

## GIVING THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Thanksgiving Service - November 22, 2015 - MCC Chapel

### I. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

**A. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (ESV) packs a punch in nine verses:** *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it."* (Or as Phil. 1:6 puts it: *"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*)

**B. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God for everyone who is in Christ Jesus. (Hard or easy?)**

**C. Maybe it's easy when you ask God for something and get it. You pray for someone battling cancer or some other life-threatening disease and they're healed. It's easy if your children or grandchildren are doing great, in excellent health, getting good grades, scoring lots of points. It's easy when your boss loves you, your pay and benefits are generous, and opportunities at work are ever increasing. But not everyone in Christ Jesus have such good things happen, not *always* or and not *without ceasing*. Often our circumstances are just the opposite. Does the Scripture still apply? All circumstances means all circumstances.**

**D. Many on my prayer list have died in the past month. Families are grieving. More names have been added and some have serious diagnoses. I'm praying for people without jobs and others who hate their jobs. I'm praying for people going through difficult relational problems including divorce. Did you wake up with any nagging pains this morning? Do you have a pending doctor's appointment you're concerned about? Did you hear what happened in France? In Mali? Could another terror attack happen here? Have you been watching the presidential debates? Are your health insurance costs rising? Is the IRS on your Christmas list? How about ODNR? We call stuff like this, *circumstances*.**

**E. The first Thanksgiving at Plymouth followed a brutal winter where 47 out 102 Pilgrims died. Yet they chose to give thanks with their Indian friends and their celebration went on for days. And then when the next ship arrived, none chose to leave. Do you consider them fools or admire them for their faithfulness, courage, and thankful hearts?**

**F. So how do we give thanks in all circumstances? How is that possible? It helps to remember that God is sovereign and in control, that He never sleeps nor slumbers, that His throne is never left unoccupied, that He sees beyond the present, that nothing ahead is a mystery to Him, that He holds your future. There's encouragement in the words of John Newton when he says: *"Everything is necessary that God sends our way; nothing can be necessary that He withholds."***

**G. Listen to V18 one more time, there's a key phrase here we don't want to miss: *"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."***

**H. Consider this: In Christ Jesus your future is bright. In Christ Jesus your soul has an anchor--it's called Hope. In Christ Jesus your hairs are numbered, you're loved more than sparrows and ravens, adorned more handsomely than lilies, and He knows what you need before you ask. In Christ Jesus you're justified--declared righteous, declared not guilty, declared ransomed and free! In Christ Jesus you're adopted as beloved children! In Christ Jesus nothing can separate you from the love of God even as everything is working together for good (*His good and your good!*). In Christ Jesus you're loved enough to be taught and disciplined, loved enough to be given thorns because His grace is sufficient, loved enough to survive shipwrecks and viper bites, beatings and imprisonment--all for the glory of God! In Christ Jesus you face death once not twice, you're promised resurrection unto eternal life to the glorious place of no more tears. In Christ Jesus what you lack and what you've been given and what you've been saved from and what you've been saved for are all far greater than any circumstance you're forced to face. In Christ Jesus everything has changed--past, present, and future. In Christ Jesus relationships, priorities, perspectives, positions, purpose, and destinies have all been eternally and forever altered for the better. Therefore we can say with all our hearts, all the time, no matter what: *Thank You Lord!***

\* Close with Prayer...

### Thanksgiving Service - Scriptures & Extras

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (ESV)

**16** Rejoice always, **17** pray without ceasing, **18** give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. **19** Do not quench the Spirit. **20** Do not despise prophecies, **21** but test everything; hold fast what is

good. **22** Abstain from every form of evil. **23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.

### **Thanksgiving 1621 - William Bradford**

They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercising in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.

- William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, (1620-1647).

### **Anne Steele's Fiancé Drowned**

A young woman named Anne Steele had encountered one trial and disappointment after another. Being a devout Christian, she continuously sought to praise God—even in sorrow. She was engaged to be married, and had looked forward to her wedding day with eagerness. The big day finally arrived and so did the guests—but the groom was missing. After about an hour of waiting, a messenger brought the tragic news that Anne's fiancé had drowned. The sudden shock was almost too much for her, but after a while she regained her spiritual composure. Later Anne Steele penned the following song that is still found in many hymnbooks. - H.G.B., Our Daily Bread

### **Father, Whate'er of Earthly Bliss**

**By Anne Steele**

Father, whate'er of earthly bliss  
Thy sovereign will denies,  
Accepted at thy throne of grace,  
Let this petition rise:

Give me a calm, a thankful heart,  
From every murmur free:  
The blessings of thy grace impart,  
And make me live to thee.

Let the sweet hope that I am thine,  
My life and death attend;  
Thy presence through my journey shine,  
And crown my journey's end.

### **"Now Thank We All Our God"**

by Martin Rinckart, 1586-1649

Translated by Catherine Winkworth, 1829-1878

1. Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things hath done,  
In whom His world rejoices;  
Who from our mother's arms  
Hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.

2. Oh, may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in His grace  
And guide us when perplexed  
And free us from all ills  
In this world and the next.

3. All praise and thanks to God  
The Father now be given,  
The Son, and Him who reigns  
With them in highest heaven:  
The one eternal God,  
Whom earth and heaven adore!  
For thus it was, is now,  
And shall be evermore.

THE HANDBOOK TO THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942) p.31.