



# CANYON HILLS

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17

November 25, 2018

## Give Thanks

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What a perfect way to cap off Thanksgiving weekend, to see that and be able to be a part of that with these people. We have baptisms that every service today and they're all joyful in their own right, amen? Amen. I'm going to ask that you would begin preparing yourself for our offering now to give of our tithes and or offerings, I'm going to ask the ushers to begin receiving that offering. And while we're doing that, I want to ask you to get your Bibles open to First Thessalonians chapter five. I hope this weekend for you has been a meaningful time of fellowship with loved ones and friends. And hopefully by now you're in full recovery from your turkey hangover. I know that I am recovering, recovering gratefully. I'm especially grateful to be with you today after just being in India for the past two weeks. I certainly have a deeper appreciation for the blessings of God that we enjoy so much. I want you to hear me say I have the deepest appreciation for our missionary heroes, who are sacrificing more than we could ever imagine in order to bring people to Jesus, to bring Jesus to people who are enslaved to the deception and the idolatry of Hinduism. What we just witnessed in that baptistry right now is one of the greatest miracles I think we've seen in our church in a long time. And having come from the part of the world where Hinduism was birthed, to see someone come to Christ it's always miraculous whenever anyone when anyone comes to Christ. But it just seems a little extra miraculous when someone is rescued from Hinduism.

I am certainly standing before you more grateful to live in a place that has clean air and green grass. I am grateful for a faith that values human life, especially the lives of women and children as human beings created in the image of God. I have a newfound gratitude for food. Just to let you know, especially beef and turkey and good coffee, thank God, I just stand before you as a very grateful person on every

level. I want you to open your Bibles. As I said the First Thessalonians five, we're going to go back to a familiar verse, that is a that's vital to the Christian life. I'm going to take a little break this morning from our study in Ephesians. If you're visiting with us from out of town the day, we're going through Ephesians verse by verse. But we're going to pause that today to focus on it on the topic of gratitude and giving thanks. And then we're actually going to conclude the message with a brief time of thanksgiving in prayer and then thanksgiving in worship. And so, your Bibles already open let's stand for the reading of God's word. We're just going to look at a couple of familiar verses. We're going to start in verse 16, *"Rejoice always"* Okay. That's easy. *"Pray without ceasing"*, no problem. *"And give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

Father, we stand in your presence right now with our heads bowed humbled and grateful. And it is our prayer God that you would open our hearts to even deeper reasons to be thankful for you for what you have done for us in Christ. I pray God that you would open our hearts to be more thankful to you for who you are. The one true God, unfailing, unchanging, unable to lie, perfectly powerful in present, we are humbled God to call you our God, and our father, in the name of your Son Jesus, amen. You can be seated.

Well I want to focus on the third part of this, I guess this trifecta of Christian living that Paul gives us here. He says, rejoice always, like I said okay, like that's easy. And then he says pray without ceasing that. That just amazing to think about. And then he says give thanks in all circumstances. Out of these three, I am absolutely convinced that the third one is the most difficult one of all. Does Paul really mean this? Give thanks in all circumstances, that means in both the bad and the good circumstances. Or is he having one of those syrupy Christian Hallmark moments? You know as he's writing this epistle. I don't think so. I want to suggest to you that Paul not only means it but that it's an absolute necessity to being a follower of Jesus. Giving thanks, for being grateful, or thankful as mentioned at least one hundred and forty times in the Bible. That should indicate to us that this topic is an important topic in the mind of God. If he would choose to put it before us that many times in his holy scriptures. And after looking up many of those verses I discovered that there are about 15 subcategories to this idea of us being grateful and thankful. Now we're not going to look at all of those. But what I did notice in the ones that I found and in and read, what's perfectly clear in every one of them is just how critical being thankful is. In fact, I would say to you that being thankful is linked to so much of the Christian life, that I can confidently say with that without it I'm pretty sure the Christian life falls apart. I'm convinced that without thankful hearts and

hearts of gratitude the Christian life doesn't work at all. Hence why God might have chosen to put it in front of us one hundred and forty times in the Bible.

Well like I said we're not going to look at all of those versus or all of the categories but we're going to look at a few of them today, to kind of have a capstone to this great excuse and holiday that we have to be grateful people. Let me just start out with this one that the Bible teaches us that giving things reduces our stress and increases God's peace. And who of us would not want more of God's peace and less of our stress, right? See one of the things I've noticed, I'm sure you have too, now what I've noticed about people who seem to have that inner peace is that they are very grateful people. I don't know if you've ever known someone that has kind of that that peaceful demeanor kind of that peace on that soul level. When you know that person what you typically find out is that they seem to be thankful people. They appear to be grateful people. Being grateful, being thankful is absolutely critical to our spiritual health, as well as our mental health and we get that right from scripture. In fact, I'm going to have you turn to Philippians chapter four. Go ahead and get there just to the left a little bit of where we are. First Thessalonians, Philippians chapter 4. It's such a key verse in all of our life and in most of our faiths some of you while I would guess that most of you have this verse underlined or circled. You probably have some smiley face next to it in the margins of your Bible. And I want you to look at verse 6. *"Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"*.

Now notice right in the middle of this familiar instruction about overcoming anxiety, Paul teaches us that thanksgiving is to be a primary ingredient in our prayers. Especially in times of anxiety. Think about that God's prescription, part of the prescription, for overcoming anxiousness and worry is to be thankful. It's to pray, but it's to precede that praying with a thankful heart. And then he says this amazing peace, which is hard to understand and explain because it's peace on a spiritual level, begins to guard our hearts and our minds. And I just wonder how much more peace we might experience if we bathed our anxious prayers in thanksgiving. A real time example of this actually taking place as in Daniel 6. And I'm going to have you find that in the Old Testament because I wonder, I can't prove this, but I wonder if Paul learned this principle from the great prophet Daniel in the Old Testament. Why don't you find it there. Get past Psalms and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes these get Ezekiel and then you're going to get to Daniel. if you get to Hosea, you've gone too far. Hang a left.

Let me say it again I wonder if Paul had this in mind as he penned this principle for us in the New Testament in Daniel Chapter 6. You'll remember this story quickly starting in verse 6. It says, *"then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the King and said to him "Oh King Darius, live forever!" Verse seven "all the high officials of the kingdom the prefects, and the satraps and counsellors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition or prayer to any God or man for 30 days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O King established the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked. Therefore, King Darius signed the document and the injunction. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously".*

Now look at that with me, what an amazing thought. King Darius makes a law that no one could pray to anyone except him, and if they did, they would be thrown to the lions. That was especially grievous to the Jewish people, who prayed to the one and only true God, the God of the Bible. And what Daniel does we find here, is that he goes home, and he prays, but that key little phrase and gives thanks in the midst of such a horrific context. We would all agree that tribulation and trials like this are no fun, ever. Yet we do believe that God who loves us so greatly allows some tribulation to come into the path of our lives wouldn't we. God allows trials and tribulations and even tragedy to come into our lives. We believe that he does that in order that his wise and merciful purpose may be accomplished and be worked out in our lives and ultimately for His glory. And so, Daniel goes to his room. He prays and he gives thanks in the midst of a most anxious situation. Now just in case you forgot the rest of the story, they caught him praying to his God, and they did throw him to the lions as we know, but God rescued him. And King Darius ends up proclaiming that Daniel's God, is the only true God and decreed that the people were to only tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. Now not every tribulation turns out like that. We know that. But the key principle for us as we're talking about thanksgiving today is, we see an example of somebody in real time turning to thanksgiving, in moments of great anxiousness and concern. And so, I would say to you that one of the key principles for the Christian, one of the key joys we have, is that we have a prescription to deal with and process stress and find God's peace in the midst of worry.

And the Bible also teaches us something else. Giving thanks is a prerequisite to acceptable worship. In other words, our worship is especially pleasing to God when our praise comes to him from the lips of gratitude. I would say it like this, thanksgiving is really the starting point of all worship. It's the starting line. And to show you that I want you to look at Hebrews chapter 12, all the way the back of the book of Hebrews, at the end of one of the last chapters in this book, we find an amazing principle for us as we worship, Hebrews chapter 12 verse 28 tucked right back here towards the end we read this, *"Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus or then let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and are for our God is a consuming fire."* Now notice that let us be grateful for what we have received from God and then let us worship him acceptably. That is consistent with many other passages in the Bible, that may be one of the most common themes for being thankful. In Psalm 95:2 it says, *"let us come before him with what, thanksgiving"* in Psalm 100 verse 4 we already saw that to begin our worship today, it says, *"enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise"* and then it goes on to say, *"give thanks to him and praise his name"*. Two times in the same verse and Psalm 100 Verse 4 we see that our praising is preceded by our thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is essential in blessing God with our praise. And so, I do love how our worship always begins with a call to acknowledge and to be grateful for the greatness of the God of whom we worship.

And so, I want to encourage you that your worship of God starts long before you get here on Sundays. In fact, I want to encourage you to begin your worship on Saturday night. I want to encourage you to begin your worship long before Sunday morning. And to begin even sometimes for some of you on the way here, in the car, either privately or out loud beginning to thank God for His many blessings and His goodness. And as you come into this court to praise him, your praise and worship has going to flow from the lips of gratitude and thanksgiving. That's what makes our worship so acceptable. And aren't you thankful for that. It's not how good we sing, it's how grateful we are.

Thirdly the Bible teaches that giving things is a part of being Spirit-filled. The Apostle Paul actually links being thankful to holy living. See the difference between your life being out of control and your life being controlled by the Holy Spirit can be linked to gratitude toward God. And this is amazing. I want you to see it for yourself go to Hebrews or I'm sorry Ephesians Chapter 5 go to the left just a little bit. Ephesians Chapter 5, we'll talk more about this when we continue our study through the book of Ephesians. But for now, I want you to look at verse 18 Ephesians 5 verse 18. Now let's go back to verse 17. I like that start better. *"Therefore, do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is do not*

*get drunk with wine. For that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*". Don't you love that? Paul is saying don't give yourself a way to foolishness, that would be drunkenness, but give yourself a way to the Holy Spirit's guidance and control. And he says here that part of that Holy Spirit control of our thoughts, and our actions, and our priorities, and our values. It comes from a few things, he says hey I want you to share in God's word together, address one another with psalms, and hymns, God's word. And then he says I want you to worship together. That's what we do. That's all a part of the holy being, Spirit filled Christians. But then at the end he makes a big deal in verse twenty says giving thanks *always and for everything* to God our Father. Wow, there is a deep connection between being a Holy Spirit led person and being a thankful and grateful to God person. Let me say it a different way, the path to immorality and sin, and terrible choices, and decisions in our lives is, paved with ungratefulness. The path to making stupid choices and sinful choices in our life is typically paved with thankless, first and foremost to our God and potentially to those of whom we are sinning against. And so, the Bible teaches that this whole giving thanks thing and being grateful thing has a lot to do with how we choose to live our lives. Controlled by the world's influences or controlled by God's very own Holy Spirit.

Number four, the Bible teaches that giving thanks replaces foolish talk. Paul's advocating that one very effective way to guard ourselves against having a foul mouth, a foul mouth that is filled with things like criticism, and gossip, complaining, cynicism, and talking dirty or envy. One of the effective ways of guarding against that stuff, is to wash our mouths out with the soap of thanksgiving. It's a pretty good metaphor isn't it? It's one of those ones I'm proud of. I just get one or two of those a year, just use them up right there. But I want you to look at Ephesians 5 verse 4, *"let there be no filthy honest nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place but instead let there be thanksgiving"*. Wow isn't that interesting? To fill ourselves, our conversations with thankfulness for each other, and for God's blessing, is one of the surest ways to knock off the silly talk, in the cussing, and the complaining, and the gossip. Something I want you to be sensitive to, is to whenever you are in a with a group of people or hanging out with friends, I want to I want to encourage you make it your goal to be the first one to speak words of gratitude. When you're at work tomorrow or you're hanging out with some people whatever it is, I want you to be conscious to try and be that person that that says something thankful either for someone who you're with or for something that you just are grateful for. And I think what we're going to notice is that the conversation seldom degenerates from there. On one of the ways to stop a conversation from

becoming more degenerate is just to be that person that speaks a word of thanks or praise, appropriately so. It certainly has a way of replacing foolish talk in our own mouths.

Number five, the Bible teaches that giving thanks helps us to enjoy God's goodness and blessings. Thanksgiving is a critical way to be able to receive God's blessings without shame or guilt. Paul warns us that they're always going to be people in our lives that try to steal our joy. You probably have known somebody like that. He calls them insincere and liars. In fact, I want you to meet these people in First Timothy chapter Four. Go to the right just a little bit. First Timothy chapter 4. Paul is very concerned about people who steal our joy. Unfortunately, those people can sometimes be Christians. In fact, most of the time they are. The people who are in our lives who tend to steal our joy. Paul has no tolerance for that, but look at what he says in First Timothy Chapter 4 starting in verse 1, *"now the spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars, whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving for it is made holy by the word of God in prayer"*. What are these liars and insincere people that have crept their way into the church doing that Paul is so concerned about?

What we read here, is that there are people who believe that their righteousness comes from external acts of piety and things like self-deprivation. In Paul's context there were people who took good things like marriage, getting married, or certain foods, and they deprived themselves of these things based on the idea that it made them more spiritual, it made them more holy, more pleasing to God. And then they taught that if you were truly spiritual you would do the same. Now that's not much different from the people in our context in our western world. In our churches that may come across our path, who would say things like there are certain technologies, or cable TV, or women wearing makeup, or taking a nice vacation, or driving a nice car. They're all forbidden by God. They would say that these things are not appropriate. They are not right for God's people, and that list can have a lot of other things on it. And what Paul teaches here and teaches us, that one way of keeping ourselves from becoming legalistic and self-righteous, is to be grateful for God's blessings and goodness. Now he's not talking about being grateful for sinning, or for overindulging, or for materialism, or compromising our conscience, what he's talking about is not allowing someone else's personal convictions to rule our hearts. Being thankful allows us to receive God's blessings with a clear conscience. James 1:17 agrees with this he says, *"every good*

*and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father.”* So, one of the reasons one of the ways we can keep ourselves from becoming legalistic and self-righteous and one of the ways we could keep ourselves from being made to feel guilty or bad because somehow God has chosen in his goodness to bless us in certain ways, is to just be a grateful people. And you don't become conceited, you don't become haughty, you don't become proud, and you don't become one of those legalistic liars who are in sincerely trying to make themselves self-righteous by depriving themselves of things that God calls good. That's a relief.

Here's another one the Bible teaches that giving thanks is an absolute necessity for Christian unity. Thanksgiving is a built-in repellent to divisiveness in the church. And we find that in Colossians chapter three, go ahead and turn there with me, Colossians chapter 3 Verse 14, *“and above all above all this put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony”*. So, there is the desired effect. Paul is saying, hey I want you to have harmony amongst yourselves, I want you to have unity amongst the body of Christ. And he knows, that's going to require a lot of love. And then in verse 15 he says *“let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you are called in one body and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgiving in your hearts to God and whatever you do in word or deed. do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, through him”*.

Three times in four verses about establishing our unity. Paul says, be grateful, give thanks to God. What a beautiful remedy for unity amongst God's people. Now there is no doubt that we Christians disagree on certain things; do we agree on that? Do we agree that we don't agree on everything? Can we can we admit that? We disagree on certain things. We disagree on homeschooling versus public schooling, we disagree on hymns versus choruses. We disagree on communion once a week or communion once a month. We disagree on the King James translation of the Bible versus any other translation of the Bible. Some churches disagree on whether you can use instruments in the church, or you have to sing acapella. Some of us disagree on precisely when Jesus is going to return. We disagree on politics. There's a lot of stuff that we may differ in and disagree on. But Paul is teaching that when we focus on the many things that we're grateful for when we force ourselves to do all of the things that we love together, it's really hard to fight for very long. It's really hard to remain unforgiving. It's much more difficult to be divisive or to divide in the church when we put being thankful in its rightful place in the midst of our gatherings, we call the church. And this principle especially applies to family and friends



doesn't it. I mean think of this in the context of marriage focusing on the things that we do love together. Think of this in the context of family extended family in-laws and we're going to disagree on some things some things more than others, but we don't because we're thankful people were grateful people, we don't have to let those disagreements ruin us or divide us.

These are just six of the things that the Bible talks about being grateful for. And I would encourage you that sometime before the end of today you might look at those six things and say wow, I needed to be reminded of this one. You want to share that with someone that you're here today or maybe you go home and say, hey we talked about being grateful and one of the things that meant a little more to me today was this one right here and find yourselves this week understanding that the beautiful power and place of a grateful heart in the believer.

Now as I said to begin with, I want us to take some time to be thankful and prayer. And one of the ways we do this at Canyon Hills is we get on our knees, and we get into a humble posture of coming before God. And I want us to do the same thing right now. If you're up in the risers. It's almost impossible to do that so don't worry about it if you can't. But for those of us sitting down here on the floor we basically turn around and we use our chair as a prayer bench and kind of slip your feet underneath the seats in front of you. And if it's a little a little tight there I know these rows are close together just remain seated be relaxed if you can. But if he can get on your knees comfortably, please do. I'm going to ask us right now just to just to put into practice a little bit of what we heard. Psalm 30 says, *"my heart will sing to you and not be silent. Oh Lord my God I will give thanks to you forever."* Let's take a moment right now and just thank God for our salvation. Let's thank God for what he did for us on the cross through his Son. Let's be thankful that we no longer have to fear death. We no longer have to fear God's wrath and punishment that's coming against all of sin. We don't have to fear hell. Maybe this year you were baptized, or your loved ones were baptized. Would you just give praise to God for your salvation and the salvation of those you love right now, just you and him.

Psalm 107:1 *"give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever"*. I want to encourage you right now to give thanks to God for meeting your needs. It may be the job you have, or the provisions God has brought your way. Maybe the money that that you have just give God, be thankful for his provisions in your life. Psalm 28 versus 6 and 7, *"praise be to the Lord for He has heard my cry for mercy the Lord is my strength and my shield my heart trusts in him and I am helped"*. I want you to give

thanks right now for answers to prayer. Maybe it's your own healing or deliverance from addictions, maybe it's reconciliation of relationships that are broken. However God has heard your prayers and answered them, would you give him thanks for those named them specifically and tell him thank you. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Some of you are going through it right now. There are circumstances happening in your life or close to your life that are going to require and requiring strength and endurance and perseverance in God's mercy every day. Give him thanks in the midst of these. Thank him for meeting you every day with the grace and the strength that you need for that day.

Father in heaven, we are now before you incredibly grateful that you are faithful. God may you now receive our worship from grateful lips and may worship be especially pleasing and acceptable to you.

I think one of the greatest privileges that we have as Christians is the ability to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances, because the reason for our thanksgiving has nothing to do with what's happening around us. It has everything to do with the goodness and the faithfulness and the graciousness of our God. If you're here today and you do not have a relationship with Jesus, if you do not have a reason to be grateful, even in the difficult seasons of life then, they were people down here in the front that would love the opportunity to share that hope with you pray with you and tell you what those next steps look like. If you share today and on Thanksgiving weekend life is just heavy and you need someone to pray with, they would love that opportunity as well. Have a great rest of your week we'll see you all back here next Sunday.