

## “Gratitude Exercise”

November 24, 2019

Psalm 105:1-8

In a few days we'll all be gathering with our family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving. My hope, of course, is that today's message will be a help and an encouragement to you. I appreciate the opportunity to join together with you in learning the truth from God's Word again today. So, thank you. And thank you for opening your Bible with me to the New Testament and to the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

Now, find with me the twelfth verse. This is an account of one of the greatest miracles of all time. But, as you are about to see, as great as the miracle was, something else becomes even more important.

Luke 17:12 “*And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: (13) and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. (14) And when he saw them, he said unto them, go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.*

*(15) And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, (16) And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.”*

There are just fourteen lepers who were healed of leprosy in Scripture. At least, we only have the stories of fourteen. There's no doubt, though, that others were healed of such a terrible disease.

But, the story here in Luke goes beyond the miracle of healing to what happened in one man's heart. And that is thanksgiving.

Now, don't you think that thanksgiving should be a normal thing for you and me? It isn't. But, it *is* a normal

thing for Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ lives in you. So, He's always thankful. But, you and I need to be reminded of it. Today, I'm reminding you. So, I've titled this message “Gratitude Exercise.” Shall we pray?

No doubt, you've heard the term “Eucharist.” The Eucharist is usually a reference to “the LORD's table.” But, what does it mean?

Here it is right here in the Bible at Luke seventeen. Luke 17:16 “*And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks [εὐχαριστέω, pronounced “you karis te ow”]: and he was a Samaritan.”*

It's really two Greek words put together to form one. “Eu” means “good” and “charis” means “grace,” which then means that every time you express thanksgiving, you are acknowledging God because He has showered His grace upon you.

As you can see, just saying “thank you,” you are acknowledging God and that God's grace is evident; it's evident to you. And, it's evident that that grace is good. That's what the term “Eucharist” means.

So, the reason the LORD's Table is sometimes called the Eucharist is because the one thing we should be when we think about what Jesus has done for us, is thanksgiving. We should be grateful. And one of our expressions of our gratefulness is coming to the Communion Table.

Now, the Samaritan leper. He's been miraculously healed of leprosy. And he returns to say to Jesus “εὐχαριστῶ,” “I give thanks.”

And do you remember what happens next? Luke tells us the LORD's response to a grateful man. Here it is; verse seventeen. Luke 17:17 “*And Jesus answering said, were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? (18) There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save [except] this stranger. (19) And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”*

The LORD fully expects you who receive the gifts of His grace to come to Him with a spirit and a word of appreciation and gratitude.

What's on my heart today is this; exercise. You can exercise your body and your mind. Today, here's how to exercise your heart.

Exercise number one, decide to be a receiver.

Here's what I mean. What do you have that came from the LORD? Better yet, do you have *anything* that didn't come from Him? Isn't it true that *everything* you have you've received?

Let me give you an example. Do you remember the man who had been born blind? One day he was introduced to Jesus. Here's the story. Luke 18:35 "*And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: (36) and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. (37) And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.*

*(38) And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. (39) And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

*(40) And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, (41) Saying, **What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?** And he said, Lord, **that I may receive my sight.** (42) And Jesus said unto him, **receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.** (43) And immediately **he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.***"

There is a huge connection between receiving and gratitude.

Salvation, you know, is a gift. And how can you experience salvation? One way. John 1:12 "*But as many as **received** him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God ...*"

Here's John 3:27 "*John answered and said, A man can **receive** nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*"

You cannot be saved by good works. You can't be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. You can't be saved by baptism or confirmation or doing any other thing. You can only be saved by faith.

Now, of all the things you and I can do for Thanksgiving this year, the first is to exercise receiving. I Corinthians 4:7 "*...and what hast thou that thou didst not **receive**? Now if thou didst **receive** it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not **received** it?"*

And here's Acts 26:18 "*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may **receive** forgiveness of sins...*"

It's a choice. Exercise is always a choice. The gift of God must be received. All the gifts of God must be received.

I think I can solve the problem for those of you who are plagued with a spirit of complaints. Here it is. Ask yourself this "What do you have that you haven't received?" The answer is nothing.

The Scripture tells us that the essence of salvation is "receiving forgiveness of sins." Jesus Christ died on the Cross as a Substitute, as your Substitute. He died in your place. He took your sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for those sins.

So, salvation teaches you that you are a receiver. Every minute of your life you are a receiver. Someone Else has done something for you that you could never do for yourself. Christ paid for all your sins at Calvary two thousand years ago.

The real problem, though, is awareness. The reason you are a complainer and not a grateful soul is simple. You don't see yourself as a receiver. Receiving is an exercise. It's a matter of choice. Everything you have, everything, is a gift.

John 3:27 “*John answered and said, A man can **receive** nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*”

James 1:17 “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights ...*”

You see, the Source of everything you have is outside of you. Everything you have has been given to you; your health, your eyesight, your mind, your face, your body, your time, your income, your home, your job, your family.

And what is that Source? No, Who is that Source. It's the LORD. A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven.

So, it's all about “receiving.” And, even when you are dealing with things that you wish you didn't have to deal with; even if you've lost your job; even if you've lost your health. Even this must apply the Bible answer? Receive it.

Do you remember how Job's wife responded on the day Job had boils all over his body? She was definitely not a receiver. Here's what she said. Job 2:9 “*...curse God, and die.*”

And yes, there are those who respond to the hard things of this life like Job's wife. But what does Job say in the midst of that trial? Here's Job 2:10 “*But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we **receive** good at the hand of God, and shall we not **receive** evil [adversity]?” The word “evil” here refers to “adversity.”*

So, if you're going to be grateful, you need to be a receiver. And if you are going to be a receiver, you need to receive both the blessings and the adversities that come into your life.

You see, you really can't be a grateful person until you see yourself as a receiver. Whether it's a healing of blindness, a healing of leprosy or it's an experience of forgiveness, or it's your everyday life in this world, you are a receiver. And if the challenge is that God allows adversity, it's still “*I'm going to be a receiver because I know that God is in full charge of my life.*”

So, turn your complaints into gratefulness by seeing yourself as a receiver.

Exercise number one, decide today to be a receiver.

Exercise number two, say it.

Look again at the leper; verse sixteen.

Luke 17:16 “*And fell down on his face at his feet, **giving him thanks:** ...*”

First, we're receivers; all of us; for all things.

Second, we're responders. We respond to all the gifts the LORD sends to us. Say the words “I am thankful.”

By the way, sometimes what the Bible doesn't say is just as important as what it does say. And what do we know about the other nine lepers? We only know of one who returned to say the word “thank you.” So, isn't it at least an implication that most of us, most of the time, even when something great takes place in our lives, that we simply forget to say those two words?

Let's say you do something for someone at work. And what happens? They quote “receive” what you did. They, then, show up at your office. And what comes out of their mouth? Thank you. It's as if receiving and thanksgiving are two sides of the same coin. They are perfectly related.

Dr. Robert Emmons is a professor Psychology at the University of California at Davis. He's described as the world's expert on gratitude. He's written a lot about it. And he delivers lectures on the subject of gratitude. One of his books is titled “Thanks.” It might just be worth your while getting it and reading it.

Here's Dr. Emmons “In a series of studies, my colleagues and I have helped people systematically cultivate gratitude, usually by keeping a “gratitude journal” in which they regularly record the things for which they're grateful.

Gratitude journals and other gratitude practices often seem so simple and basic; in our studies, we often have

people keep gratitude journals for just three weeks. And yet the results have been overwhelming. We've studied more than one thousand people, from ages eight to 80, and found that people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits."

And this is one of the most interesting sidelights to the studies they've done on gratitude. There are benefits to it that you might not have considered. Some of those benefits are these:

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- More exercise taking better care of your health
- Sleeping longer and feeling more refreshed upon waking
- Higher levels of positive emotions
- Feeling more alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness
- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated.

*"I soon discovered" says Dr. Emmons, "that gratitude is a deeper, more complex phenomenon that plays a critical role in human happiness. Gratitude is literally one of the few things that can measurably change peoples' lives."*

[Found on [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_gratitude\\_is\\_good](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good) "Why Gratitude Is Good" by Robert Emmons, November 16, 2010].

The key then is this; say it. Say "I'm thankful." But, don't stop there. Say *"I am thankful to God, Who gives me every single thing I have."*

So, what's the exercise can you do? At least once each day, say "Thank you" to someone.

Here's I Thessalonians 5:18 ***"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."***

I Timothy 4:4 *"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be **received with thanksgiving:** ..."*

[Slide of "The Attitude of Gratitude"].

You are continually receiving. So, continually give thanks. The more you see yourself as a receiver, the more likely you are to respond with a "thank you."

What is it anyway? Gratitude is one thing - "appreciation for what someone has done for you"

Now, let me ask you this. Is it possible to be grateful and not recognize Who it is that gives everything to you? In other words, for example, can you express gratefulness to the universe; to an impersonal force? According to the Bible, gratitude is an expression of appreciation to a person.

So, here's the answer to the question. "One mark of the atheist is that he or she will not give thanks to God." [Found on <https://www.newlifepca.org/> "Evidence That God Exists" by Pastor Bob O'Bannon].

And, there's no doubt that the atheist would say "The reason I don't thank God is that I don't believe He exists."

So, someone else asked, "Do you think that an atheist never says thank you?" And who is it that he'd be thanking? What if an atheist were to get into a car accident in which the car he was driving is totally destroyed and he walks away from the accident without a scratch? First, does he say thank you. Second, who is he giving thanks to?

After one atheist (Hemant Mehta) had a serious car accident he says this. *"So I was standing there waiting for them to flip my car over and tow it, and for my friend to come pick me up so that I could help him with his project (yes, I still helped him out. But he bought me dinner with dessert, so it was all good, lol). And I realized ... this could have been so much worse and I took the time to count my blessings evaluate the good things."*

*I had my seatbelt on. If I hadn't, I might have gotten half thrown out of the window, or otherwise seriously battered or even killed. The seatbelt did a great job to keep that all from happening. So I was grateful to seatbelt designers and makers.*" Period [found on <https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/> "After Surviving a Car Accident, God Doesn't Need a Thank-You" January 19, 2012 by Hemant Mehta].

Or, what if the atheist is a pilot and, while flying, he runs out of fuel; and somehow safely lands his plane?

Mark Rose learned to fly at 16, and by age 22 had become a bush pilot who helped take care of a fleet of helicopters that worked on the Alaska pipeline. "My ego meter was on 101," he admits.

One day he flew some hunters to the upper part of a large river on the Arctic. But on his return flight, carrying one passenger, several things went wrong. First, herds of caribou had moved in, covering his first and second choices for a landing spot. Then he began to run low on fuel, so he called ahead for a weather check at the small airport near Kotzebue, on the Baldwin Peninsula.

"Come on in, the weather's fine," the FAA flight service operator told him.

He decided to take the chance his fuel would hold out, but then weather conditions changed dramatically. *"I ran into a snowstorm at night, and I couldn't see the terrain, so I had to follow the gray ribbon of river below."* In the days before satellite weather imaging, the weather man had given him very bad advice.

*"All my options were evaporating as fast as I could fly."*

Now, Mark had had several friends – fellow pilots – who perished in similar flying conditions. *There must be a way out,* he thought. *I don't want to die ... [at 22. I won't get to experience marriage...].*

He had been flying on empty for 30 minutes. Then the engine started missing. *"I was just waiting for silence and to have to crash at night."*

His mind turned to his very last option – God. He'd never prayed before, but in desperation, he lifted up a silent prayer. *If there is a God, I need your help now...*

Immediately after his prayer, the plane popped out of the snowstorm! *"Before me were the beautiful lights of Kotzebue – it might as well have been the lights of heaven,"* he recalls.

There was only one problem – he still had to fly another 20 miles over the Kotzebue Sound, a broad expanse of salt water north of the Bering Sea.

*"That was a breath-holder,"* he says. When he landed safely at Kotzebue Airport, his humanist worldview collapsed. **He was simply thankful.** There was no earthly reason his plane should have traveled such a distance with no fuel.

He's convinced today that God added an hour of fuel to his tanks to save his life. *"When I landed I was a different boy. I was not a Christian, but I was a believer in God."*

He thought about his grandmother, the only Christian in his family. *So Gramma was right; there is something out there,* he thought. But his stubborn heart was still not ready to make Jesus his Savior and Lord.

Then he had another brush with death in a helicopter that crashed, which completely flattened the seat he rode in.

About the same time, he missed a flight with some of the lead contractors for the Alaskan pipeline due to a schedule conflict. Shortly after the plane took off, it crashed, killing everyone aboard.

Later, on a flight to Fairbanks on a bush aircraft, he began to reflect on his life. *I'm not happy. This whole thing is not working,* he admitted to himself.

*Everything I'm reading in the Bible is either a lie or it's true. It's all or nothing. From reading the Bible I understand God is my creator. If*

*Jesus can raise someone from the dead and forgive my sins, that's exactly what God has for me.*

With this in his mind, Mark Rose surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. *"When I landed in Fairbanks I was a different boy, once again."* [Found on <http://godreports.com/> "Atheist pilot mocked God, until he ran out of fuel in a snowstorm" February 6, 2014].

"Life is better if you develop an attitude of gratitude," Lewis Howes in "The School of Greatness."

Exercise number one, decide today to be a receiver.

Exercise number two, say it.

Jesus Christ died 2,000 years ago as the Savior of the world. His death and resurrection are the two most amazing things in history. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And, by doing so, He provided a way for you to be saved. So, as you prepare for Thanksgiving, make sure that you are saved.

Now, if you've never trusted in Christ, Go to Him today; this One Who is Eternal Life? Admit that you are a sinner and turn to Him? Receive Him as your LORD and Savior? Trust Him? Receive the free gift of Eternal Life? God puts the choice into your hands. What will you do? If you've never trust Christ as you Savior and LORD, do it today.

The Sinner's Prayer

"LORD, I know that I am a sinner. I ask Your forgiveness for all my sins. I believe on Your Son today as the One Who paid for all my sins. Thank You for the free gift of Eternal Life in Him. Amen"

And here's the Christian's Prayer. "LORD, thank You for all that You have brought into my life. Your word has shown me that I am a receiver. Teach me today to know You better and to walk with You as a grateful child."

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 786 "Count Your Blessings"