



Friday, September 28, 2018



**“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The above passage from Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians reminds us that gratitude and thanksgiving lie at the heart of the Christian life and witness. Being thankful is a state of being that grows out of our relationship with Jesus. It is born in the hearts of those who intentionally take the time to count their blessings because they know that everything they are and everything they have comes from God—it is all grace!

This passage tells us three things about God’s will for us. First, Paul says; “Give thanks.” This means we are to show gratitude, appreciation, recognition, praise—it means giving credit, where credit is due. The phrase “give thanks,” comes from the Greek word *eucharisteo*, which is where we get the word *eucharist*. Holy Communion is the great thanksgiving, where we celebrate Jesus’ death on the cross and His sacrifice for our redemption.

Second, Paul says; “in all circumstances.” The Greek word for ‘in’ means “any, all, everything, anyone, all the time, anywhere, the whole thing.” It means “no exception, no excuses, no exemptions.” God wants us to be grateful in every circumstance. Notice he doesn’t say; “Give thanks **for** all circumstances,” but “**in** all circumstances”—there’s a big difference! A lot of terrible things can and will happen in our lives and in the world—and it would be crazy to think that God wants us to give thanks for them. However, we can give thanks in the midst of them because we know that God is in control—that He can bring good out of evil. We know that God loves us and wants what’s best for us, and He can redeem any situation, including the stupid mistakes that we make. Anyone can be grateful in the good times, but to be grateful in all circumstances is radical gratitude. This passage is a challenging one because it presents thankfulness as a constant attitude of the heart. No matter what we are doing; no matter what’s going on in our lives; no matter what our circumstances—we are called to have an attitude of gratitude. I don’t know about you, but I have a long way to go before I am living this verse 100% in my everyday life. The good news is, because it’s God’s will for us in Christ Jesus, it’s not impossible for us to do it—with His help!

This brings me to my third point. Paul says; “this is the will of God for you...” Often, we seek God’s will for our lives when we want to know what to do or where to go. “Should I take this job? Should we engage in this ministry? Should I have this medical procedure?” However, these kinds of questions take second place when it comes to knowing God’s will. God’s will for us, according to Paul, first and foremost, is that we learn to give thanks.

I encourage you in this season of thanksgiving to consider all that God has given you: the breath in your lungs, the love of family and friends, the fellowship of a community of believers, the prayers He’s answered, and His faithfulness in keeping His promises and providing for your needs. Then let your gratitude overflow into generosity toward others—and not just with your money and material goods, but also with your time and attention.

To help you do this, I am inviting you to once again reflect on the commitment that you would like to make to God in and through *Living Waters* in the coming year. Included with this letter is a Commitment Card—I encourage you to prayerfully reflect on those areas of ministry that you are interested in supporting in the coming year, through the offering of your time and talents. **I challenge you, in addition to the ministries that you are already doing, to prayerfully consider committing yourself to one new ministry.** All ministry information will be given to Kathleen Young, our Vestry Clerk, who will ensure that you are contacted by the appropriate person for any new ministries that you are interested in undertaking. The financial information that you provide will be kept in strict confidence, and will help guide Parish Council as they prepare the 2019 Operating Budget.

I invite you to offer your commitment to God on **Commitment Sunday—Sunday, October 21**. If you are unable to be present on the 21st, please bring it in as soon as possible.

Scripture tells us that as believers we are to live our lives in such a way that we make the truth about God attractive and inviting to others. One of the best ways to do this—one of the best ways to share our faith with other people—is to start with gratitude. In a world that is often dark, critical, and ungrateful, thankful, encouraging people shine like stars in the evening sky. Paul is very clear: As followers of Jesus we should be known for our radical gratitude. What are you known for?

Fall is traditionally a time to give thanks. I give thanks for all of you, and for your thoughtful generosity and active support of the life and ministry of *Living Waters* over the past year. God has richly blessed us these past three years with His presence and provision, and I am confident that He has great things in store for us in the coming year! I look forward to ministering with you with a renewed sense of commitment and purpose.

May the love and peace of Jesus rule in our hearts.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Christopher R. Doering
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