

Text: [Psalm 103:1-12 \(CEB\)](#)

Date: November 24, 2024

Title: “Bless the Lord, O My Soul”

Theme: Thanksgiving isn’t real without proclamation, and without gratitude it’s hard to keep our priorities straight.

1

If you want to engage your gratitude muscles
Begin by thinking about the things you can’t imagine your life
without

For you: Who are the people, what are the things that fall in that
category?

That you absolutely can’t live without

Give that a minute – I actually want you to think on this

Lots of things are important

But what’s the most important?

We’re in church, so I’m going to take for granted that somewhere
in there is our relationship to God, we’ll take that as a given
If it’s not, then that’s something for you to ponder

Having said that, you may be thinking about your partner or
spouse

Your kids

Your parents or siblings

Your dog or cat

You may have thought about something more abstract – but that
are necessary to your soul – to your well-being

Music

Art

Nature

Something like that

All the science behind gratitude shows that its one of those things
where you can “fake it till you make it”
In other words, that the more you practice gratitude, the more
grateful you become
Just like smiling can actually make you happier
(That’s true by the way – it’s been studied, you can look it up)

So, here’s the natural question: of the people and things you said
you couldn’t live without, do THEY know that?
Have you told them how important they are to you?
How much they matter?
How they change your life for the better, just by being in the
world?
If you haven’t, you should

2

I heard a wonderful sermon this week about gratitude where the
preacher reminded us:
“There’s no thanksgiving without proclamation”
In other words, unless you express your thanksgiving – is it even
real?
Now, that sounds like kind of a “churchy” idea, but....

I’m sure that you can remember a time or two when you’ve been
in the situation
Where you felt like you were going out of your way to show
someone kindness
To be helpful
And the person never bothered to say thanks
You noticed, didn’t you?

I KNOW you noticed
You know how I know?
Because as I mention it, you still remember

AND, if you're honest, you're still a little salty about it
Maybe you even said to yourself: "I'm done helping them!"

If you asked them, THEY may have felt grateful for what you did
But when they didn't say anything
To you, it was like their gratitude didn't even exist
There is no thanksgiving without proclamation -
No one knows you're grateful unless you tell them!

3

At least when it comes to God, this idea is scriptural
Today's reading from the psalms illustrates it:
"Let my whole being bless the LORD!"
Or, a phrase that might be more familiar – when you read from
the King James
"Bless the LORD, O my soul!"

And then the writer goes on for 22 verses about things he's
thankful for
WHAT God has done for him
And WHY God deserves his gratitude

Now, again, for people who haven't spent a whole lot of time in
church

This may seem weird

"So...you show up an hour a week to worship God...
to tell a being you can't see how great they are?"

"What's the deal with this God?"

Are they a megalomaniac or something?"

No, that's not it

We don't say it because God needs to hear it...

In the psalm, we've already established that God forgives when
we forget

“As high as the heavens are above the earth...”

“As far as the east is from the west...”

So far has God removed our sins from us

It's not like when someone forgets to say thanks to us

And we hold onto it for a LOOOONG time

Our ungratefulness – which is frequent - is not a thing God holds
against us

No, unlike with humans, we say thanks to God NOT because God
needs it

But because it does US good to say it

In the same way we smile in order to be happy

We say thanks *in order to* be grateful – to remember God

We say thanks *in order to* be humble – because we didn't do it all
by ourselves

And we say thanks *in order to* keep our priorities straight

4

I don't know if you have this experience

But when I am stressed, scared, or sad

I often find it very hard to keep perspective on what's most
important

Because the thing I'm worried about takes up all the space I have
in my mind

So if you asked me the question we started with:

“What do you value the most?

What can't you live without?”

Frequently we'll find that whenever we've gotten stressed or
scared about something

Our actual living is out of sync with our answer to that question

Because we've allowed that thing we're freaking out about to sit in
the place that we should be setting aside for the *most
important things*

So, unless we're scared about LOSING one of those most
important things

Maybe – just maybe – that thing we're giving so much of our mind
space to doesn't belong there at all

Gratitude – and the recognition of what's most important – helps
us to keep the rest of our lives in perspective

5

So, let's come back: gratitude is a practice of proclamation

We need to SAY what we're feeling

Otherwise, it does no good

This week, then, the obvious challenge is to make a point to say
what you're feeling

Maybe not after you've had a few glasses of wine at Thanksgiving
dinner – “I love you, man...” just, no

But when you are clear-eyed and can really articulate to the
people who matter most WHY they matter

And if, when I asked what you couldn't live without, you named
something more abstract

Like music or art or nature or whatever

Go enjoy them if you have a little time off this week

Make music, do art, get out in nature

Practice what you claim to believe

Thanksgiving is PROCLAMATION

It's also PRIORITIZATION

When you get sad, or scared, or stressed this week
Maybe ask yourself: does this thing that I'm carrying around
 DESERVE to hold that space in my mind?
Does it DESERVE to sit there on a throne like it's the most
 important thing of all?
And maybe it does, maybe it doesn't

If you IMMEDIATELY see it doesn't, then praise God!
Whenever that fear or worry tries to climb back on the throne
 ('cause it will)
Keep coming back to that idea that other things should take
 priority
And then LET them take priority

But if you're unsure how the thing you're stressed about fits
Then keep praying
Keep thanking God for the most important things
And see if it doesn't get clearer

6

Gratitude is foundational to the spiritual life
If you want to grow in it
It's important to speak the things that you feel
To God, and to the people around you

Thanksgiving isn't real without proclamation
And without gratitude, it's hard to keep our priorities straight

So let's ask God for the wisdom to practice it!

Amen.

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