



***We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks, for your name is near;
people tell of your wonderful deeds.
Psalm 75:1***

Thankfulness has become a theme for me, especially on difficult days. Like everyone else, I have moments when I can sometimes feel overcome by the difficult and unexpected. Times when the negative seems to be running wild and it feels like God, although visible, is perhaps just a bit out of my reach. But here's a discovered reality that I would like to share: even if I can't be thankful for what I've received on those days, you can bet I'm thankful for what I've escaped and journeyed through with His help.

Gratitude is a mighty force. It can change the whole landscape of our lives. It can take a situation that seems dead or hopeless and infuse it with light and life. It has a way of changing us. A way of keeping our hearts open and our minds fresh. A way of keeping our feet headed in the right direction. It is without doubt a worthy habit to pursue.

And yet, how often do we as believers and followers take the time to truly feel grateful? Scripture speaks of it again and again. Have you ever noticed just how much it is referenced? It's that which should be filling our heart and greeting our neighbor; that which we are to build upon and share; that which we are to approach our God and prayer with; as well as the essence of what we should be sharing with others. But what does the reality of gratitude look like and mean within the routine of our day?

I once heard someone compare gratitude to laughter, saying it was a type of internal medicine that we need frequently and often. I don't believe truer words were ever spoken, and yet I fear that we don't take that medicine often enough. I struggle these days as there seems to be such an absence of gratitude in the hearts of people. I find folks struggling to hold tight to anything that resembles thankfulness given all of the many unanswered situations and questions that seem to abound. And there is certainly no doubt that life is filled with way too much right now, but isn't there, perhaps, room for both? Can't we take time to think, to center in on that which we have to be grateful and thankful for?

I'm not sure if you know but the Quakers have a tradition of keeping "gratitude journals." They focus on life's often unnoticed gifts rather than on their problems and difficulties. They see it as important to bear witness to God's goodness; which in turn keeps them focused forward, something that we could all benefit from; as who wants to live life in the "past" lane.

So that being said, right here and right now, what is it that you are thankful for in this very moment? All stressors aside, do things automatically come to mind, or do you really need to give that question some time and thought?

If finding a sense of gratitude is a challenge, I want to encourage you to take some time today and begin to aim your mind in a thankful direction. Take a moment or more to be grateful for the tiniest things: water to drink, a moment of rest, the color of a flower, a sunset, a bird that you see in flight, a piece of bread, a familiar song you hear. Keep looking for sights, smells, sounds, that make you feel pleasure, and write them down. Give thanks for the clothes on your back, and the food on your table. Be thankful for the abundant grace that has brought you this far in your journey; and take the time to give thanks for God; for His word, and for His love. I promise you it will undoubtedly change your life.

My friends take this opportunity, take this day and make the decision to be thankful. Let it spill all over; share it with everyone you come across. Greet those you know and even those you don't with the best gift you can offer to them or to yourself – a grateful and thankful heart!!

Prayer

Gracious Lord,

Give me a spirit of thankfulness. Open my heart to all that surrounds me and make me eager to share it with others. Keep me mindful that your gifts are without parallel and that the best gift of all is your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen