Gratitude Leads to God sermon for 11-20-16

I’m excited about this week. I believe that this coming holiday is one of the most holy of holidays initiated by man.

Thanksgiving is this Thursday and it reminds us to raise our eyes from the normality of life and give thanks for everything.

But how much do we really know about gratitude?

Interestingly enough, we know quite a bit about the effects of gratitude on a person through scientific research.

People who live a lifestyle of gratitude experience these effects:

**Physical**
• Stronger immune systems
• Less bothered by aches and pains
• Lower blood pressure
• Exercise more and take better care of their health
• Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

**Psychological**
• Higher levels of positive emotions
• More alert, alive, and awake
• More joy and pleasure
• More optimism and happiness

**Social**
• More helpful, generous, and compassionate
• More forgiving
• More outgoing
• Feel less lonely and isolated.

Even with all of these benefits that have been recorded in many studies, it seems to me that many in our society know very little of living a life of gratitude.

Oh, we all are happy and thankful from time to time when things are obviously good in our opinion.

But that is so different from being a grateful person where the virtue of thanksgiving is a default response in every circumstance whether happy or sad, painful or comfortable, sacrificial or beneficial.

We are called to be lights of thanksgiving in a world darkened by selfish resentment, envy, and depression.

### Psalm 100 (NLT)

#### A psalm of thanksgiving.

**1**Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!
**2**    Worship the Lord with gladness.
    Come before him, singing with joy.
**3**Acknowledge that the Lord is God!
    He made us, and we are his.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20100&version=KJV;NKJV;NLT#fen-NLT-15488a)]
    We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
**4**Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
    go into his courts with praise.
    Give thanks to him and praise his name.
**5**For the Lord is good.
    His unfailing love continues forever,
    and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

**We enter God’s presence with thanksgiving.**

There is no other way. Jesus is the gate.

And **we can only go through the Door of Jesus to the Father if our hearts are grateful to Him for His goodness.**

Robert Emmons, a leading scientific expert on gratitude, defines gratitude as having two components—affirming goodness and attributing that goodness to someone who brought that goodness into your life.

*“Why Gratitude Is Good”*

*By Robert Emmons | November 16, 2010*

*http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\_gratitude\_is\_good*

# Affirmation of Goodness

**Gratitude requires a willingness to admit that there is goodness in our lives and an effort to identify goodness in our lives.**

The first enemy to gratitude is a restricted view of our lives.

Too often we choose to center our thoughts, our conversation, and our attitudes on what is negative in our lives instead of stepping back to see a more balanced perspective that includes the good in our lives.

**If negativity is not defeated, then we will be blind to God simply because God is good.**

# **Psalm 100:5**

# **5**For the Lord is good.    His unfailing love continues forever,    and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

# **Psalm 119:68**

**68**You are good and do only good;
    teach me your decrees.

# Attribution of Goodness

**Gratitude requires a willingness and an effort to attribute the goodness we identify in our lives to a giver of that goodness.**

Gratitude forces us to admit that we are dependent on the goodness of others and the goodness of God; it’s a humble realization that we are not responsible for and capable of producing all the goodness in our lives.

# **James 1:17**

**17**Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

**Maintaining an attitude of gratitude is the only true understanding of our lives, because it makes it impossible for us to think too highly of ourselves.**

The Bible makes it clear that nothing we do that’s motivated by anything other than the will of God is good.

# **Romans 7:18**

**18**And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7%3A18&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28071a)] I want to do what is right, but I can’t.

So to believe that we are responsible for the good in our lives is believing a lie.

And in the same sense, when we believe that we have been able to achieve anything without the contribution of others we believe a lie.

# Impossible to be Grateful in Suffering?

**As difficult as it seems, it is possible to be thankful even in the midst of suffering.**

Satan is constantly painting a picture of our lives from his interpretation whether we are in comfortable circumstances or troubling times. His picture always contradicts the story that God witnesses about you.

It is more tempting to agree with Satan’s perspective when we are suffering, but the Holy Spirit is able to empower us to agree instead with God’s picture.

Giving thanks is that: making the canyon of pain into a megaphone to proclaim the ultimate goodness of God when Satan and all the world would sneer at us to recant. —Ann Voskamp

# Cultivating Gratitude

#1: Ask the Holy Spirit to create a thankful spirit in you.

#2: Honor those who have paved the way for you.

#3: Say “please” and “thank you”.

#4: Be generous.

#5: Count your blessings regularly and write them down.

Write down 5 good things in your life.

Then write down who is responsible for those good things.

Let’s take a moment and pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for those people and for His goodness in our lives.