

Give Thanks With A Grateful Heart

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[0 : 00] So this morning, as we talk about thanksgiving, we're going to be in three passages, which makes more work for all of us. So I want to have you turn to three different verses and just stick your fingers in there.

And what I've done, because I'm not a horrible person, is I'm going to put those verses up here on the slide so you can read it as well. But turn in your Bibles. So the first one is Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 through 8, 6 through 9, excuse me.

Philippians 4, 6 through 9. The second one is 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 through 18. And the last one is James 1, 17.

I just gave those to you in the order that they appear in the Bible. We're actually not going to go through them in that order. So Philippians 4, 1 Thessalonians 5, James 1.

While you're going there, I just wanted to reinforce the support that we give to Toby and to urge you to continue to pray for him.

[1 : 05] I saw a video yesterday from a gentleman by the name of Nick Fritas. I think that's how you pronounce his name. He is in the House of Delegates in Virginia. He's a very outspoken Christian man. And it was a YouTube video that talked about the fact that we are seeing an unprecedented movement of God among young men coming to the church.

Because they're recognizing the bankruptcy of what the culture is offering to them about what it means to be a man, what it means to live out their life.

Even what marriage looks like. All these things that men want to know the world is failing to deliver and the church has the opportunity to deliver that message. We want to pray for the work on the college campus.

Because it's a great opportunity to see God work. Like Toby was saying, you plant that seed in college and it will change the trajectory of not just an individual but of an entire family.

It's a powerful thing. It's an important work that Toby's doing and it's very difficult. It's a place of great strife, turmoil. We saw Charlie Kirk was murdered several weeks ago, a couple months ago.

[2 : 16] There is opposition. This is spiritual warfare. We need to be people who pray and be thankful for what God is doing. So, Philippians 4, 6 through 9.

And I'm just going to read all three of these and then we'll come back to them as we go. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. Now turn over to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

A few weeks ago I mentioned that the favorite memory verse of middle school students is John 11, 35. Jesus wept. The second two most favorite we're going to read this morning. 1 Thessalonians 5, starting at verse 16.

[3 : 43] Rejoice always. Middle school students love that. Not because of the content, just because it's easy to remember. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.

For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Important words. And then lastly, James 1, 17. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above.

Coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. Let's pray together. Father, thank you that you have given us an antidote to the problems of life.

You have given us the means to overcome. You have given us the means to survive and thrive in a world that's full of difficulty and challenge and war. Lord, it's centered around this idea of thankfulness.

And I pray that as we think about what it means to be thankful, what gratitude looks like, help us to be attentive, help us to listen and take to heart your word. And to be actively engaged in the practice of thankfulness.

[4 : 56] God, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. As I was preparing the sermon, I realized there's some challenges to a Thanksgiving sermon. The first one is simply this.

We think we know everything there is to know about. How hard can it be? Give thanks. If you receive something nice, send a thank you card. Okay, sermon's over. See ya. No, no. No, no. It's way more than that. But we're conditioned by cliché to think that we already know what gratitude is. We know how to behave. We teach our children to say thank you.

And so the challenge is to jar you out of the cliché into the depth of what it means to be truly grateful. And the grace that comes to us when we express gratitude, when we make that a practice. Now, the second challenge is the big one. It's easy for me at this season of my life to do a sermon on gratitude.

[5 : 57] do a gift for you. because frankly, I'm in a great spot. I am so thankful for where I am. You have given me the gift of serving as a pastor at this church. You've given me the gift of letting this be my job, that I make a living off of studying God's Word and teaching it to you and discipling people. What a gift. My kids are walking with the Lord. Life is good.

I've got these great grandkids, some of whom you've seen running rampant up front. By the way, it wasn't just mine, just to be clear. But I'm in a great place. But the problem is that not everybody in this room is in that great place. And so it's hard. It's easy to say, actually, what do you know? You don't know what I'm going through. You don't know how hard my life is.

You all see the names in the prayer list. We're dealing with cancer, with uncertainty, just ongoing chronic health problems. One of the songs we sang this morning talked about like a summer flower. Our bodies fade away. What a depressing thought. But it's true. And some of you are living out that reality right now, and it's discouraging, it's overwhelming. Thankfulness? I'm just about surviving. And then for others of us, it's just a grind where you just feel like, I'm never going to get ahead. I think I've gotten to the point where I'm living not paycheck to paycheck, but I actually can save at least part of every other paycheck. And then something, the car breaks down, or you have a medical issue or whatever, and you never seem to be able to get ahead. How can I be thankful in that circumstance? I would not be honest or helpful if I didn't acknowledge the fact that giving thanks is not always easy. As a matter of fact, sometimes it's the hardest thing we could possibly try to do, but it's essential. And I hope.

Because we talk about gratitude that you won't hear platitudes, that you won't hear, you know, doctors used to say, you know, take two aspirin and call me in the morning. I never want to be the pastor who says, take two verses and call me in the morning. That's what platitudes do. But what I want you to hear from the place of real serious pain or worry or heartache, that you have reason to give thanks, and you should, because it's to your benefit. The other problem is a concept that's called foreboding joy. I'm going to lean pretty heavily on a woman named Brene Brown, who's a social worker.

She's got a doctorate who has focused her studies on shame and vulnerability and their importance to us as human beings. And her research has been very helpful to me. Well, one of the things she talks about is foreboding joy. Like, what does that mean? That sounds like jargon, which is almost as useless as platitudes. Let me explain the jargon. Foreboding joy, and tell me, you don't have to tell me, but think in your head if you've ever had this feeling. And I'm going to use Brene Brown's example. She would go into her infant child's bedroom, overflowing with gratitude and joy and love, as she saw this child asleep. You can smell that, not the diaper, but the good smell of a freshly bathed baby.

[9 : 50] You watch his or her chest rising and falling, and you just feel joy. But then you think, oh my goodness, what could go wrong? They could get jumped on the bus when they go to school. They're going to be exposed to pedophiles. They could get in a car accident, and pretty soon we build up all these imaginary fears, and it destroys the joy. It sucks the life right out of us.

Do you ever feel that? That you're almost afraid to experience joy for fear of the unknown. It's terrifying. It's terrifying. And it's fictional. It's the extension of our imagination in an unhealthy way.

But foreboding joy is an obstacle to gratitude. But gratitude is the weapon you can use against it to keep foreboding joy at a distance. So those are the challenges we face this morning. As we face them, I need you to help me to accomplish my goal of getting across what it means to be grateful. I want you to set aside your assumptions that you think you know what gratitude is. I want you to set aside your thoughts. I want you to set aside your thoughts. I want you to set aside to let the volume of that fade so you can hear the volume of my voice and hear what God wants to tell you about gratitude. And for those of you who deal with foreboding joy, that you would allow that fear of the unknown, that fear of not being enough, set it aside and listen to what it means to be grateful. And how gratitude truly is the only weapon, the best weapon to fight against these things. Can you do that? Can you focus on what we're trying to get across this morning, which is what it means to be thankful? So let's talk about Brene Brown. She did extensive study, literally thousands of interviews.

And what she was trying to unpack is what is joy, what is gratitude, what is a whole life, a wholehearted life. And what she means by that, you know, wholehearted life is somebody whose life is just, is rich, you're fully present in what you're doing, you're enjoying the moment that you're in, you're living healthy, you recognize your limitations, and you actually can celebrate those limitations. One of the things she discovered was a relationship between gratitude and joy. [12:34] Her assumption, and I'll bet you had this assumption too, well, to really be grateful, I need to be joyful. The gratitude arises out of a joyful heart. That as we look at the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, love, joy, peace, patience, etc., that gratitude arises because of the spiritual fruit of joy. According to Brene's research, you would be wrong. And I agree with her. Joy does not precede gratitude. Gratitude precede joy. Here's a quote from her. Without exception, every person I interviewed who described living a joyful life or who described themselves as joyful actively practiced gratitude and attributed their joyfulness to their gratitude practice. Isn't that interesting? So you don't have a way to be joyful to be thankful. You need to be thankful and watch for it to emerge. In a few minutes, we're going to talk about that passage in 1 Thessalonians where it said, this is God's will for you that you be thankful. Why? It's the means for the fruit of the Spirit to develop in your life.

And what I love about Brene's research is it brings to light, it doesn't supplant God's Word. I don't even need it to believe God's Word. But it really gives insight as to how God has designed us to work. And so that's the first point that came out of our research, is that quite simply, gratefulness is the means to experience joy. You with me so far? Here's a second finding. Both joy and gratitude were described as spiritual practices that were bound to a belief in human interconnectedness and a power greater than us. That idea of spiritual practice is going to come back. I'm going to reinforce that. I'm a big believer in spiritual discipline. Paul told Timothy, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. We need to decide to read God's Word. We need to decide to be people who pray. We need to decide to be people who worship, who are involved in community, who engage in mission. Because in doing those things, we experience our relationship with God on a deeper level. We don't do them to earn His favor. We already have His favor in Christ. We do them as the outgrowth of our relationship with God. Gratitude is a spiritual discipline. We need to practice it. We're going to talk about that as we go on. What's interesting though, and this exposes not the flaw in Brene Brown's research, but the monumental flaw in her premise that we're going to come to in a minute. The last part of the sentence exposes the deep error of trying to achieve spiritual goals on her own. She talks about praying to the universe. Okay. She talks about offering prayers, but it's really not clear to whom she's praying. And I don't think she knows. That's a bankrupt belief system. Remember I mentioned that men are flooding into churches? That's why. This humanistic approach to our life simply doesn't work. It's bankrupt. And we're going to see how that flaw works itself out as we go through this looking deeper into gratitude. But the key point I want you to get out of there is that joy and gratitude are spiritual disciplines that we practice. That's part of disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness. And then the last finding from her research is people were quick to point out the difference. This is so important. People were quick to point out the difference between happiness and joy as a difference between a human emotion that's connected to circumstances and a spiritual way of engaging with the world that's connected to practicing gratitude.

Because happiness is tied to circumstances, it dies a painful death in the face of hardship. Happiness, the pursuit of happiness, is actually idolatry.

[16:59] I highly recommend a sermon that I listened to by Timothy Keller on the fruit of the spirit of joy. I listened to it several times in the last few days. He's a brilliant preacher, really does a great job of unpacking what God means in the practice of joy. But he talks about this difference that Brene Brown uncovered between happiness and joy. Happiness is a healthy thing. God gives us happiness when we achieve a goal or when we achieve a goal. The day I got married, I was happy. The day that my kids were born, each one of them, I was happy. We have happiness in big things and little things. Every once in a while, I get my morning cup of coffee just right, and I'm happy. That's a good thing. But if the pursuit of happiness becomes my focus, happiness, it becomes an idol. And idols bless us when they get what they want, which is elevation, and they curse us when we don't. And the curse is if you don't achieve your goal, what happens immediately?

I don't deserve it. I'm terrible. I'm not worthy. We undermine ourselves. We undermine the work that God is doing in our lives. So don't confuse the fact. Happiness is a good thing in its place, but we don't pursue happiness. We pursue joy. And this is again where the flaw comes in, in Brene Brown's premise to her research. Our happiness and our joy... I thought I was going to have a helper up here. Our happiness and our joy... excuse me, our gratitude and our joy are rooted, deeply rooted in our relationship with God.

everything starts with God. We have to sink our roots deep there.

Brene Brown and the humanists cannot see that. And in not seeing that, you can't close the loop on gratitude. What do I mean by that? Gratitude is, first of all, is recognizing something good. My cup of coffee, the birth of my children, not equivalent levels, by the way. But it's recognizing something good and celebrating that, or recognizing what I have in Christ. My sins are forgiven. I can boldly approach the throne of grace. I have the Holy Spirit residing in me, directing my life, all these things. And I feel grateful for them. I'm glad. But the loop isn't closed until I express that gratitude. Until I say to the person who has blessed me, whether it's another person or God, thank you.

[19:51] We have to close the loop. And if you don't have God, most of the stuff in life we get, where did it come from, if not from God? Who are you saying thank you to? And you literally can't close the loop. And we have to close the loop. It's actually a psych...it's designed in us.

It's a psychological need. Our appreciation for things are not completed until we tell other people about it. I'll give you an example. C.S. Lewis talks about this in one of his books. I couldn't find the reference, so just trust me, it was C.S. Lewis. But he talks about the fact that, what do we do? We read a good book. We watch a movie that we like. We go visit a place. And what do we do we tell people? I read this book. It was so good. You ought to read it. And when are we really happiest with the person we've talked to is when they read that book and say, you were right. Not because we were right, but because they have entered into our joy at the thing that we experienced.

They've entered into it with us. God has designed us that that's when the gratitude loop closes, is when we take something, we enjoy it, we express gratefulness, we invite somebody else to be involved, and it becomes a shared experience. We're connected to each other.

So, what are the conclusions? I'm going to summarize what Brene Brown was talking about, and then we're going to go back to the Bible, because that's where we always belong, is in God's Word. First of all, joy is rooted in the practice of God. Joy is rooted in the practice of gratitude. Remember that. Your joy, the level of your joy, will be decided by your practice of gratitude. Number two is joy and gratitude are rooted in two beliefs. We are intimately interconnected with one another. And God plays a critical role in the production of joy in our lives. That's why it's the fruit of the Spirit, brothers and sisters. The practice of gratitude is the means that God has ordained to produce joy in our lives. We are intimately connected to each other. And as we share what we're grateful for, we share our joys, that builds our bonds. We become stronger and healthier. And the third thing is joy is essential to our long-term health. Happiness is a temporary rush when we get something that we wanted. But joy is what sustains us. Tim Keller has a great definition of joy.

Joy is the buoyancy that results from the enjoyment of the unchanging privileges we have in God. Think of a helium-filled balloon. Where does it go? Up. That's what buoyancy is.

[22:54] It's natural direction. It's upward. Joy is the buoyancy that carries us to God as we enjoy all the things that He's given us. Everything from that great cup of coffee to my entirely new life in Christ. We want to celebrate and enjoy that buoyancy.

So why do I use research from non-Christian sources? I want to address that. For some of you, that might be a concern. Because their research is helpful, for one. I think Brene was using a good method to learn what she needed to learn. And it really served to illustrate what God is teaching us

in the Bible. There's value in that. And frankly, the source really doesn't matter.

But we have to exercise discernment. And discernment is critical. Because while I wholeheartedly agree with the results of Brene Brown's research, I think it's consistent with Scripture. That's the test.

It's consistent with Scripture. And it really did help me gain a better grasp on what it means to be thankful. But where discernment comes in is the recognition that her premise was flawed, and from her premise came flawed conclusions and outcomes. Thank you. It's always a team sport.

So we have to consider these sources are useful, but we have to keep them in their place. And they always, always, always fall under the authority of Scripture, just like I do. I have to fall under the authority of Scripture. So let's talk about these three verses. First one. Now I'm going to get them out of order that I read them to you. James 1.17. This is our foundation.

[24 : 55] Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above. Every good thing. Every. There's no exception. There's no, well, no, actually some person gave this to me. No, every good and perfect gift comes from God. Do you realize how much He loves you? If you question that, if you're feeling like there's a burden of sin in my life, there's something I've done that's broken that relationship with God, you need to go back to the book of Luke and read the story of the prodigal son.

That, without question, is the most important picture in Scripture of the heart of God toward you. I'm not going to give you a sermon on the prodigal son. It's very tempting, but time is short.

Read it. If you are dealing with, feeling like there's this barrier of sin that you can't get through, brother, sister, you don't have to get through it. That's not your job.

You need to accept that God broke through it. He ran to you to welcome you back. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, without exception.

So we direct our gratitude toward God always. And here's the cool thing about God. It comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there's no variation or shifting shadow. My kids will tell you that I wasn't a perfect dad.

[26 : 40] I know that probably comes as a shock, but I was not a perfect dad. Things were going bad at work. I took it out on my kids. We all have done that. God doesn't do that. There is no variation in him.

He is consistent. He's a straight arrow. You can be sure of where he is. And you can be sure that he gives only good gifts. Now let's look at 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 through 18. This is God's will for you. You better pay attention. It's very clear. Rejoice always. Experience joy. We talked about joy being a spiritual discipline. Pray without ceasing. A friend of mine wrote a song called Pray Like Breathing.

We need to be constantly in dialogue with God about what we're facing, our circumstances, whatever happens to be. In everything, give thanks. In everything, give thanks. The good, the bad, the ugly. In everything, give thanks. We're going to talk about how to do that here in a minute.

But this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. This is how he wants you to live. As a person who radiates joy, who experiences joy, who summons it up as a discipline, who prays without ceasing, and who is grateful. This is God's will for you. And then Philippians 4, 6 through 9.

[28 : 04] This is how we practice the discipline of gratitude. Be anxious for nothing. Quick sidelight. This may be a radical thought for some of you guys. If it unsettles you, talk to me after. Be anxious for nothing. Does not mean that anxiety is a sin. Listen to me carefully. Anxiety is not a sin.

It can be a symptom of sin, but it is not sin in and of itself. I'll tell you what anxiety is. Anxiety is a check engine light on your dashboard. So, when my boys were just getting out of high school, they were given two cars. I am not a mechanic, but I know the basics. Change the oil.

Do the basic maintenance. My brother is a super genius mechanic, and he was right around the corner from where my kids lived. And what I told my sons was, do not let the check engine light come on.

Well, how do you prevent that? By doing preventive maintenance. Be anxious for nothing is the same type of warning. Don't let that check engine light come on.

But how do you prevent it? Not by whipping yourself if you feel anxious, but by doing the things that God tells us to do, the preventive maintenance that keeps our lives going where they need to be, that undermines anxiety and gives us an antidote for it. Does that make sense?

[29 : 36] Let it be that. So, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will

guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Here's another fruit of the Spirit. It's one right after joy. When we discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness, we exercise these spiritual disciplines. Gratitude, prayer, supplication, which is asking for things.

We experience the fruit of the Spirit. It's the means to the end that God has for us. It's the tool that God has given us to experience the fruit of the Spirit. So, do it. Be a person of prayer, especially when you're in crisis. Be a person who is taking needs. By the way, next week, we're going to be looking at Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. I've been saying for months that you need to wrestle with God. Next week, we're going to talk about what that looks like.

But that's what Paul is talking about here. But with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And then he goes on in verse 8, finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there's any excellence in anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. That's the filter for gratitude.

Look for those things in your life. What's true? Even in the worst of circumstances, something true that's good is in there. You may have to dig for it, but it's there. And look at that list as a checklist for what are things I can be grateful for. And what's the result?

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Those were Jesus' final words in Matthew.

[31 : 25] Lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age. That's the promise. Always. Always. So let's talk about some practical things about how we practice godliness. What does that mean?

And this is where it's important. This is where my first struggle in the sermon was, how do I get past the cliché? This is the point where you get past the cliché. So if you're stuck there, break out of that rut and listen, because this is how you're going to know what it means to be grateful. First of all, go on a God hunt. Look, consciously look for reasons to be grateful.

They're out there. Ask the people around you. Here's a weird one. The first one is make sense. What are you thankful for? But here's the weird part. Ask them, what should I be thankful for? What should I be thankful for? And having somebody else who looks from a different perspective will help you see things that you probably missed or took for granted. No, no, you should be thankful for that. That's a good thing. Let me show you why. We need to be thankful for everyday blessings.

I got to confess, I'm not a big fan of St. Grace at meals because that, frankly, is something that has become cliché for me. Thank you, God, for this food. Okay, let's eat. That does not reflect well on my heart. One of the things that Brene Brown suggested, I think is a great alternative to saying grace, which grace is not a bad thing. The problem is my heart, not the practice, is with your children or with your people, your community, make that moment before the meal sharing what you're thankful for and go deep. When I was in sales, one of the trainings I took years ago said that you don't get to the real reason why somebody's making a purchase until you ask the question why seven times. You uncover the real reason at the seventh task of a why. Why do you want that? What if you did that with your grateful thing? Well, I'm grateful for care. Well, why? And just keep going. And then you really uncover depth and then share that with the person. Remember James 1.17, every good and perfect gift comes from above.

Set an alarm on your watch or on your phone to periodically remind yourself, oh, I'm going to be thankful. Let's look around. What am I thankful for? And address it to God and address it to the person because it might be something you received. Call the person up. Hey, did I tell you I really appreciate whatever it is? Let them know. Keep records. Yeah, write it down. Keep a gratitude journal, a gratitude jar where you, you know, we've heard of the swear jar. You put something in there and you have to pay five bucks. Write down what you're grateful for. Put it in there through the rest of the year. And then a year from now, the week before Thanksgiving, what if you opened that jar and looked at all the things that you had to be thankful for that you had forgotten about over the course of the end of 2025 and into 2026? So keep a gratitude jar. Be creative. Come up with things.

[34 : 38] What if with your kids, you know, we make the chains for Christmas trees where you cut construction paper and strips and make loops. What if you made a loop for everything you're thankful for, kind of like the gratitude jar, and you just, hey, oh, you're thankful for that? Put it down, add another loop and see how by the end of the year your house is completely surrounded by these chains, good chains of things that you're grateful for. But be creative.

Dave, practice gratitude in community. Our brains are wired for us to be together. I'm reading a book right now about, it's called Brains Need Friends. We are way healthier when we're together. It fosters our intelligence. It lengthens our lives. It keeps dementia at bay. There's all kinds of benefits

to being in community. We need to be grateful in community. Listen to why other people are grateful.

Share with them why you're grateful. Ask each other the why question. Why are you grateful for that? Tell me more. Wow, that's really cool. Tell me more about that. Why did that happen? Why are you thankful? And pursue it. It builds those bonds that makes us strong together. And it makes, builds us, the bonds of love that attract people from outside to come in and figure out why we're so weird.

Because we like each other. We like to hang out. Which, by the way, I want to commend you for something. One of the things that Kayla observed when she first started coming to Tri-State was that of all the churches she's been to, this is the first church that she's been to that people come to church intentionally way early, half an hour early to hang out and stay late just to hang out. Keep doing that. That's a strength of ours. Now, here's an important one. Focus determines reality. And this one addresses those of us who are going through really hard times. The things that are difficult in life are loud. They have flashing lights. They're dominating our attention. And if we're not careful, they overwhelm the still small voice of God.

[36 : 36] But your focus determines your reality. Focus on the good gifts that God gives and then go above those gifts. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Look to Him. Choose to focus on God, on the things that you have in Christ, to force your focus away from the bad to the good. It's hard. I'd be a fool not to recognize that. It is hard. You may need help to do it. But shift your focus. Because focus determines reality. I'm going to give you a really quick example and then I've got one other point and we're done.

Years ago, I had a job that lasted a very short time because it was horrible, where I went door to door selling Comcast internet. And one of the weeks that we were in training, I went with a guy and we worked opposite sides of the same street. So we're in the same neighborhood. Now here's where it gets interesting. I like people. And I just think people like me. Why wouldn't you? Right? I just assume that.

I assume that people may not like my product, but that's not a reflection on me. I'm not Comcast. I'm John. I'm just a flunky knocking on your door. And so I just assumed that I'd be safe. I'd make some connections and maybe I'd sell some internet. Well, my partner, interestingly enough, expected the exact opposite. He thought, oh, people hate me. They're going to kill me. They're going to stick their dogs on me. They're going to hose me down. They're going to slam the door. Here's what's interesting.

We were both right. Opposite sides of the same street. I get to the end. Did you know those people down there at XYZ number? That was a weird way to put it. 123 number gave me water. And we had a nice talk about their family. And they told me about their neighbors. And I talked to the neighbor.

And these are cool people. What a great neighborhood. I think I might look at buying a house here. And my neighbor says, are you kidding? I think this is a den of drug dealers and arms dealers and terrorists. These people are horrible. They're mean. I got water thrown on me. Slam doors.

[39 : 01] Focus determines reality. Choose to focus on the gifts that God has given you and then use those to carry your attention to Him. Every good and perfect gift comes from above. Choose to shift your focus.

And the last thing is, dig your well before you're thirsty. Dig your well before you're thirsty. What do I mean by that? You need to start that practice now. If you're like me and you're in a great place in life, that's awesome. But you start better building up that reservoir of things that you're thankful for because life is nothing if not change.

The only constant in our lives is change. You've got to be prepared because the day is going to come where something's not going to go right. And you've gotten lazy, potentially, with everything running smoothly, that when things go bad, you're not prepared. The way that you prepare yourself is to start digging now. And you're digging into the depth of all the goodness of God.

All that you have in Christ. All that you have in this fellowship. And as you dig that down and you build that reservoir, you record it in your gratitude journal or with some other creative means, when things get hard and it becomes time to shift my focus, you've got little stepping stones from the hard thing to the grace of God. Does that make sense? Practice that. And we're going to go downstairs. We're going to have some good food. We have pumpkin pie. Telling Peggy earlier, I think that's why God instituted the holiday of Thanksgiving, was he had all this extra pumpkin pie and it's delicious.

So there we go. But share with each other what you're thankful for. That's your assignment. And ask each other why they're thankful for that thing. Go deeper. Let's pray. Father, this morning as I was driving into church, playing an old song by Petra, I have a thankful heart that you have given me. And it's true that you have given me a new heart in Christ, but you've also given me the things that make me grateful, that lead to gratitude.

[41 : 36] You're so generous to us. You're so good. God, help us to see your goodness and to revel in it, to celebrate you, to express our gratitude. And as we express gratitude, to let joy well up in our lives and let that joy be a light to the world everywhere we go, that we're proclaiming Christ because we're full of joy. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Thank you.