

Thanksgiving 2014 - Because We Are Thankful

21 Day Devotional - for All God's People

by Cindy Shomo North

God is doing something unique in your congregation. During this time of thankfulness, give God the opportunity to draw your heart closer to Him. We are going to explore three movements over the next three weeks that help establish grateful hearts:

- Remembering awakens a thankful heart
- Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity
- Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity

Preparation:

Daily Opportunity - You are invited to...

- Humble yourself before the LORD and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and heart to hear what God has to say.
- Ruminare, dwell, and wait on the word of the LORD. As you read and re-read the scripture passages three or four times, deliberately and slowly, be attentive to what stands out. You may want to try reading the words aloud.
- Write down the things that God brings to your mind as you read or listen to these devotionals.

****Note:** All Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Monday, Day 1 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

Memories shape and form our experience of life. In order to establish a thankful heart, we have to remember God's good work. This week we will focus on scriptures that call us to this special task of memory.

Psalm 77:11-15

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;

I will remember your wonders of old.

*I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.*

Your way, O God, is holy.

What god is so great as our God?

You are the God who works wonders;

you have displayed your might among the peoples.

*With your strong arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Tuesday, Day 2 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

This song of David expresses great joy and praise while calling the people of God to remember God's power to work miracles. Some memories are destructive to us, but others are important for shaping who we are in Christ. When we openly bring our past and our memories before God, He can transform even our hurt into something that brings good. Establishing an attitude of thanksgiving is crucial for our spiritual well-being.

Psalm 105:4-7

*Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually.
Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered,
O offspring of his servant Abraham,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.*

*He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Wednesday, Day 3 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

Can you remember the gracious deeds of the LORD in your life? Think of it: God came himself to save us! Through His very presence among us we have been brought to mercy and healing.

Isaiah 63:7-9

*I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord,
the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,
because of all that the Lord has done for us,
and the great favor to the house of Israel*

*that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely";
and he became their savior
in all their distress.
It was no messenger or angel
but his presence that saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Thursday, Day 4 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

We, like the disciples, often forget what Christ has already done. Jesus instructs His disciples to remember, because in doing so, their faith will be made stronger. They do not need to worry about things like food or shelter, because the Father has already provided those things and will again. Remembering Christ’s good work produces gratitude and increases our faith, allowing us to move forward in the next work He wants to accomplish through us.

Matthew 16:5-12 - When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, “Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They said to one another, “It is because we have brought no bread.” And becoming aware of it, Jesus said, “You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How could you fail to perceive that I was not speaking about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!” Then they understood that he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Reflection:

- 1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

- 2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

- 3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Friday, Day 5 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

Sometimes a thankful heart can come through seeing Christ at work in others. Are we looking for Christ's work in the people around us? When you see God doing an incredible work through other people, do you praise Him? In these verses, Paul recognizes the incredible gift of relationships that God has given us within the body of Christ. Our giving increases as we remember with a thankful heart how God is moving among us.

Philippians 1:3-7 - I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Saturday, Day 6 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

This passage in Deuteronomy admonishes us to not forget what God has done for us. When we forget, we begin to believe the lie that it is our skill and our power that is responsible for what we have. When we remember the many things that God has done, we will establish an attitude of thankfulness and begin to share our gifts with others.

Deuteronomy 8:11-18 - Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Sunday, Day 7 - Remembering awakens a thankful heart.

The memory of our magnificent Savior is itself a blessing from God. If we simply look away from ourselves and turn to God, He will cause us to remember, in gratitude, His mighty works. Then we will know that this promise is fulfilled: "I will come to you and bless you."

Exodus 20:22-24 - The Lord said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. You shall not make gods of silver alongside me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Monday, Day 8 - Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

Get ready to celebrate! When we have established a thankful heart, we want to offer back praise and thanksgiving to the one who deserves our praise. As God’s children we are called to exalt God, directing our attention away from ourselves to the worship of the Holy Trinity. When we exalt God, we make it possible for His divine actions and work to be accomplished.

2 Chronicles 20:17-21 - This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you.’

Then Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

They rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God and you will be established; believe his prophets.” When he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy splendor, as they went before the army, saying,

*“Give thanks to the Lord,
for his steadfast love endures forever.”*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Tuesday, Day 9 – Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

Let joy overflow into an uncontrollable noise! Our joyful worship may be displayed many different ways, but, no matter how we worship, God still loves to hear our thankful hearts overflow with praise.

Ezra 3:10-13 - When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,

*“For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”*

And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Wednesday, Day 10 - Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

If the soul is silent, then God is not being glorified. In this Psalm, we can hear the emotions of the singer as he moves from sadness to jubilation. God is being magnified and exalted with thanks, and we need to continue this celebration of thankfulness.

Psalm 30:10-12

*Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me!
O Lord, be my helper!"*

*You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Thursday, Day 11 - Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

How do we glory in the praise that is given to God? The Psalmist in today's text believes that as praises are lifted upward there is a glory which we experience also. Can you describe or name what this glory might be? How is our faith affected by this?

Psalm 106:47-48

*Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.*

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
And let all the people say, "Amen."
Praise the Lord!*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Friday, Day 12 - Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

Recognition and honor belong to God. In these verses, Daniel lifts his praises to God for His wonderful care and answered prayers. Trust and faith are displayed in Daniel's thankfulness and praise.

Daniel 2:20-23

Daniel said:

*“Blessed be the name of God from age to age,
for wisdom and power are his.
He changes times and seasons,
deposes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding.
He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and light dwells with him.
To you, O God of my ancestors,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and power,
and have now revealed to me what we asked of you,
for you have revealed to us what the king ordered.”*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Saturday, Day 13 - Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

Paul’s admonition in this passage has to be one of the most challenging to us—“Rejoice always” and “give thanks in all circumstances.” Giving thanks even in the face of hardship means that we believe in how God will display His loving care in our lives. Such faith looks beyond the immediate and remembers God’s faithfulness in the past. Then, we can rejoice and celebrate our God.

1 Thess. 5:16-22 - 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 the words of the prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Sunday, Day 14 - Celebrating exalts the Holy Trinity.

A heart of thankfulness results in an outward flow of praise. As gratitude wells up in the heart, an expression of praise is sure to follow. When something completely changes your life, is it possible to stay silent about it?

Isaiah 51:3

*For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Monday, Day 15 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

What does it mean to sacrifice thanks or praise? This idea may seem strange at first, but if we look more closely at the text, we may be able to understand what it means. When a grateful heart is stirred, there is a call to respond. We are called to give of ourselves or to let go of something that is very important. Such a movement of gratitude leads us to an outward generosity of spirit, time, energy, and resources. A thankful heart results in a life of generosity.

Luke 17:11-19 - On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give

praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Tuesday, Day 16 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

Two men, empowered by a new vision of the kingdom of God, allow their gratitude to become generosity by sacrificing their reputation, time, and resources to care for the body of their Lord Jesus after his death. Even in their great sorrow, these two disciples offered a sacrifice of praise to God through their faithfulness.

John 19:38-42 - After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths,

according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Wednesday, Day 17 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

In the Gospel of Luke we find the story of a blind man who refuses to be silent, even when the crowds try to push him aside. When Jesus hears the man's cries for help, he acknowledges him and heals him. Spontaneous thanksgiving and praise for God overflows from this man who receives new sight. As God is glorified through this man's sacrificial praise, many in the community are moved to join him.

Luke 18:35-43 - As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who

were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Thursday, Day 18 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

When the body of Christ works together to meet the needs of the community, we are bringing great glory to God. Generosity flows out of thankful hearts which express humility through their unreserved dependence on God rather than self...

2 Corinthians 9:10-12 - He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God

through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Friday, Day 19 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

Because of her gratitude to God, Hannah willingly and generously offered her only son back to God. This story foreshadows God's own desire to lovingly surrender His only son, Jesus, for us. How will our gratitude impact what we relinquish from our hands?

1 Samuel 1:21-28 - The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the Lord, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time." Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. When she had

weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh; and the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord."

She left him there for the Lord.

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Saturday, Day 20 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

Compelled by loving gratitude, this woman anoints Jesus' feet with a costly perfume. The disciples thought that this act was wasteful, but her generosity became a beautiful blessing to our Lord Jesus. It was a sacrificial expression of thanks. Have we truly grasped the depths of our own forgiveness the way this woman did? How great will our sacrifice be in response to that forgiveness?

Luke 7:36-50 - One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?

Sunday, Day 21 - Sacrificing moves gratitude to generosity.

We can see reflections of our own story in this Psalm. We have all cried out to the Lord Jesus to save us, and God hears and answers our prayers. He saves us from destruction. How will our gratitude move us to a sacrifice of thanksgiving?

Psalm 107:19-22

*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
he sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from destruction.
Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.*

Reflection:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you the first time you read or hear the scripture?

2. After you have studied the scripture a second or third time, can you identify one lesson that the LORD wants to teach you today?

3. How would you like to respond to God in prayer?
