This person serves the Lord or His church only for what they can get in return.

A man who’s greedy is destined to a life of unhappiness. Why? Because physical things, earthly position, or human accomplishments cannot meet spiritual needs.

A person whose treasure is on earthly things and has some deep spiritual need will never see it met as long as his focus is on material things.

Therefore, the more he seeks happiness, the further away from it he's driven. It's like drinking salt water, the more you drink the thirstier you become.

Others serve God with a grudge. This attitude asks, *"Why do I have to do this for God, haven't I done enough already?"*

These people think they've paid their debt to God and that somehow God owes them. They're blind to God's blessings.

They fail to realize that we're always going to be in debt to God; we can never pay Him back.

John Maxwell puts it this way, *"The instant we're born, we already owe someone for nine months of room and board... and we never really pay that back."*

We can never do enough to say thanks to God. As some serve out of greed and others with a grudge, others see service to God as a drag.

These people have lost the joy of their salvation. Like some marriages, our relationship to God doesn't have to become a struggle, lacking passion and zeal. It only gets that way because we allow it.

We're not to serve God out of greed or with a grudge or as a drag; we're to serve with gladness.

Remember, God's more concerned with what we are than what we do because what we are determines what we do.

Slide 5 - He alone is God

Psalm 100:3, *"Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."*

No one deserves our service like God does. He must be first in our lives. God must come before our careers, before our family, before our children, before our spouses, before our desires, before everything.

He's our motivation for service with gladness. This is how we can live with an attitude of gratitude because the Lord we serve is God.

He made us and we are His. He made us and He owns us. When we sold ourselves out to sin, He bought us back with the Blood of His precious Son.

We have no claim, no right to our own lives. They belong to Him. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. We are His representatives here on earth.

As His sheep He leads us, provides for us, guides us, comforts us, protects us, and prospers us. He alone is the source of all our blessings.

An ancient Chinese proverb says, *"When you drink from the stream, remember the spring."* If we drink from the stream of God's goodness, we must remember that He is the fount of every blessing.

Slide 6

Psalm 100:4, *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."*

In ancient Israel the Israelites could only experience the presence of God through the Ark of the Covenant. That's where God resided.

But now, because of Jesus, He lives inside of all who place their trust in Him for forgiveness of sins and for eternal salvation. So, for the New Testament Christian, we're always in the presence of God.

We can't escape His presence. Our attitude should always be one of thanksgiving and praise. We're to be thankful and bless His Name.

Now, we don't talk about blessings very much, at least not in the Old Testament sense. But throughout the Old Testament you find people seeking God's blessing.

Recall the story of Isaac's son, Jacob, who wrestled with the angel of God till dawn, over in Genesis 32:26.

He tells the angel that he won't let go of him until he blesses him. This would be a blessing which would bestow abundant and effective life upon the person receiving it.

What we need to understand is that a blessing is transferred from the greater to the lesser and it was normally for the future.

But the ancient Hebrews understood one thing about this blessing for abundant or effective living, it could only come from God.

So, when a blessing is directed towards God, it's not with a view towards bestowing it but acknowledging that God alone could grant it.

A blessing became an expression of thanksgiving, of recognition that God was the sole source of a rich and meaningful life.

The Hebrews also believed that a person could not be separated from their name. That's why we are to bless the Name of the Lord.

That's why, when Scripture tells us to bless the Lord, it's telling us that we must profess, acknowledge, accredit, recognize and confess with our words and deeds that God alone is the source of all true happiness and blessings in life.

When we do this, we have no choice but to give thanks because it's impossible to be in a right relationship with God and be void of an attitude of gratitude.

An attitude of gratitude or thanksgiving is the natural result of a proper understanding of Who God is and what He has done for us.

If you're living without this gratitude, you're living with the deception that you or someone else is responsible for the good things in your life.

Gratitude displayed is the evidence of a proper understanding of Who God is. If you want to know why He's worthy of our praise, look at verse 5.

Slide 7

Psalm 100:5, *"For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."*

In this verse, we find the reason why we're to give praise to God; why we're to enter His gates with thanksgiving and to serve Him with gladness.

It's because He's *"good,"* because He has mercy on us, and because His truth is without end. There's no one else about whom these things can be said. God is good.

To gain and maintain an attitude of gratitude in our lives we must:

- **Take note** - This means to live with awareness. As Americans we're often tempted to see nothing but our own reality.

It takes little more than a brief trip to the Mexican border to be reminded of the great blessings we, as a nation and as individuals, have received.

It's been calculated that if we reduce the world's population to a city of 1,000 inhabitants, 46 of those people would be Americans and the other 954 would represent the rest of the world's population.

Those 46 Americans would receive half of the income of the city, and the other one-half would be divided among the remaining 954 people.

The 46 Americans would have a life expectancy of 75 years, while the other 954 would live less than 40 years.

The Americans would have 15 times as many possessions per person as all the rest of the people.

And the Americans would have more than their daily food requirements, while the rest of the people would never have a good, balanced meal.

Our pets have a better-balanced diet than most people around the world.

We have a great deal for which to be thankful. Take note, become aware; open your eyes to the world around you. It'll shock you, but it'll also cause you to be grateful. Next, we must:

- **Take inventory** - of the blessings in your life. I like the song we sang earlier, *Count Your Blessings*.

*"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
when you are discouraged thinking all is lost,
count your many blessings, name them one by one,
and it will surprise you what the Lord has done."*

Have you stopped to count the blessings in your life? Many of us have a tendency to focus on what's wrong, which gives us a distorted picture.

A few years back, Barry Siegel, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times said, *“Consider what some scientists predicted. If everyone kept stacking National Geographics in garages and attics instead of throwing them away, the magazines' weight would sink the continent by 100 feet and we'd all be inundated by the oceans.*

If the number of microscope specimen slides submitted to one St. Louis hospital lab continued to increase at its current rate, that metropolis would be buried under three feet of glass by the year 2224.

If beachgoers kept returning home with as much sand clinging to them as they do now, 80% of the country's coastline would disappear in 10 years!”

If we always focus on the bad, we'll never see the good. Take inventory of your blessings and stop focusing on the things which could go wrong. And lastly,

- **Take action** - Turn your attitude of gratitude into an action of appreciation. Do something good for someone else.

God has given you plenty, share it. God didn't give it to you solely for your own benefit. He placed it in your hands to see what kind of servant you'll be.

He gave us all we have so we could be His ambassador. Do with it the same thing He would.

Jesus said when we act in kindness, blessing others with even as much as a cup of cold water, it's as though we have done it unto Him. Do it while you're here to see the good it will do.

A rich man once asked his friend, *“Why am I criticized for being miserly? Everyone knows I'll leave everything to charity when I die.”*

Well, said the friend, let me tell you about the pig who was lamenting to the cow one day about how unpopular he was.

“People are always talking about your gentleness and your kind eyes,” said the pig. *“Sure you give milk and cream, but I give more.”*

“I give bacon, ham, bristles. They even pickle my feet! Still, nobody likes me. Why is this?” The cow thought for a moment and replied, *“Well, maybe it’s because I give while I’m still living.”*

Slide 8

Conclusion

Abraham Lincoln, in his Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, said.

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown.

But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.”

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God who made us!

It behooves us to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

How about you this morning. Does your life demonstrate a sense of gratitude to God?

When others see you, are they aware that your life is being lived for Someone to Whom you owe a great debt? Is there joy in your life? Does it show?

How have you demonstrated your gratitude to Jesus?