

Attitude of Gratitude — Part 1

Centenary United Methodist Church

Nov. 12, 2023

01 TITLE

Please pray with me: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Think to a time when you felt intense gratitude.

What were the circumstances?

- Maybe a time when you needed help.

02 GRATITUDE

I was driving from St. George, Utah, to Lincoln, Nebraska, to start work for the Great Plains Conference.

- It was snowy and icy.
- I had driven from Sidney, Nebraska, where I had stayed the night.
- I stopped at an exit on Northwest 48th Street to get my bearings and make sure I knew where to get off once I got to town.
- I had a 10-foot UHaul with a trailer with my car on it.
- I stopped at a truck stop there, got my directions and started to leave.
 - A small median was there, but I couldn't see it in the snow.
 - The UHaul got high-centered. I was stuck

A truck driver noticed my issue and talked to a guy with a large pickup truck.

- They came over.
- Hooked a chain to my UHaul's front bumper.
- He went really slowly and got me off the median.

I was grateful!

- They took no payment.
- They simply unhooked their chain, told me good luck getting to my stop.
- Told me to have a great rest of my day.

They saved me time and money — but mostly restored my peace of mind.

- I knew nobody.
- I had no one to call.

Have you had a similar situation? When the kindness of a stranger bailed you out of a mess?

I think about my dad.

- He had kidney disease and was on dialysis for years.

- A place in Leavenworth opened at 4:30 a.m., so my dad had that appointment so he would miss as little of the workday as possible.
- Three hours in the chair, twice a week.
 - When he and my mom visited our family for Thanksgiving one year, we had to arrange for dialysis about 45 minutes north of us in Cedar City because there was no room for an appointment in the much larger St. George.

But in 2010, my dad got the call he had been waiting for: A kidney was available.

03 RESEARCH MEDICAL CENTER

He called us all, and headed to Research Medical Center in Kansas City for a transplant surgery that next morning.

My dad didn't talk a lot about spiritual matters.

- No discussion about gratitude.
- Nothing really about thanksgiving beyond the holiday by that name.
- But he was grateful.

He talked openly about caring for the person who lost their life.

- How that person — and their family who agreed to donating organs — had restored his life.
- For many years after that — up until his death in October 2022 — my dad expressed his gratitude from time to time about that unknown person who gave their organs to extend the lives of others.

04 ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

We are nearing the season of Advent — when we will prepare for the arrival of Jesus.

- Definitely something for which we should be grateful.
- But for the next two weeks, we'll look at what I'm calling our "Attitude of Gratitude."
 - Today, we'll explore how joy and gratitude are intertwined.

Let's take a look at one of the psalms that ties this together for us.

It's Psalm 100.

05-07 SCRIPTURE

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

² Serve the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;^[a]
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him; bless his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever
and his faithfulness to all generations.

May God add a blessing to the reading, hearing and understanding of scripture.

08 PSALM 100

It's fairly widely believed that this psalm likely was sung quite often — like a favorite hymn — in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and, later, in synagogues around the known world.

- It's short.
- It's memorable.
- It provides a pretty short but meaningful lesson.

09 JOYFUL NOISE

At only 5 verses long, it spends the first four giving us an invitation to praise God.

- Joyful noise — didn't say on key
- With service.
- With singing.

It tells of our relationship with God:

- God made us.
- We are "his," it says — meaning we are not on this earth for ourselves or even for our families.
 - We're here to serve our creator.
- God is our shepherd — we are to follow him.

Most importantly, it tells us to enter into his presence with thanksgiving.

- We are to praise God.
- We are to give thanks to God

And why? Verse 5 tells us:

- The Lord is good.
- God's love endures forever — no matter what we do.
- And God has sought a relationship with us throughout the generations.

In other words, be grateful:

- At all times.
- In all places.
- In all circumstances.

And because God provides, we not only are grateful.
We also are filled with joy.

10 TIGGER & EYORE

But what if we're a little less like Tigger and a little more like Eeyore?

We may, just as with other aspects of our faith at times, have to work at it.

I want to spend just a few minutes on two aspects of this idea of living a joy-filled, grateful life.

- How do we enter his gates with thanksgiving and praise?

- 11 DOORS**

Think of the doors we enter:

- Our homes — are we grateful for our families?
 - For the roof over our head?
 - For the food in our refrigerator?
 - For our dogs and/or cats?
- Doors to the church?
 - The church family we get to see when we come here?
 - The legacy left to us by those who came before and built this place both originally and after a fire — perhaps arson — in 1968?
 - What are the things we need to change to be more inviting to more people so we can continue that legacy?
- Hospitals?
 - Nobody wants to go to the hospital.
 - But aren't we grateful for skilled doctors? Caring nurses? Constantly improving technology?
 - When I had a kidney stone, I was never so grateful for doctors and for morphine — I can see how people could get addicted.
- How about schools?
 - Homework's a drag, but what we learn is important.
 - English
 - History
 - Yes, even Algebra.

You get the idea.

- God is in all of those places.
- Let's make sure we enter them with Thanksgiving in our hearts.
- Be grateful that we have them.

And let's do it with that joyful noise the psalmist talks about.

- Could literally be singing loudly.
 - Not me, but maybe you?
- But the joyful noise can be much more subtle.
 - Just being present with another.
 - Or maybe it's a phone call.
 - Fern and Judy Saathoff talk most every day.
- It could be a simple, kind act

- “Actions speak louder than words,” right?
- We certainly can make a joyful noise in worship — so sing out.

And why wouldn't we?

- **12 CROSS** Jesus went to the cross for us.
- **13 BIRTH** Before that, he left Heaven — paradise — to come live among us, just so he could die for us.
- That's a reason for gratitude — right there, alone — if I've ever heard of one!

And along with that gratitude comes joy.

But preachers, you might say, I am grateful for what Jesus did. But I can't feel joy all the time.

14 JOY VS HAPPINESS

I would argue you can.

- Don't confuse joy with happiness.
- Happiness is about pleasure.
 - Could be materialistic.
 - Could just be that things are going well.
- Joy is deeper.
 - Joy is soul-satisfying, emotional wellbeing
 - It's that sense of peace we talked about a little bit last week
 - It's not contingent on if we've had a good day or a bad day.
 - It's a long-lasting — like for your life — attitude.

It's what you do.

It's what you feel when you wake up to a new day.

It's who you are.

It's an attitude — an attitude of gratitude.

Let's pray:

Loving God, we are so very grateful. You provided Jesus, a part of yourself, as a sacrifice for us.

And all you ask of us is to believe.

As believers, we experience joy:

- Joy in knowing we can live with you for an eternity.
- Joy in the comfort that you love us.

And for that love, we express our gratitude for you and all you have done in our lives, all you are doing, and all you will continue to do.

In the name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.