

Thank You Lord

by Jim Cymbala

God wants us to cultivate a thankful heart by making a conscious effort to thank Him for His blessings and by focusing on the good things in our lives.

Duration: 26:21

Scripture: Luke 17:11-14, Acts 13:2

Topics: "Thankfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the existence of God and the evidence of His creation in the world. He argues that the complexity and wonders of the human brain and the existence of love and kindness are proof of a superior being. The preacher also discusses the importance of breaking bad habits and how God helps in this process. He encourages gratitude and giving thanks in all situations, citing the Bible's instruction to give thanks in everything. The sermon concludes with a call for the congregation to hug one another and share three things they are thankful for.

Transcript

One of the things that God does when he saves us is he starts to break things that are habitually part of our lives. They're called habits, but we all have habits, many of which are not good for us. So God wants us to see these habits broken.

God is in the habit of breaking bad habits. Do you believe that? Sometimes they're broken in an instant. Other times, God has to change things in our life so that we come to a position of being able to see that habit broken.

He has to renew our minds because we think down old tracks that are not healthy for us. Of all the bad habits Christians have, there's one probably that's the worst or the most common among all of us, and I know it's one of my besetting sins, and it's one that I wanna see God help me in, and that is a habit which also has profound spiritual dimensions to it because it has a lot to do with a lot when you think about it in the light of the New Testament. The best way to tell you about it is by telling you a familiar story from the Gospels.

Let's look at it. Now, Luke 17, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee, and as he was going into a village, 10 men who had leprosy met him, and they stood at a distance. Why did they stand at a distance? Because you were told you didn't get near anybody when you

had leprosy.

You had a cry when someone came within a certain amount of, according to Jewish law, we're told by Edersheim and others that a certain distance, you had to cry and yell out, "Unclean, unclean!" So nobody would walk into your area and not know that leprosy was around. People didn't know much about it then. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us." And when he saw them, he said, "Go away, go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed." There's an interesting example of obedience to a command of Jesus being the key to an answer to prayer.

In this case, they were healed, not because he touched them. He did touch leprosy people, but not these. He just spoke and gave a command and told them to go to the priest and to show themselves, which was what you did after you healed, but they weren't healed yet.

But as they obeyed him and went to the priest, according to the law, to show that they were healed, so an offering could be made and so on and so forth, as they were going, they were healed, cleansed. And one of them, when he saw he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice and he threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

And it seems like the nine others of them were Jews from either the northern province of Galilee where Jesus grew up or the southern province of Judea. So they were Jews, full Jews. This one was a Samaritan.

Samaria was the piece of land in between the northern Galilee, the south of Judea. And they had their own religion and they were detested by the Jews. They were hated by the rabbis.

And the rabbis taught that if you walk through Samaria and even the dust from the Samaritan villages, the dust from the roads gets on your feet, you were unclean. That's how much they looked down on Samaritans, Samaritans. But the one who came back was one of these despised, rejected people who the Jews said, no, no, no, we have nothing to do with you.

You always gave us trouble throughout history. And you have a hybrid religion. You got some of the, they believed in the teaching only of Moses, they didn't believe in the teaching of the prophets or the Psalms of David.

It's a mixed religion and I was in Samaria on my one trip to Israel and David, our missionary, took me to the headquarters of the Samaritan religion. You wanna talk about a demonic place and the head guy of the whole thing. They've never left the land.

The Jews have gone out of the land during their time of captivity. But the Samaritans boast and say, we're the only ones who never left the land. It's like a hybrid people with different bloods of different other peoples and a religion that's half this, half that.

And the guy started to bring out books of the heritage that goes all the way back to the time of the original Samaritans, shall we say. And they intermarry and they have a lot of birth defects and they have some odd looking characteristics because they're inbred. They don't marry outside.

At one time, they got down to only like seven, 800. Now there's only eight or 10,000, I think, in all of Samaria, but they've never left. And that was one place where I said to David, I'm out of here and they showed me the side where once a year they kill a huge animal as their sacrifice and people come in from

around the world to see it and take pictures of it and it's their religion.

Very, very uncomfortable feeling I had there. Very. That man was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, we're not all 10 clans? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise or thanks to God except this foreigner? And then he said to him, rise and go. Your faith has made you well. Now what's interesting about that story is not only that it was the Samaritan who came back, not only that Jesus didn't heal like he usually healed, which was laying on of hands or speaking your cleanse.

He just said, go and show yourself to the priests. And they could have said, no, I'm not going anywhere. I'm not healed.

Look, I got leprosy. But they obeyed him and as they went, they were healed. So sometimes God just does nothing almost the same way twice and when the Lord tells us to do something, we'll never know what blessing we'll miss if we don't do it.

When God tells you to do something, whatever simple thing it is, do it. You don't know what's gonna happen out of that act of obedience. But the interesting part about this, yes, it was the Samaritan came back, not a Jew.

But the point is that Jesus was saying, wait a minute, I just healed 10 people. 10 people had faith to go and obey the command and go to the priest. I healed 10.

What's the deal that there's just one coming back? Where are the other nine? So nine people obeyed him and had the faith and they were healed. But they had the bad habit that a lot of us have. They were unthankful.

It amazed Jesus. Jesus said, one out of 10 comes back to say thank you. Don't you think if you were healed by someone of leprosy, you would come back and at least say gracias, senior.

No. No, maybe they were so busy celebrating back with the family. Maybe they were moving on to the next problem.

Where are they gonna get a job now that they're clean? Where are they gonna get clothes because their clothes were all unclean? You know, we go on to the next problem. And we don't stop and say thank you, God. One of our besetting sins is a lot of us are chronic in our unthankfulness.

Our ingratitude is incredible. We got 99 things to thank God for. We focus on the one thing that we need.

And then we cry out to God for that and complain. And then when God helps us, we don't even thank him for that. We're on to the next problem that we can find.

That's the truth about a lot of us. I'm not saying to put you down. I'm speaking about myself.

Some of us owe back pay. Are you kidding? Some of us should be here till midnight just thanking God for all that he's done. Come on, can we say amen to that? Just thanking God.

Ingratitude is hard to take with anybody. When you see children who are ungrateful to their parents in the natural, you wanna slap them. Am I right or wrong? When you see people, when you see kids talking back and sassing their parents, their mother or their father, who took care of them, changed them and fed them

when they couldn't manage for themselves, and now they got all the answers and won't say thank you to their parents? And if that fits somebody here in this building, why don't you, when you get home tonight, call your mother or father? I don't care what kind of parents they weren't.

I know some things they did, they kept you alive because you're here tonight. So call them up and say, thank you, Mom. Thank you, Dad.

I could never thank my mother. She's here. I could never thank her enough for putting up with me and taking care of me when I was little and through all my ups and downs.

She was always there for me. So it's very hard to see people being ungrateful. And now we live in a city which is known for being unthankful.

And in here, we're not thankful to anybody. You rarely meet people. My wife and I have noticed that, and we have felt failures about it many times because we see people in our own church who are ungrateful.

People do something nice to them. They can't break down and say, I thank you. I really thank you for doing that, whether it's opening a door or giving a seat or buying them a meal.

It's very hard for them to say, thank you. It like humbles them. They feel they're in a vulnerable position.

That is very hard to take. In fact, one of the signs of the difficult times in the last days, Paul says in 2 Timothy, the third chapter, he says, difficult times will come in the last days because men will be lovers of pleasures, lovers of money, lovers of themselves, not lovers of God. But listen, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, they'll be religious.

They'll be religious people. But they'll be all this other, and one of the things they'll be is ungrateful. Difficult times will come because people will be going to church but will be ungrateful.

And I meet people all the time, and I need the grace of God or I lose what little sanctification I have. I'm around people who have an edge. They have an edge, like they're bitter and they're mad at the world.

And everyone's taking advantage of them. Why don't you just stop and thank God for being alive? Everybody in the building, lift your hands. Out loud, thank God that you're alive today.

Just thank you. God, we thank you we're alive today. That you put breath in my lungs today for one more day.

God, I'm alive, I'm not dead. I'm not in the grave. I deserve to be in the grave.

But you've kept me alive. We thank you and we praise you. We thank you.

This is hard because here were people who had faith to receive a healing, but they didn't have the grace to come back and say thank you. Now it doesn't say God said all right. Christ didn't say all right.

Let the leprosy go back on him. He's not like that. But still it hurt him.

Because it hurts anybody. When you do something nice for someone, they can't even say thank you. The Samaritan came back and fell at his feet.

All he wanted to do was worship him and say thank you. Musicians, I hope you're thankful. Background singers, I hope you're thankful.

What kind of pastor am I? How am I gonna stand at the judgment seat of Christ if we're all unthankful to people? Ungrateful. Always talking about the problem and what went wrong in life. How about what went right in life? How about that? What went right in life? Unthankfulness to God is another whole thing.

Because it seems that an unthankful spirit is the beginning, the first step, toward all departure from God. The first step of backsliding is not taking a drink. We're not watching some pornography.

The first step of backsliding is to get that proud, ungrateful attitude in our heart. Yes, toward people it'll show, but toward God. The proof of that is found in this deep passage in Romans 1 where Paul is arguing and describing people who didn't have the law, like the Jews.

The Jews had the law. The Jews got the law from Moses. Well, how about all the Gentile peoples who didn't have a law? He's answering the question, how is God gonna judge those people who never had the law, never got the 10 commandments? How will he judge them? Well, we don't know that totally.

We just know God is just and he does everything well, amen? But it says in Romans 1, the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Notice this, the truth is presented to them in one form or another, but they hold down the truth. It's not that they can't believe the truth.

They suppress the truth. They hold it down, the word means in the Greek. They press it down so it won't come up in front of them.

It's not convenient for them to believe in the truth because they don't wanna give up. They know if they accept that truth, they're gonna have to change the way they live. They're gonna have to stop sleeping around or stealing or hating.

They're gonna have to say, I'm sorry and make things right. So they don't wanna do that. So they suppress the truth, even though their conscience is ringing and saying, yay, listen, you know what's right.

But rather than get right, they suppress the truth. Since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, now he's talking about man separate from the law, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse.

There's a world around us. How did it get there? There must be a superior being. There must be a creator.

This all happened by accident. If I tried to convince you that this glass pulpit just accidentally happened because some stuff was flying around and someone opened the doors and a breeze came in and it made that, you would laugh at me and say, what do you think I'm crazy? Well, look at the world. Look at the wonders of how we're made.

Think of the human brain. It makes every computer look like a toy. This just happened accidentally? And to claim we're linked to animals? Where did kindness come from? Where did love come from? Where did these things that only humans being, we went to the moon.

We had a man on the moon. We love, we make sacrifices. We build hospitals for people who are down and out.

You ever see a lion build a hospital for zebras? I'm gonna eat that zebra. I'm not gonna build nothing for nobody. No, we are fearfully and wonderfully made, aren't we? Let's just say amen to that.

We are. So that men are without excuse. They're without excuse.

Don't believe people go around and say, I can't believe. They can believe. They suppress the truth.

For although they knew God, listen, although they knew God, they had some understanding of God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave. But their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. And it started when they knew about God and they wouldn't worship him and they wouldn't give thanks.

And that was the departure. And the next thing you know, their minds are darkened, their imaginations are polluted, and the whole thing goes corrupt. But it began with the simplest things.

Not studying the Bible, not understanding difficult passages, just the ability to stop and say, God, I thank you. I thank you. I glorify you, God.

I praise you, God. Oh, the power that there is in just thanking God, praising God. Before we eat, we should thank every meal, we should thank God for the food set before us.

Because not everyone has food. Think of what we have. When I think of the moods that we all go in, starting with myself at times in my life, feeling bad for myself, letting pressures get me down.

And all around me, God is just like, what more do I have to do for you to get you to thank me and praise me? We should be running around New York every day just blessing God. And that's just physical blessings. And then think we have Christ in us.

Through the Holy Spirit, our sins are gone. I talked to someone before the service who's been battling with something and fell into a bad area of disobedience, but has come back. And I said, don't let the devil get you down now.

There's no record of your sin in heaven. Either the blood of Jesus cleanses and washes it away, or it doesn't. And if it doesn't, you're in a lot of trouble, but it does.

So there's no record. Why can't we be thankful? Come on, that's one of the worst habits we have. We're not thankful.

Could I charge you? Can I encourage you? What can I do to get up into your heart somehow and tell you, can you please shake off the negativity? Could you shake off all that you're going through and that you're a victim and all of that? Could you please give it a rest? And could you start to praise God for what he has done? Come on, can we say amen to that? Come on, can we say amen to that? Can we shake that off? You might say, Pastor, that's hurtful to me because you don't know what I'm going through. I'm not lessening that. I'm not being insensitive.

We all go through stuff. You don't think I've ever cried? You don't think my heart's ever been broken? Well, of course, but if you live that way, how is that pleasing to Christ? So listen, we got problems. We gotta go

through things, but we have Christ in us.

Our sins have been washed away. Come on, we have God on our side. Can we say thank you to God for that? Thank you, Lord.

Could I charge everyone here in this building, in the name of Christ, would you please refocus and start counting your blessings? It sounds trite. It sounds trite. Count your blessings instead of your problems.

Give it a rest. I don't wanna know for a few minutes what you don't wanna have. I wanna know what you do have.

I don't wanna know what you're going through. I wanna know what God has already brought you through. Come on, are you here today because God has been good? Satan will try to block you from praising God.

I've had it happen this way in my life, and the Holy Spirit, I believe, is helping me say this. I had one battle when I was just a few months in the ministry where I could feel the enemy trying to just kill the baby while it was a baby, while I was young, the church on Atlantic Avenue when Carol and I started. So I went up in an attic, and I had nothing to preach, and I didn't feel God seven million miles from me, and I got very bad suggestions in my mind, not to go, to just quit, to give it up.

And then I remembered something, and the word from Psalm. Listen, Psalm 100. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and praise his name. The only way to approach God, bless his name. Enter his gates with thanksgiving.

His courts with praise. I'm telling you, the holy place is a little further, but enter the gates at least thanksgiving. Then the courts are out here with praise.

Then when you get in there, God will lead you to all other kinds of things. But the only way to approach God properly really is to be praising him. So I knew that, I knew that.

That was planted somewhere in my mind. So I said, I gotta bless God. I gotta praise God.

I'm gonna thank God. I'm in trouble. I was having an attack, Satan.

I could feel Satan's powers, dark, discouraging. So I said, I'm gonna thank God for what he's done for me. So let me just think of what he's done for me.

I couldn't think of one thing. Tell you, Satan attacked my mind. I thought, okay, let me just think of one thing God did for me.

And Satan, as if he was blocking my mind from thinking about one good thing that God has done for me. I got afraid. I got up off of this mattress.

This mattress was in the old mattress with nothing covering it, in this attic, a little attic that had a V-shaped ceiling. And I got up out of the mattress. My heart was pounding, tears coming out of my eyes, so young, so inexperienced, and I got so afraid because I realized, like, he's gonna extinguish my life.

And I just said, Jesus. That's all I could say was, Jesus, help me. And something came into me that God had done in my life.

Some answered prayer. The blessing of Christ, the promise of eternal life, whatever. My wife, my daughter downstairs.

And I started saying, thank you, God. Thank you, God. And there was like a fight, and I just kept louder.

I bless you, God. I thank you, God. I'm telling you what I went through.

And suddenly, the clouds rolled away. And the sunlight came out. Oh, did I have a time up in that alley.

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise, you know what? Continually be. Let's clap our hands one more time.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Isn't it interesting? Isn't it interesting that the Holy Spirit spoke to the church in Antioch in Acts 13, verse two? Isn't it interesting? And while they fasted and ministered to the Lord, while they were blessing God and thanking Him, the Holy Spirit said, separate me, Paul and Barnabas, right now.

The word now is left out of the authorized version and most of the others, but it's in the Greek. Separate me, Paul and Barnabas, right now for the work that I've called Him. God speaks and draws near when we're praising Him.

Amen. If you're here tonight and you say, pastor, that was for me. I struggle with the same bad habit you have.

I can get so unthankful. I can be ungrateful. I worry, I worry, I major in worry.

I have a PhD in worry and I haven't even gotten out of kindergarten when it comes to Thanksgiving. That's the way a lot of us are. Don't say no, it's true.

Worry needs, oh, attitude about everyone who did us wrong and then God is saying, wait a minute, didn't I heal, Jesus said, didn't I heal 10? He only got a tithe back, one. 10% came back. I wonder if that's symbolic or prophetic about how us folks are.

10% came back to say, thank you, Lord. This is why giving is down in most churches. People don't practice systematic giving because they're not thankful.

They're not thankful. If you really are thankful what God has done for you, that everything you have belongs to him, are you kidding, you can't give enough because you know he's gonna take care of you. You have a thankful spirit.

That's why the Bible says God loves what kind of giver? A cheerful giver, someone who's thankful. Praise God I have something to give. Not, oh, no, I gotta give up something I have.

I feel like a cheerleader here tonight but I'm gonna be a cheerleader for Jesus. We gotta give thanks. If you're here today and say, pastor, that was for me.

I don't care who you are. Get up out of your seat. You're gonna stand here in the front and we're gonna praise God.

You're coming today, I'm gonna thank God tonight. I want that stranglehold the enemy's trying to get on me broken. I'm gonna begin to praise God and thank him tonight.

Pastor Cymbala, I owe God back Thanksgiving. You've reminded me. I've been focusing on the negative instead of thanking him for the blessings.

Come on, you come up here. I don't want anyone to think I'm insensitive to the problems of life but there's a time for everything under the sun. The Bible says in everything, in everything, in every kind of situation, give thanks.

How many wanna lose that bad habit and give more thanks in the days to come than ever before, starting with myself? Now, it's time for everything under the sun. Sometimes we cry, we pray intercessory prayers and all of that. Now, here's how we're gonna dismiss.

We're gonna hug one another, men with men, ladies with ladies. But now when you hug each other, I want you to take time and tell the other person you're hugging three things you thank God for tonight. I don't wanna hear one prayer request.

No prayer requests. Come on, hug one another and whisper to one another. Come on, share what you thank God for.

Come on, tell him. Tell him.

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