



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

November 18, 2018

Something to Thank About

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble ... He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! —Psalm 107:1-2, 15-16

You may not have noticed it. You may even wish it didn't happen, but this morning ... you woke up! You have received a gift—a new day—today. Thank God!

Some days are challenging. Some are difficult. Most seem ordinary. Some days are important—even monumental. But every day is a tailor-made gift from God, worth thanking Him for. *This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it* (Psalm 118:24). Now that's a good command to obey.

Thanksgiving Day is significant for countless reasons. It's a national holiday, focusing us as a people on gratitude toward God. It's a reminder—not of pilgrims and turkeys—but of God's mighty hand providing for His children and the founding of our country. It's a spur to God's people to say "Thank You" for all He's done and all He's doing.

The word "thank" is similar to the word "praise" but not the same. To "praise" means to brag about how wonderful someone is. To "thank" someone means to acknowledge something they've done. While "praise" boasts, "thanks" recognizes. "Thanks" connects something good to its source and gives credit.

As God's Church, we are called to open the eyes of the blind and set prisoners free, to inform the ignorant and remind the forgetful. Christ has reconnected us to the God who made us. Our job is to help others make that connection, and the practice of giving thanks keeps the connection alive. It opens our eyes to the daily miracles of God's providence, so we can see His hand in everything that happens—even if it's just the dawn of a new day.

Today, for example. The sun comes up on a world of dazzling beauty. God created it and gave us eyes to see it. Stars march through the night sky with astounding regularity. The sun runs its course over a skyline no sculptor could imitate. Rivers flow through lush valleys as birds sing in delight. Each day gives us people to engage, friends to enjoy, and family to love. Work brings us things to do, challenges to take on, and meaning to our activity. So we thank God for each new day.

Life, though, is a good-news-bad-news proposition. Death is reality we can ignore but not avoid. The evil we see and pain we feel tell us that all is not right with the world. Sin—our fatal disconnection from God—is a carefully concealed but undeniable, unavoidable, and unconquerable reality. But Christ has overcome the sin that broke our world and the death that haunts our days. That fact is the fountain of all thanks.

The Good News of redemption in Christ has steadily advanced from the first Pentecost to this day. From Jerusalem to Corona, Christ has built His Church just as He said He would. The gates of hell have not prevailed against missionaries who spread God's Word, monarchs who forged its truth into structured society, and martyrs who gave their lives to spread the Gospel across the world. And so we say thanks.

Thanks acknowledges Christ's triumph even when the Church turns on itself. Both Catholics and Protestants have persecuted the faithful, yet the truth has more than survived. Persecution has driven God's people throughout the world. It was the state church that chased the pilgrims to America. More than stiff, stilted figures, with blunder busts and strange speech, the pilgrims were real people running for their lives and searching for freedom. Their quest was for all we abundantly enjoy today.

What God gave them He gave us. Free worship. Abundant feasts. Self-determination and self-governance. The right to decide for ourselves and pursue God's leading without government interference. And so we say thanks to God from whom all blessings flow. He loves to bless and provide for His own, even though we don't deserve it. And we have been blessed and will be blessed to the praise of His glory.

Noticing God's Blessings

It's often difficult to take time, but it's so worthwhile. Busyness can be blinding, and there are forces at work to keep our eyes off our good God. Making time to give thanks is a deliberate process that brings rich rewards. It connects us to our God and Maker. It enables us to see His providing hand and sense His presence. Time with God is precious and essential, so be sure to make room for your Maker.

Think through some specific ways God has blessed you and give Him thanks. Maybe the video on this link will help. <<https://www.charlottestories.com/local-charlotte-church-released-christmas-video-thats-going-viral-4-million-views/>>

Giving Thanks

Spiritual: In what ways has God blessed you in your relationship with Him?

Relational: Identify friends and family members God has used to bless you.

Physical: Notice God's hand in your health and your life situation.

Social: How has God blessed you with freedom and opportunity, goals and ambitions and success?

Financial: How does God provide for you financially, even when you're in need?

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. —Ephesians 1:3-4