

Give Thanks to the Lord

Meditation #1 Give Thanks to the Lord for the Strength and Ability to Work

What satisfies you? Is it a job well done or a raise for doing the job well? Is it the well-earned vacation? Is it a kindness done for another person? Is it a simple good night's rest? Is it a good meal with all the fixings for Thanksgiving, just like Mom or Grandma used to make?

When you look at the things that bring you satisfaction, who gets the glory? Who gets the praise? Is it you? Are you the cause of the things that bring you satisfaction?

It's easy to look at the things that satisfy as things I do, things I accomplish. I'm satisfied by the job well done and the raise that came with it because I put in the extra hours and the careful attention to every detail. We earned this vacation because we scrimped and saved and planned and found the right deals. I am proud of myself because I saw a person in need and I acted, I helped them out. I got a good night's rest because I worked out, planned enough wind down time, and went to bed plenty early. We have a fantastic meal prepared for tomorrow because I bought all the premium ingredients, used Grandma's recipes, and have been prepping for this for days.

God knew that when his people would enter the Promised Land of Canaan, they would be tempted to take all the credit, to look at their fine new houses, all their new land, all their home-grown crops, and say, "I accomplished this." We're no different than the Israelites. It's easy for us to say, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me, have produced these things that satisfy me," but it's also wrong to say that. It takes the credit away from God and gives it to yourself. That mentality pushes God off to the side, forgets what God has done for you. It says all the blessings I have, I have earned. These blessings that bring me satisfaction are to my glory, not God's.

To avoid this temptation as we take count at Thanksgiving of all the things that satisfy us, we need to ask, "How does God get the glory for all the we give thanks for?" The job well done and the raise - well, that was accomplished only because God gave me the talent and the focus to be a faithful and a productive worker. That vacation is mine only because God blessed me so much to be able to afford it and to actually take the time off to enjoy it. That person I helped out with an act of kindness - that's because God gave me the means and the opportunity to serve my fellow human being. A good night's rest - that comes from God who gives me peace of mind to know that all things are in his mighty hands, that I have nothing to worry about, and so I rest easy in his care. That great Thanksgiving meal that I'm prepping for tomorrow will only be delicious because God made all those crops grow, those premium ingredients available, and preserved those tasty recipes for us to use and enjoy.

When it comes to the things that satisfy, all glory must go to God instead of myself. He is the one that makes it all happen. He is faithful to his promises, even if I forget him or take his credit, his glory. The LORD gives me the power and strength to work and produce things that satisfy. Give thanks to the Lord for the strength and ability to work.

God's Word from Deuteronomy 8:10-18: ¹⁰ **When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.** ¹¹ **Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.** ¹² **Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down,** ¹³ **and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied,** ¹⁴ **then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.** ¹⁵ **He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock.** ¹⁶ **He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.** ¹⁷ **You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."** ¹⁸ **But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.**

We sing Hymn 612.

Meditation #2 Give Thanks to the Lord for Contentment

As we are coming to another Thanksgiving, are you satisfied? Are you content with what you have? Or are finding yourself a little bitter because there are things that you desire and you are not getting them? Do you feel incomplete? Have you found yourself singing, "I can't get no satisfaction."

Why are we not always satisfied? Why are we not always content? Part of this answer is because we are always wanting more. That's especially true when it comes to the stuff in our lives. I want the new phone. I want the new car. I want my house (and church) to be shiny and new and improved. I love my kids, but I'm not always satisfied with their behavior. I love my wife, but I'm not always satisfied with my marriage. We are not content to be sick. We want and think we should get better. I am not content to suffer. Why can't the pain just go away? Why can't life just be easier?

If we feel incomplete without the stuff in life, we develop an attitude of ingratitude. We grow angry for not having the things we want or demand, the things we are convinced that we need. We find ourselves wanting, and we blame that wanting on people or circumstances or, yes, even God. If stuff is your focus, if you rely on earthly stuff or health or relationships to give you lasting contentment, you will never be content.

God has blessed every single one of you here tonight. It's often at Thanksgiving that we take catalog of these blessings. Although when you make your list, you may not have as much stuff as someone else but we count what we have, not what we don't have. We count the blessings from God, the stuff from God, instead of focusing on my discontent, on what I don't have. But I also understand that you may very well be in want tonight. You may be wondering where the Thanksgiving meal will come from, how the rent will get paid this month, how the car insurance and car payment.

How can you be content if you have counted your blessings from God and realize that you have plenty? How can you be content when you know you are in want? Paul wrote, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (verses 12-13) This verse often gets misapplied as sort of follow your dreams promise from the Bible or that an athlete can get bigger, stronger, faster if God allows them to. In context, though, this is about being content whether you have plenty or whether you are in want. The secret is trusting God to meet your needs when you are in want and it's giving thanks to God and helping others when you have plenty so that you don't focus on always wanting more.

When you are in want, when your strength is gone, you have to rely on God's strength instead of your own. You look to God to give you contentment with what he has blessed you with, to see the richness of his blessings in your life even if that has not translated into material blessings or what you have asked for. Look to God to see how he is still taking care of you even if that care looks different than how you imagine it. And then, taking your strength from God, you ask him to get you through. You trust him to come through for you. You submit yourself to have him provide for you in the way that he thinks in best.

God will and does meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. He meets all your needs because not only has he cared for you and provided for you every day of your life, but he has also given you the one thing needful. He has given you a Savior from sin. It's his free gift to us with no strings attached. He has given you the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, a place in heaven with him. He has provided all your spiritual needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus and so we have reason to always be content. Give thanks to the Lord for his gift of contentment whether we live in plenty or in want.

God's Word from Philippians 4:10-20: ¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. ¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We sing Hymn 158.

Meditation #3 Give Thanks to the Lord for Healing – Inside and Out

Tips are kind of a way to say thank you for someone's service, but who are you supposed to tip and when? Growing up, I knew that I was supposed to tip my server at a restaurant. My sister, who was a server, taught me that tips were how they made most of their money. But then I remember as a teenager finding out that I was supposed to also tip my barber. I wondered how many haircuts had I made the social faux pas of not tipping my barber. Was I guilty of being a cheap and ungracious customer? How should I express my thanks and satisfaction for a service provided to me? Who else should get tipped and why don't people tell me these things?

Have you ever wondered the same about your relationship with God? Have you ever wondered if you have properly thanked him for what he has done for you? Have I been an ungracious receiver of his underserved love, or his service of a life lived for me and a life laid down for me? Do I owe God a tip?

Yet another amazing aspect of our God is that he continues to give and give and give to us, even if we don't thank him. Ten lepers came to Jesus to be healed. He healed all 10, but only one came back to thank him. He didn't un-heal the other nine for their lack of gratitude. Instead, God's blessings and graciousness still stood. All 10 were still healed.

How many times have we gotten over a cold and didn't thank God for the healing? How many surgeries have we gone through or have other people we know gone through and we didn't thank God after the surgery? Did we remember to say thank you to God every time we left physical and occupational therapy knowing that he was working to heal our bodies? How many times should we have said thank you to God? Do we always thank him for the skin-deep healings?

From the one leper who came back and praised God in a loud voice, threw himself at Jesus' feet, and thanked him, we learn thankfulness. We repent of our ingratitude, of how many times we have not said "thank you" to God. We come tonight to give thanks to the Lord. And we thank him not just for the skin-deep healing, for the surgeries, the recoveries for colds, etc. We thank him for the healing that goes well beyond our physical ailments. We thank him for the spiritual healing, the inside healing. By Christ's wounds we are healed. We say with David in Psalm 103, "Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases." (Psalm 103:1-2)

Tonight, we say, "Thank you, God" for healing us inside and out. We may not be able to "tip" him for forgiving all our sins and healing all our diseases, but we can show our thankfulness to him in the way that we live, that we would strive every day to live according to his will, to keep his commands, to honor, serve, and obey him and give him love and respect. May our thanks be more than skin-deep. Give thanks to the Lord for healing us both inside and out.

God's Word from Luke 17:11-19: ¹¹ **Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.** ¹² **As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance** ¹³ **and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"** ¹⁴ **When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.** ¹⁵ **One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.** ¹⁶ **He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.** ¹⁷ **Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"** ¹⁸ **Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?"** ¹⁹ **Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."**

We sing **Hymn 609**.