

Thanks-Living — More Than a Holiday

A Text That Changed Everything

A friend once texted me saying, “*I’m thankful for you.*” That simple message made me stop and realize how much *I must be thankful for* — life, relationships, home, church family. **It was a reminder that gratitude isn’t just for big moments, but for everyday things.**

We might reserve *our gratitude* for a holiday or a big blessing, but *what if we treated thankfulness as a constant posture* — not just a day?

Thankful for the Thorns – Sermon illustration =

“Thankful for the Thorns” about a woman named Sandra who had endured deep loss and hardship — including the death of her child in a car accident. In a florist shop, a clerk gives her a bouquet of thorny rose stems without any flowers — a “Thanksgiving Thorns Bouquet.”

Application: This bouquet symbolizes gratitude not only for the “roses” (blessings) in life but also for the “thorns” (suffering).

Thanks-living means we recognize that God’s grace works even through pain, and that our thankfulness can include the hard, thorny parts of life.

Today we pause not only to celebrate a holiday, but to reflect on a deeper spiritual truth:

Thanksgiving is not just something we do, but something we live.

- Too often, we treat Thanksgiving (or similar giving-thanks times) like a single event.
- But the Bible calls us into a lifelong posture of gratitude.

Let me call this a life of thanks-living.

=====

I. The Biblical Foundation for Thanksgiving

1. Gratitude is God’s Will

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- Paul tells us: Give thanks in all circumstances...
- *We are called to give thanks not only when things go well!*
- For **THIS IS the will of God** for you!!!
- This is not a suggestion — *it's described as God's will.*

2. Thanksgiving Anchors Us in God's Goodness

Psalms 100:4-5 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. *Be thankful to Him* and bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

- Enter His presence w/thanksgiving and praise!!!
- For the Lord IS GOOD; His LOVE endures forever!!!!

Psalms 107 Thanksgiving to the Lord for His Great Works of Deliverance

The psalmist repeatedly calls: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

These Psalms remind us that: Thanksgiving is rooted in who God is, not just in what He gives.

3. Thanksgiving as a Sacrifice

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

- The Bible uses sacrificial language for gratitude.
- We are called to offer "a sacrifice of praise ...
- *The fruit of lips that acknowledge his name*".
- *"Through Jesus, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise".*
- This shows that **thanksgiving isn't passive: it's active, and spiritual.**

4. Thankfulness Colors Everything We Do

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

- “*Whatever you do ... do it all ... giving thanks to God!!!!*”

According to Paul, even Our daily words and actions should flow out of gratitude — *not only in church, not only on Thanksgiving Day, but constantly.*

=====

II. Why “Thanks-Living” Matters

1. Thanksgiving Changes Our Perspective

When we choose to give thanks in every situation, it shifts our eyes from our problems to God’s presence.

- Focusing back on God helps us *put things in a proper perspective!!!*
- It cultivates that attitude of gratitude.
- This doesn’t mean ignoring pain - - -
- But acknowledging God’s sovereignty and faithfulness through it.

2. It Builds Spiritual Maturity

- A lifestyle of gratitude reflects growth.
- Thankfulness is a mark of spiritual maturity.
- When we’re mature, we don’t just praise God when He answers our prayers.
- We also thank Him for shaping us through hardships...

Gratitude reminds us that our relationship with God is not transactional, but relational.

- *We thank God not only for what He gives, but for who He is.*

3. Thanksgiving Opens the Door to More of God

When our hearts are grateful, we become more aware of God’s ongoing work in our lives.

- *As gratitude overflows, it invites God's grace, provision, and peace.*
- *A thankful heart "attracts more of God's grace and provision."*
- *It also fuels joy and deepens our trust: knowing that God is good...*
- *We can rest in His faithfulness, even when we don't understand.*

4. Thanksgiving Is a Witness to Others

Living in thanks is not just for our own spiritual benefit; it's a testimony.

When others see Christians living gratefully, even amid trials, it draws them to God.

As the redeemed of the Lord, we are called to tell the story of what He has done. Our gratitude becomes a living sermon to the world.

=====

III. How Do We Cultivate Thanks-Living?

Little David and the Broccoli

Story: A child named David was asked to give thanks before Thanksgiving dinner. He thanked God for friends, family, the food — turkey, pie, cool whip, everything. Then he paused, *"If I thank God for the broccoli, won't He know I'm lying?"*

Application: This is both funny and profound: children remind us how honest (and vulnerable) gratitude can be. *It encourages us to reflect whether our thankfulness is genuine — do we thank God just for the "good" things, or even for the things we don't particularly like (the "broccoli" of life)?*

Practical steps to move from holiday gratitude to everyday, whole-life thanksgiving:

1. Take Note of God's Blessings

Develop awareness. *Often we forget to recognize the source of our blessings.* Preachers suggest we "take note" — actively look for God's hand in your daily life.

Practice a gratitude journal, simply pause each day to name things you're thankful for.

2. Pray with Thanksgiving

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

- Let our prayers be rooted in thanks.
- Paul links prayer with thanksgiving....
- Present our requests with thanksgiving.

In prayer, even when we bring our worries and needs, start or end **by thanking God for who He is and what He's already done**.

3. Make Praise a Habit

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

- Offer praise Continually!!!
- Find ways to praise God in the small moments — morning, evening, before meals, or even in the car.

4. Give Thanks in Hard Times

- This is perhaps the most challenging, but most important.
- Easy to give thanks when things are going well, harder when life hurts.
- Yet, the call is to give thanks in all circumstances.

When trials come, shift your focus: Remember God's promises, His character, and His presence.

Gratitude demonstrates our trust in the Lord, especially when we don't see immediate resolution.

5. Share Your Thankfulness

- Testify. Share your testimony!!!!
- Tell others what God has done for you.
- Let your gratitude be vocal and visible.

=====

IV. A Vision for a Thanks-Living Community

Imagine My Church where thanksgiving is not just a once-a-year moment, but a defining posture of our community.

Sundays: People come not only to ask God for things, but to thank Him for what He's already done.

Bible Study Groups: People share how God has helped them progress through the good, bad, and ugly times...

Lighthouse Outreach: Our service to the community is motivated by gratitude.

Gratitude not guilt, we serve because we are thankful for what God has done for us, and we want others to experience His love!!!!

We teach new believers and children that thanksgiving is not seasonal — it's spiritual, constant, and transformational.

This kind of community – a **thanks-living community** – changes not just individual hearts but the world around us.

=====

CLOSE: The Humble Tibetan Couple

Story: In his missionary work in Tibet, Dr. Albert Shelton encountered an old couple who traveled five days just to thank him. They bowed low, bumping their heads out of humility, and offered him a dirty piece of butter, six eggs, and a rooster — **simple gifts, but deeply heartfelt.**

Application: Their **gratitude** wasn't based on wealth, but on relational debt and humility. This illustrates how

True-thanks-living sees value not in how much we give, but in the posture of our hearts.

Even small gifts or acts of service, when offered in humility, can be powerful expressions of thankfulness.

Thanksgiving is more than a holiday: It's a reminder of God's goodness, His provision, His love. But it's also a calling: to live every day in gratitude.

As you go forth, I challenge you:

1. Let **gratitude** guide your prayers.
2. Let your actions be **rooted in thanksgiving**.
3. Let your words testify to **God's faithfulness**.
4. In every season — joy, trial, doubt — **choose thanks**.

If you don't yet know Jesus, know that gratitude begins with knowing Him:

The greatest thing we thank God for is His Son, who reconciled us to Himself.