

“Do not Forget the Lord Your God”

A few years ago, in August, it was almost the end of our summer vacation. Euni and I were driving downhill on interstate highway #5 southbound around Shasta Mountain, driving around 75 miles per hour. Please do not report me to the police. Suddenly, we heard something continually striking the front part of our van. I had to slam on the brakes carefully on the wayside. Checking the windshield, we found the rubber mold on the driver's side, which held the front windshield, had partially fallen off, and it struck the body and windshield due to the rapid winds.

At the moment, we were so nervous, but fortunately, we found a roll of clear masking tape inside the car. We put in as much as we could until we thought we had made a strong enough hold, carefully drove at the snail's pace of 35 miles per hour and turned on the hazard light with earnest and prayerful hearts. Luckily, after driving 45 miles, we reached the city of Redding. After driving to two auto glass businesses, we met the kind owner in third place. Even though he didn't have anyone to help us, he found a capable store, and we were able to get it fixed.

We had to spend one more hour there. However, when we asked the owner what the repair cost was, the mechanic told us it was on the house. What a thankful event! We gave him a 20-dollar tip because we expected at least 50 dollars for the cost. Afterward, we had to drive slower than 55 miles and needed to be careful until the glue dried well enough.

Every car passed us on the highway; as a speed racer, it was an event I never imagined. Beat-up cars were passing by me like they were Ferraris. It was quite embarrassing. However, our hearts were filled with great thanksgiving. We thanked God for our security in the midst of the sudden problem, for the goodness of the owners, and for our joy, although we drove slowest.

If we didn't have the problem, would we still have been able to experience that great Thanksgiving? We were arriving home while we gave more thanks to the Lord, who allowed us to experience His marvelous grace.

Without fail, the saddest day for turkeys is coming this year. However, I am appreciative of them due to their making our Thanksgiving Day so delicious. Anyhow, we feel our hearts are filled with thanks even when we hear and share the word of thanksgiving in this season. We enjoy the anticipation of meeting together again with family who are scattered, sharing love with them and our neighbors at the plentiful table, and giving thanks to the Lord.

So, let's fill this Sunday, so close to Thanksgiving, with genuine gratitude through the Word of God.

Examining the scriptures, we can see God's concern for His people of Israel. We might wonder how the almighty God has any worries. However, the God of Israel was worried that His people might forget their savior. And He reminded His people that they would forget their God when they forgot to give thanks to their savior.

I. First, let's find the elements that disrupt our thanksgiving from the scriptures.

Verse 14 in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 8 warns us that human pride makes us forget the Lord. It says, "Be sure that you do not become proud and forget the Lord your God who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves."

Human pride before God is forgetting our origin. The beginning point of all creatures is our creator God. We must acknowledge that without Him we have no existence. Our life totally belongs to God. When we accept this fact as the truth, we can experience genuine humility, security, and thanksgiving.

Moreover, verse 17 indicates that when we look down on God we must give thanks to Him. It says, "You must never think that you have made yourselves wealthy by your own power and strength." However, God teaches us in verse 18, "Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because He is still faithful today to the covenant that He made with your ancestors."

When we confuse who is the owner of our lives, we become the subject of our own thanksgiving. Our God gave the promise of blessing to His people and wants to be glorified through the accomplishment of His promise.

Let's move on to the teachings of Jesus from the gospel of Luke. The ten lepers were healed by Jesus. Nine of them went home first because they were excited and missed their families. Nine of them were Jews who were healed from their disease but lost their savior, Jesus Christ, due to the healing. On the surface, the healing could seem like the greatest thing, but what good is it after death? They may have had earthly satisfaction, but they lost eternal salvation.

However, one Samaritan came back to Jesus first, filled with excitement. He had the same healing as the others, but he was the only one who met the Savior, Jesus Christ, with thanksgiving, even though he was treated as a foreigner. We should have the same heart and attitude as this Samaritan and recognize that all the blessings in our lives are from the Lord.

II. Let's now count what we should be giving thanks for.

The first thing we should give thanks for is our lives. No one was born or died according to their own desires. This fact proves our lives are a gift from the creator, God. In our lives, we have the opportunity to rely on each other. Accordingly, we help each other as those who received life from God.

Before we had faith, fellowship with God was something of no value or interest to us. But after experiencing God, fellowship with God means everything, and everything outside of fellowship with God decreases in value significantly. At least it should. If this is not the case for you, you should check your heart and see if you have any idols that you have placed before him. It is through fellowship with God that He gives us the power and vision that allow us to transcend earthly living and experience everlasting life through our faith.

The second thing we should give thanks for is abundance in our lives. Does this mean we must be rich? Not necessarily. Where can we eat as much as we do and be as full as we are on this earth? Thanksgiving is the prime example of this. Where can we sleep more comfortably and securely than in this country? However, we still worry so much about food, clothes, and sleep.

In November 2017, one North Korean soldier crossed over the MDL (Military Demarcation Line) in an attempt to defect to the South, an area

located between North Korea and South Korea in the JAS (Joint Security Area), and he was shot by other North Korean soldiers. He was hit by 6-7 bullets all over his body, out of approximately 40 shots taken. He was taken to the hospital by a helicopter and had surgery.

According to the surgeon, the patient was in a coma due to the severe damage caused by excessive bleeding and ruptured organs. An unbelievable thing was that one of the reasons hindering restoration was the presence of so many kinds of parasites in his body.

Those kinds of parasites have almost disappeared from the world and are rarely found in medical books. Moreover, some grains of corn were found in his intestine. The North Korean soldiers who work in the JAS were in the top 5 of the best-treated groups in North Korea. But the soldier was 5'7" tall and weighed just 132.3 pounds.

His physical condition showed us the difficulty of obtaining food in North Korea. North Korea's food crisis is more serious now than it was five years ago. We need to share our possessions with the needy. That is the reason we are living in abundance.

Lastly, let's give thanks to God for allowing us to hear the gospel freely. We received salvation through the gospel. However, some people do not want to or cannot hear the gospel in the world even today. By what right are you able to listen to the gospel and be a child of God? You have no right. It is only by the grace of Jesus Christ that you are in your position now. However, we need to remember that many people worked and sacrificed for our salvation.

We experience the joy of worshipping God through the gospel. How much is the ticket price for getting good seats at a famous sports game or tickets to the concert of a famous singer? Someone paid \$133,000 for two tickets to Game 7 of the NBA Finals last year. Can you believe that? But what is the ticket to worship freely worth? What value does it have for your life and soul?

We must truly comprehend how thankful we should be for God's invitation to us to worship and experience His presence. We need to wake our sleeping souls, which have lost their sense of great joy. We have the

mission and the privilege to feel how precious, joyous, and blessed our daily lives are!

Let's be reminded here that God allows us to stay under the protection and blessing of the Creator through the gospel. Whoever made us knows our needs and desires. The reason He made us His children is to protect us with His absolute power and love. When we acknowledge and long for His promise, God rejoices as he performs his promises to us.

I want you to welcome me this Sunday while you engrave the promise of God given to us through 1 John 5:14–15. “We have courage in God’s presence because we are sure that he hears us if we ask him for anything that is according to his will. 15 He hears us whenever we ask him, and since we know this is true, we also know that he gives us what we ask from him.”

In my garden, the sunrises and sunsets during November are so beautiful. I have attempted to take pictures often. But I hate just one thing every time I am taking pictures. Do you know what it is? Electric poles.

A few days ago, I was taking a walk and was struck by the beauty of the sunset. However, the electric pole was smack dab in the middle of the picture. I had to quell my annoyance, and I remembered that I needed to be thankful for everything—every annoyance, every difficulty, every blessing. Because every situation we encounter inevitably becomes part of our lives, we need to accept it and do our best to seek peace from Jesus and abide in him. Amen.

Reflection and Application for Today’s Sermon:

- 1) Let's reflect on a specific instance of gratitude from the past year in various aspects of our lives: pertaining to ourselves, our family, friends, neighbors, community, country, or even in relation to the church.
- 2) Recall an experience where you felt gratitude to God after undergoing pain and refinement. What does that particular experience signify to you this Thanksgiving?
- 3) This Thanksgiving, let's commit to performing one act of love for others, irrespective of its scale. Whether the recipients are family, friends, or neighbors, what is something you would like to do?