



***Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”***

***When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”***

***And as they went, they were cleansed.***

***One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.***

***Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”***

***Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” Luke 17:11-19***

This Thanksgiving in the midst of missing family and friends and hearing of more and more people I know becoming ill, I took the time to re-read chapter 9 of Max Lucado’s “You’ll Get Through This.” An older, quick read, I continue to appreciate Lucado’s approach as he does a skilled job of pointing out the importance of a grateful heart when it comes to standing strong in the midst of difficult and turbulent times. He writes:

“A grateful heart sees each day as a gift. Thankful people focus less on what they lack and more on the privileges they have. I attended a banquet recently in which a wounded soldier was presented with the gift of a free house. He nearly fell over with gratitude. He bounded onto the stage with his one good leg and threw both arms around the presenter. “Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” He hugged the guitar player in the band and the woman in the front row. He thanked the waiter, the other soldiers, and then the presenter again. Before the night was over, he thanked me! And I didn’t do anything.

Shouldn’t we be equally grateful? Jesus is building a house for us (John 14:2). Our deed of ownership is every bit as certain as that of the soldier. What’s more, Jesus cured our leprosy. Sin cankered our souls and benumbed our senses. Yet the Man on the path told us we were healed, and, lo and behold, we were!

The grateful heart is like a magnet sweeping over the day; collecting reasons for gratitude. A zillion diamonds sparkle against the velvet of your sky every night. *Thank you, God.* A miracle of muscles enables your eyes to read these words and your brain to process them. *Thank you, God.* Your lungs inhale and exhale eleven thousand liters of air every day. Your heart will beat about three billion times in your lifetime. Your brain is a veritable electric generator of power. *Thank you, God.*

For the jam on our toast and the milk on our cereal. For the blanket that calms us and the joke that delights us and the warm sun that reminds us of God’s love. For the planes that did not crash today. For the spouse who didn’t cheat, and the spouse who didn’t turn from their partner; and the kids who, in spite of unspeakable pressure to dishonor their parents, decided not to do so. *Thank you, Lord.*

Gratitude gets us through the hard stuff. To reflect on your blessings is to rehearse God’s accomplishments. To rehearse God’s accomplishments is to discover His heart. To discover His heart is to discover not just good gifts but the Good Giver. Gratitude always leaves us looking at God and away from dread. It does to anxiety what the morning sun does to valley mist. It burns it up.

Join the ranks of the 10 percent who give God a standing ovation. "Giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)"

In the midst of all that we seem to be facing and dealing with these days it is without a doubt important for us to remember all that we have to be grateful for. I was reminded of that today as I had the opportunity to sit at a dinner table with Mark and our girls. At a time when it would be easy to overlook the obvious, the most precious and important, it brought a sense of peace to be able to sit at a table where we were able to give thanks to God, share a meal, and have conversation. No, it didn't stop the reality of my tears that would come later as I talked to my Dad hundreds of miles away or negate the ache that I felt in my heart; but it gave me an anchoring sense of thankfulness to hang tightly to. An ability to come back and to say a prayer of thanks to our Lord.

Right now, it can be easy for us to forget the obvious and to overlook the most important reasons that we have for giving thanks and showing our appreciation. Our world is undoubtedly out of whack and nothing is as we want it to be, or as it should be for that matter. People are struggling everywhere we look, even within our own families and circles. But what does a splash of gratitude do to this unwelcomed reality that we seem to find ourselves in the midst of? That's the question that Lucado's book, "You'll Get Through This" asks over and over again. What value does a grateful heart have in the equation of our everyday realities? I believe that's a question worth exploring for each and every one of us.

So, that being said, I would like to encourage you to do the work and to take some deliberate time in the midst of everything that you have to attend to – all that seems to be going on around you. Take the time to quiet your mind and to open your heart just long enough to really think about all that you have to be grateful for. The small things, the huge things, the things you've forgotten about, and even the things that far too often people simply take for granted.

What is it within us, our world, and within our own individual lives that we have to be grateful for? What is it in the midst of all that could so easily bring us down and take from us our joy and celebration? What are those blessings that could and should keep us coming back with a filled heart and an ability to say, "*Thank you Lord!*"

Dear God,

Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life.

Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you anew. Restore our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy.

We love you and we need you, this day and every day. We give you praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy!

In Jesus' Name,  
Amen