

When Should I Send a Thank You Note?

July 7, 2019

[Scripture Focus: Psalm 30]

SCRIPTURE

Let's take a closer look at the text from Psalm 30 that Dianne read earlier. We'll listen for God's Word again. This morning, I'll be reading from The Message...

I give you all the credit, God. You got me out of that mess, you didn't let my foes gloat. God, my God, I yelled for help and you put me together. God, you pulled me out of the grave, gave me another chance at life when I was down-and-out. All you saints! Sing your hearts out to God! Thank him to his face! He gets angry once in a while, but across a lifetime there is only love. The nights of crying your eyes out give way to days of laughter. When things were going great I crowed, "I've got it made. I'm God's favorite. He made me king of the mountain. Then you looked the other way and I fell to pieces. I called out to you, God; I laid my case before you: "Can you sell me for a profit when I'm dead? auction me off at a cemetery yard sale? When I'm 'dust to dust' my songs and stories of you won't sell. So listen! and be kind!

Help me out of this!" You did it: you changed wild lament into whirling dance; You ripped off my black mourning band and decked me with wildflowers. I'm about to burst with song; I can't keep quiet about you. God, my God, I can't thank you enough.

The author of this Psalm is David. It likely was written after God stopped the great plague that had been used to discipline David. Prosperity had made David feel invincible. While deep down inside, David knew that whatever he had was a gift from God; his wealth, power and fame had an intoxicating effect on him. David felt self-reliant, self-secure and independent of God.

Sound familiar? Don't we all feel invincible when things are going well? We're usually pretty secure just before our false sense of security proves to be (well) false... We've got the world by the tail until we're faced with a problem that we can't solve. It's then that we summon God in to help us, just like we'd do to a plumber when we don't have the skill needed to fix a plumbing problem.

Years ago, my brother gave me his old King James study Bible. I love what it says about this text: "Don't be trapped by the false security of prosperity. Depend on God for your security and you won't be shaken when worldly possessions disappear." Good advice! Now, back to our topic at hand.

SO WHAT?

So, when should I send a thank you note? From "oureverydaylife.com"

Thank you notes must be sent after receiving a gift. This includes wedding, birthday, sympathy, graduation, bridal or baby showers, and any similar situation. Thank you notes should also be sent to the hostess of a party in your honor, after being entertained by your boss, or when you have stayed as a house guest (unless it was with a close relative or friend). Send thank you notes for any sympathy or congratulations letters or cards that you receive that included a handwritten, personal message. It is not necessary to send a thank you for preprinted cards that were simply signed.

NOW WHAT?

Well, Emily Post tells us that we should send a thank you note on very specific occasions. Let's see what another life expert (Billy Graham) has to say on the subject? Listen for Reverend Graham's words...

Are you thankful no matter what? Perhaps you lost your job recently. Or you may have lost your health, or a loved one. Such circumstances can be tremendously difficult. But even so, we all have much to be thankful for.

Look with me at the story of a man who had every right to be bitter—but wasn't.

The next footsteps in the corridor, he knew, might be those of the guards taking him away to his execution.

His only bed was the hard, cold stone floor of the dank, cramped prison cell. Not an hour passed when he was free from the constant irritation of the chains and the pain of the iron manacles cutting into his wrists and legs.

Separated from friends, unjustly accused, brutally treated—if ever a person had a right to complain, it was this man, languishing almost forgotten in a harsh Roman prison. But instead of complaints, his lips rang with words of praise and thanksgiving!

The man was the Apostle Paul—a man who had learned the meaning of true thanksgiving, even in the midst of great adversity. Earlier, when he had been imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote, “Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20, NIV).

Think of it: Always giving thanks for everything—no matter the circumstances! Thanksgiving for the Apostle Paul was not a once-a-year celebration, but a daily reality that changed his life and made him a joyful person in every situation.

Thanksgiving—the giving of thanks—to God for all of His blessings should be one of the most distinctive marks of the believer in Jesus Christ. We must not allow a spirit of ingratitude to harden our heart and chill our relationship with God and with others.

Reverend Graham encouraged others to give thanks to God for:

- The material blessings that God gives us.
- For the people in our lives.
- Thank God even in the midst of trials and persecution.
- We should be especially thankful for our salvation in the Christ.

We’re taught in 1 Thessalonians 5 to be thankful “for everything.” We’re not to just be thankful for things that make us happy but we are to be thankful even in the midst of circumstances that we don’t like. Thanking God for everything helps keep bitterness at bay!

Throughout God's Word, we find this consistent instruction to "give thanks."

- "O give thanks unto the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the people" (I Chronicles 16:8).
- "O give thanks to the Lord; for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever" (same chapter - different verse).

The I Thessalonians 5:18 verse also defines when we are to "give thanks." It says: "give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." There are no boundaries, no "exception clauses" in regard to when we are to give thanks. We are to give thanks "in every thing."

How does this truth relate to the suffering we experience? Does it mean we're to be thankful when a young mother dies of cancer? Does it mean you should give thanks when you lose your job? Does it mean we should rejoice when a couple suffers the anguish of multiple miscarriages?

Thanking God in all things doesn't mean that we should thank God when specific bad things happen. Rather, we are to thank God in the midst of all things. We can't stop thanking God when something tragic happens. We are to just refocus ourselves on thanks - even when times are tough!

I think that folks sometimes get confused and think that when they become followers of Christ, nothing bad is ever supposed to happen to them again. Nothing could be further from the truth!

God has given us free will to make decisions about our lives. We were never intended to be identical looking and acting members of a mono-chromatic army. God never said that our lives would be without difficulty when we began following him. He just said that he'd be there with us during the bad stuff.

I thought that you might be interested in hearing the top ten things God never promised us: (10 to 1)

1. A trouble free life
2. Personal success
3. A happily ever after life (here on earth)
4. A husband or wife for life
5. A fulfilling ministry
6. The answer to all of our questions
7. Wealth and prosperity
8. Your children will follow your lead
9. That all things always work out for the best
10. That he'd only give us what we could handle

James 1:13 says: "When under trial, let no one say: "I am being tried by God." While you very well may be, don't assume that you are being tried by God when bad things happen. God (himself) doesn't try anyone. It is true that God doesn't always stop bad things from happening but that doesn't always mean that he causes every bad thing that happens.

The bottom line is that we can't have it both ways. We can't have free will and have God completely in charge of our lives. I believe with all of my heart that God can do absolutely anything! I also believe with all of my heart that everything (good or bad) that happens to us is not necessarily God's doing. I don't believe that God always causes mass shootings or heart attacks or marriages to fail. Can he cause those things to happen? Yes. But every time an innocent person dies, is it God's fault? I don't think so!

I often look at God's role in my life through the filter of Good Friday. My first thought is that without Good Friday, we never see Christ's resurrection on Easter morning. Without Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, we really don't have anything theological to base our lives on.

If God didn't create this world, we'd have nothing. To me, that's the reason for giving God thanks always. We're not thankful for the 911 tragedy but we're extremely grateful for the sacrifice of EMTs, police and fire personnel. We are even grateful for the lives of those who died in this tragedy, but not for the tragedy itself.

Following up on last week's message when I mentioned the importance of a take-a-way from weekly worship, you may be wondering "what's the take-a-way for today?"

Knowing that God created the world and everything in it (from absolutely nothing), how can we be anything other than thankful? Knowing that God is always with us, how can we be anything other than grateful? When we consider what's to come in eternity, why wouldn't we be thankful?

The bottom, bottom line answer to today's question: When should I send God a thank you note? Every single day of my life! Because without him and all that he's done, I'd have nothing.

There's no bigger sacrifice and gift than when Christ gave his life so that we could be forgiven and live on into eternity. Granted, it can be a challenge for us to make time to send God a daily thank you note (even if we don't have to go to the Hallmark store to buy a card). But praying seems like a good first step. Can't we simply offer a prayer of "thanks" for what we've been given (instead of always asking for things)?

Sometimes, our lives get so busy that we forget to thank God for what God's done for us but on the first Sunday of each month, we have a reminder when we share this holy meal (move to table)....