

## Worship at home

Series: “Gratitude: More than an Attitude”

October 11, 2020

**Call to worship:** Psalm 137:1-4; 90:1-2; 136:1

**Hymn:** #802 “For the fruits of all creation”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtFd\\_aLkbKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtFd_aLkbKE)

**Prayers of praise, confession, and supplication:**

Generous and forgiving God,  
you are the first and the last, the giver of all good things.  
Your glory is endless; your power, incomparable.  
Your love stretches wider than the universe,  
your mercy reaches beyond the heights of heaven.  
We gather with hearts thankful for the abundance of your creation  
to worship and adore you.

And yet,  
we confess that in a world where many do not have enough,  
we enjoy more than we need.  
In a world where many live in fear,  
we take peace for granted.  
In a world where many have lost hope,  
we become indifferent to despair and grumble about small things.  
Forgive us, merciful God,  
and transform our lives to shine with the generosity, peace and hope  
you offer us in Christ Jesus.

Inspired by this time of worship,  
may our hearts overflow with praise each and every day,  
and may our lives reflect our gratitude to you  
in the ways we share your abundant love  
in Jesus’ name.

**Assurance of pardon:**

While it is true we have all sinned, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God’s love in Jesus Christ. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God I say, in Jesus Christ our sin is forgiven. Be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

**God's Word read and interpreted:**All good gifts

Today is Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday. I want to read three of the readings assigned for this day by the Revised Common Lectionary:

READ DEUTERONOMY 8:7-18

PSALM 65

LUKE 17:11-21.

*Giving thanks to the Lord is a tune by which we can transform our song from one of despair to one of joy and thus continue singing the Lord's song regardless of our momentary circumstance.*

That has been our pedal tone throughout this "Gratitude: More than an Attitude" series in which we have sought to learn to give thanks to the Lord in ways which He teaches through His word. To that end, we've looked at the ways by which giving thanks to the Lord involves all of our senses as we learn to *savour* specific moments of grace. We've looked at how such holistic savouring helps us store the experiences of grace in memory to be *remembered*, relived, and retold at a later time. We've seen how giving thanks to the Lord involves holding in tension the vision of the kingdom realized in Jesus and our daily experiences through laments and learning to be *mindful* of the presence of God in the midst of that tension. We've considered how, in addition to our 5 senses, giving thanks to the Lord involves employing our minds to *reflect critically* on what we perceive intuitively so that we can understand and then *express* our gratitude to God clearly, concisely, and intelligibly in the hearing of others whose faith might be built up by our testimony.

In each of our readings, when the text refers to humanity, it does so in the passive voice. And, it uses an active voice when it speaks of God. It is God who brings the blessing. When the Israelites were preparing to enter into the Promised Land after their wilderness wanderings, through Moses, God delivered a final sermon, recorded in Deuteronomy. At the beginning of the sermon, he encouraged them to remember the source of their blessings:

When you have crossed over the Jordan and have settled in the Promised Land, you will live the good life. There will be abundant harvests. Plentiful pasture. Your herds and your flocks will increase. There will be abundant fresh, flowing water. Life will be good.

And then, with what always seems to be a keen understanding of human nature, Moses cautioned them:

When life becomes easy, remember from whom your blessings come. It is God who has done this for you. God led you through the wilderness. God provided food for you. God provided shelter for you. God provides rain for the crops. God provides the pastures for your flocks and your herds. Remember the Lord, your God.

It's the same claim in the psalm. Why is praise due to God in Zion? Why is it to God that vows will be performed? Because it is God who gives forgiveness, God who satisfies our needs, God who calms the chaos without and within, God who provides for our bodies, minds, and spirits.

And that is one of the lessons of the gospel reading.

Ten people were afflicted with leprosy.

All ten were physically healed and rendered fit to rejoin society and to partake in the cultural activities. All ten were made clean regardless of their subsequent response. And note the passive voice. As they went, they were made clean. They didn't make themselves clean. They were made clean. Passive.

All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above.

One of the patients realized that.

He "saw that he was healed."

He realized the presence of goodness,  
he recognized that the goodness came from a source outside of himself –  
a super natural source,  
and he recognized the quality of the gift –  
it was given not on the basis of his merit  
but on the basis of Jesus' mercy.

The other nine embodied a spirit of entitlement. In their self-understanding they deserved the healing, they deserved the blessing. There was nothing for which to say 'thank you', they were just getting what they deserved. Moreover, Jesus was known as a healer so he was just doing his job.

All ten were made culturally acceptable. One was made well.

The difference between being made well, made clean, and healed is a matter of degree.

To be “healed” is to be freed from a physical disease or affliction and, in the mindset of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, this deliverance would come most often by a supernatural source. It’s physical deliverance from disease or affliction.

To be “made clean” is to be freed from the ceremonial stigma of one’s physical disease and thus able to fully participate in the worship of the community. When once someone was healed from their unclean condition (such as leprosy), they would present themselves to the priest who, upon examining the validity of their claim, would pronounce them clean and they could rejoin the community in worship.

To be “made well” however, is to be saved; to be rescued or delivered out of danger and into safety. The dangers we face are physical, emotional, psychological, societal, and spiritual. To be made well is a holistic healing of body, mind, and soul that delivers one out of the space of fear and worry and into the space of contentment, satisfaction, and peace. The King James Version renders the verb “to be made whole.”

In his gratitude to the Lord, the one patient testified that he had not only been delivered from the physical and societal dangers of his leprosy (as they all were); he had also been delivered from the dangerous and false beliefs of entitlement and irrelevancy which threaten our experience of God’s peace.

a) The belief of entitlement creates in us the idea that we deserve blessings. That “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.”

The patient who turned back recognized that whatever good had happened to him it was a gift. He was a passive recipient. Yes, he obeyed Jesus’ direction to go to the priest, as they all did; however, as he walked he was mindful of the goodness of God that was healing him not by his merit but by the Lord’s mercy.

Luke implicitly made this claim by drawing our attention to his ethnicity. From a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish perspective, Samaritans had no merit. We know that when such a belief is propagated, it has disastrous effects on one’s well-being.

Which segues to the second false belief:

b) The belief of irrelevancy or inadequacy creates in us the opposite idea, that we don’t deserve goodness, that we are unloved and unlovable.

The patient who turned back recognized that he did matter to Jesus. His illness mattered to Jesus. And so, he praised God and gave thanks that love had found him in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

I wonder if Jesus was so concerned about giving thanks because he knew then what psychiatrists know now. Giving thanks is good for the soul. Giving thanks is a testimony that we are being made well body, mind, and spirit. Giving thanks is a testimony that, through faith in the real, good, and able grace of God, the kingdom of heaven has taken root within us, regardless of what is happening outside and around us.

*Giving thanks to the Lord is a tune by which we can transform our song from one of despair to one of joy, and thus continue singing the Lord's song regardless of our momentary circumstance.*

Today is Thanksgiving Sunday. Because of COVID, it will be a very different experience than in previous years. There will be no big gatherings around the table. There will be no fall fairs. We are indeed living in a foreign land. Yet, so many of those things which we have come to expect are extras. They're nice, but they're extra. By God's awesome deeds he delivers us and invites us into the safety of his presence. In the Lord's house (by which we mean, not the physical structure, but the union we have in the Godhead through Christ), we shall be satisfied. And for that, let us give thanks to the Lord our God, for He is good; his steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

**Prayers of thanksgiving:**

We give you thanks for your abundant provision  
of grace, of mercy, of our daily bread.

We give you thanks for your compassion,  
that causes your Spirit to groan along with all of creation.

We give you thanks for your steadfast love,  
that invites us to walk under the easy burden of your yoke of grace.

We give you thanks for your mercy,  
by which you have forgiven our sin by your sacrifice.

And we give you thanks for the moments of grace  
we've experienced over the past months:

- for meaningful connections and relationships made during purposeful, mask-making work,
- for moments of laughter and the deep joy of watching the laughter of children and grandchildren,
- for technology that allows us to connect and support friends and family at a distance,
- for the generosity of strangers to travelers,
- for the human senses that trigger memories of your past grace,
- for people who are able and care enough to provide and deliver food,
- for deliverance from the darkness of depression in unexpected ways,
- for leaders who co-operate and listen to medical experts while working for the common good,
- for the safe reunion of family members separated by closed borders,
- for the community-minded volunteers of Captain Kidd Days and the donors who produced an abundant harvest for our local foodbanks, local organizations for mental health in children and youth, and local athletics despite COVID restrictions,

These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen.

**Hymn:** #807 "We plough the fields and scatter"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccVEjKFkAV4>

**Blessing:**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with you.  
Amen.

