

## Enter His gates with thanksgiving!

On behalf of Lighthouse Bible Church, I wish you and your loved ones a Happy Thanksgiving.

/As we approach Thanksgiving this year, perhaps you have asked yourself: what should I be grateful for this year? What do I have to be grateful for?\

If you haven't asked that question yet, you really ought to do so.

You're about to get help answering that question. God lets us know in His word the things that we can and should always be grateful for.

/God's ways are not our ways\. So the list you came with this morning will probably not be the same list you leave with.

The word of God gives us attitude adjustments. The word of God renews our thinking. It transforms us. It changes our outlook on things.

*Rom 12:1-2*

*12 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.  
2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

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You see, that's the problem. We too often carry the weight of the world with us, and when we do, it's almost impossible to have an attitude of gratitude.

And when our thinking is conformed to –, and blinded by – the ways of this sick, corrupt, and deceived world, ...well, our minds are saturated with fear and dissatisfaction. That's the way of this world.

Let me ask the question again: what do we – you, I – what do we have to be grateful for?

/You might be thinking: this has been a particularly difficult year.  
I am not sure there is very much to be grateful for.\

With wars raging in the Middle East and in Europe  
With hatred boiling over in our streets  
With inflation!

Just to name three.

/And when I think about you all, I realize that many of you have been through some rough things this year.\nYou've had a health emergency, or chronic pain, or financial ruin. People you loved dearly have died. The prayers you have asked for are moving and distressing.

/And so the fact is that each one of us here today has reasons to be discouraged, sad, angry, frustrated, or bitter.\

But....

/And a heart so pre-occupied is in such a state as to be far removed from the place of gratitude and thanksgiving.\

It happens. It can happen so easily.

But please don't take offense with I am now going to say.

All of these things, all of these painful and discouraging things, are temporary. They cannot compare to the glory, the peace, the joy that we have in Jesus Christ.

*Rom 8:18*

*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19*

/Therefore, we shouldn't let them - as afflicting as they are – we shouldn't allow them to interfere with our giving of thanks to the Lord.\

*2 Cor 4:17-18*

*17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Now Paul was having an awful time of it when he wrote these words.

In fact he had just finished describing this “momentary, light affliction”. Judge for yourselves:

*2 Cor 4:7-12*

*7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death works in us, but life in you.*

He was constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake. And yet, and yet, because of the glory set before him, he considered that death working in him to be momentary light affliction. Just like Jesus did when He died for us on the cross.

/Paul had become indifferent to external circumstances.\

*Phil 4:11-14*

*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. 14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.*

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/What was the secret that he had learned?\

How do we answer a question like that? Check out the neighborhood!

*Phil 4:4-9*

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*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 is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 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.*

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/Paul had learned the secret of contentment. It's found in the peace of God.\  
It comes from the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension. This peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And yet it's all very practical.

Paul gives the recipe so to speak. There are three ingredients.

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1. Be anxious for nothing. Do not worry. (Yeah but how can I stop worrying about these things?)
2. In every circumstance, make your requests (needs, worries, afflictions) known to God. Pray! And do so with an attitude of thanksgiving.
3. Let your mind dwell on the right things: *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\*

Simply put: stop worrying. Pray. Set your mind on the things above.

SO now let's return to the question I asked at the outset:  
/What do we have to be grateful for?\

What can we rely on for contentment and peace? Where will we find our joy and our hope?

/Let's let God tell us. \

*Ps 100*

*1 Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.*

*2 Serve the Lord with gladness;  
Come before Him with joyful singing.*

*3 Know that the Lord Himself is God;  
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;  
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 lovingkindness is everlasting*

*And His faithfulness to all generations.*

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He made us! We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. The Lord is my shepherd, and your shepherd too. /You and I will never want for any good thing.\

The Lord is good!

His lovingkindness, His grace, is everlasting. He is always faithful.

Like the Psalmist, we can't help but give the Lord thanks for these things.

Paul had many things to be thankful for concerning a very rebellious congregation:

*1 Cor 1:4-9*

*4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Let's join Paul in thanking God for these things.

/These things are not affected by changing circumstances, hardships, distresses, tribulation, affliction, nakedness or sword.\

God will be showering His grace on us for all eternity.

We are not lacking in any gift.

/We are eagerly awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.\

These are the things that we can always be grateful for.

/The Lord Jesus Christ will confirm us to the end.\

On the day of Christ Jesus – the Rapture – we will be blameless.

/We have been called into fellowship with God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.\

This is what thanksgiving is really all about.

*Col 1:3-12*

*3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,  
4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the  
saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard  
in the word of truth, the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also  
it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also  
since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; 7 just as you  
learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant  
of Christ on our behalf, 8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.*

*9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for  
you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual  
wisdom and understanding,*

*10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.*

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/These things are freely given to us because God has given us His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of all good things.\

All things worthy of praise are found in Christ.

All the true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, excellent things.

And we are in Christ! And He is in us!

He is the truth. He is righteous and holy. He is lovely and beyond compare.

So now - what do we have to be grateful for today? This could take a while!