

# Having an Attitude of Gratitude

by Larry Powers

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*Having an attitude of gratitude is essential for deepening our relationship with God and recognizing the blessings and goodness in our lives.*

**Duration:** 38:34

**Scripture:** Luke 17:11

**Topics:** "Gratitude"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having an attitude of gratitude. He shares a story about a man in Luke chapter 17 who was healed by Jesus and returned to give thanks. The preacher encourages the congregation to always be thankful, not just for the big things, but also for the little things in life. He reminds them that gratitude should be a response to the grace and goodness of God in their lives.

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## Transcript

Well good morning to all of you. It is a great blessing to get to be with you today and to teach from the Word of God. Dale mentioned my name is Larry Powers.

For those of you who I've not had the privilege of meeting before, I'm a professor over at Life Bible College. It's the Bible College that Pastor Chuck Smith went to many many years ago and it's been my blessing to teach there for a long time and to get to teach different Calvary Chapel pastors, staff members, and leaders. One of my star students was just standing right here.

Dale Goddard was a student in my class and it is just a blessing to know him and through him we got connected with Pastor Raul so many years ago and Pastor Raul is one incredible guy. I love him so much and I always feel just so honored when I get a chance to stand here and teach when he's gone. Well how many got a Bible today? Cool, I'm in the right place.

Open your Bible if you will to Luke chapter 17. Luke chapter 17, the title of my message this morning is Having an Attitude of Gratitude and the passage of Scripture we're going to look at together in a moment is Luke 17 verses 11 through 19. There's an old and often told story about two angels that God sent to earth on a special assignment.

One of the angels was sent down to the earth to collect all of the prayers of people and bring them back up to heaven to God. The other angel was sent down to earth to collect all of the praises of people and bring them back up to heaven to God. As the story goes, the angel who was supposed to collect all of the prayers, he was overwhelmed by the number of prayers.

He had to take many, many trips back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. But the angel who was to collect all of the praises was able to carry all of them back in just one hand. That old story, though just a story, has a truth.

And that truth is that we're so prone in many times to ask things of God and yet forget to thank him for the blessings in our life. Many, many times we cry out to God for mercy and help and then when he helps us out we forget to thank him. I don't know if you've heard the story about the man who was way high on a roof and he was tacking down some loose shingles that were up there.

And so while he was up there on the steep roof, he lost his footing and he started to slide down the roof toward the edge. And the closer and closer he got to the edge, thinking he was going to fall off and break his neck or whatever, he just began to cry out, you know, God help me, help me, help me. And just before he got to the edge, his belt happened to catch on a nail of the roof.

And so it stopped his sliding and he looked up to heaven and he said, God I don't need your help after all. It's okay God, I got it handled on my own. And I thought, you know, how often I'm like that.

I wonder how often you might be like that. You know, we cry out to God for all of the needs and circumstances and situations in our life and then when God helps us, we forget to thank him. Before us this morning in the Word of God is a story, a story about the importance of having an attitude of gratitude.

It's a, it's a story about ten people that Jesus helped. When they cried out to him for mercy and help, Jesus helped them. But only one out of the ten returned to give him thanks.

It's a story in Luke 17 verses 11 through 19. Look there at what the Word of God says. The Bible says, now it happened as Jesus went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

Then as he entered a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said to them, go you, show yourselves to the priests.

And so it was as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, he returned with a loud voice. He glorified God.

He fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving thanks that he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, we're not ten cleansed. Where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? And Jesus said to him, Arise, go your way.

Your faith has made you well. What an awesome story about the importance of having an attitude. Of gratitude.

I like the story of this one man who returned this one leper who Jesus healed. And what he did, I hope someday when I get to heaven to meet this man, I'd like to talk to him about what it was and what happened that day. We don't even know his name.

But there's a lot we can learn from this unnamed man. And this morning, I want us to just notice three things. If you happen to be a note taker, you might want to just grab a piece of paper and jot down these three things.

They'll be a blessing to you. I want us to notice this morning the reason for his gratitude. Secondly, I want us to notice the response he had in gratitude.

And finally, the result of his gratitude, the reason for his gratitude, the response in gratitude and the result of his gratitude. The first thing we notice in this story is what we could call the reason for his gratitude. Why? Why did this man return and give thanks? Why was he so grateful? Well, that Jesus healed him.

But more than that, it was the grace of God. He was thankful because Jesus did something that he didn't have to do. Jesus didn't have to heal this man, but he did.

That was the grace of God. And so it is with you and so it is with me, everything that happens in our life is the grace of God. The word grace literally means an undeserved gift.

Now, what this man got was definitely undeserved. Not only was he a leper, but he was a Samaritan and the Jews despised and hated the Samaritans. And so that Jesus would graciously do this for him was amazing.

And every good thing, every gift, every wonderful blessing in your life and my life, it's the gift of God. It all comes from him. James 1 verse 17 says, Every good and perfect gift comes from the father of light in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning.

When you and I, if we stop long enough to think about our lives, we're so blessed. We have so many, many things to be grateful for. We can be grateful for God's provision in our life.

And in Philippians 4 and verse 19, Paul says, My God shall supply all of your needs according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. And he has. Think about the house you live in.

Think about the car you drive. Think about the clothes you wear and the job you have. You and I are so blessed with the things that God has given us in our life.

And then think about God's protection in your life, not only his provision, but his protection in your life. You know, in Psalm 91 and verse 11, the Bible says that God will give his angels charge over you to guard you in all of your ways. I mean, you might have been in a car accident at some point in your life, but think how many accidents you weren't in.

Because God was protecting you. Think how many times you might have been injured, you might have been sick, something might have happened to you, but it didn't happen to you because of God's protection. It's amazing, you know, we grumble sometimes because of some difficulty in our life.

We don't ever thank God for when the difficulties don't happen. You know, we just sort of think we're owed it in life, but not so. And think, think not only of God's provision and God's protection, but think of God's people in your life.

I've always liked Philippians 1 and verse 3. Paul says there, you know, I thank God on every remembrance of you. In other words, he says, man, every time I think about you, I'm just so thankful. Think about your husband or think about your wife or think about your kids.

I know sometimes they're disrespectful and rebellious, but they're good kids, aren't they? Aren't you thankful for them? Think about your family and about your friends and you think about the people who are sitting around you here and you think about this wonderful church and you think about Pastor Raul. You and I have so many things to be thankful for. There is always, always something to be thankful for.

Even when you don't think there's something to be thankful for, there's something to be thankful for. I love the story of the great Bible teacher named Matthew Henry. He's written a set of wonderful Bible study books.

And Matthew Henry, one day he was on his way home and he was robbed on the way home. And he got home and his wife said to him, you know, what happened? He said, I was robbed. She said, you know, you seem so cheerful.

You seem so thankful about that. How can you be thankful about being robbed? He said, well, first, I'm thankful because I had never been robbed before. This was the first time.

Secondly, he says, I'm thankful because they took my money, but they didn't take my life. Thirdly, he said, I'm thankful because they took all I had, but it wasn't very much. And he said, and most of all, I'm thankful that I was the one who was robbed and not the one who was robbing.

We always have something to be thankful for. I'm reminded of the great Scottish preacher. His name was Alexander White.

Dr. White, you know, he used to always stand in the big pulpit in his church in Scotland, great man of God. And his prayers were always so uplifting. He was always giving something, some thanks to God for some blessing, you know.

Well, if you've been to Scotland, you know what the weather's like. And one particular Sunday, I mean, it was it was horrendous out there. It was snowing and cold and dark and it was a horrible day.

They got into the church and one deacon, you know, he bumped somebody next to him and he said, well, I guess Dr. White's not going to have anything to thank the Lord for today. Dr. White, you know, he got up in the pulpit and he began the services he always did in prayer. And he said, oh, Lord, we thank you that it's not always like today.

The weather's not always like this, Lord. We just thank you for that. There's always something to thank the Lord for, even the things that may not seem like a blessing, they really are.

I think of that the great woman of God, Corrie ten Boom. If you've never read the book called The Hiding Place or seen the Billy Graham movie, you can probably, you know, get it in the bookstore, you know, called The Hiding Place. Y'all need to do that.

I'll make you so grateful. You know, Corrie ten Boom and her family, they lived in the days of Nazi Germany and knowing the Jews were God's people, they they did everything they could to help them. And they had this little place in their house that where they would hide the Jews.

It was the hiding place. And the Gestapo found out what was going on, and so all of them were arrested and and taken taken away. And and Corrie and her sister Betsy were taken to that notorious prison camp called Ravens Brook.

And the conditions there were indescribable. One of the things that was especially difficult for Betsy was all of the fleas that were in the particular area where they were. You know, some of the other ladies that were staying there, they were in section that didn't have fleas.

So Betsy was always grumbling, you know, and our Corrie was always grumbling and Betsy would say to her, just be thankful to the Lord. Well, later they found out that, you know, a lot of the guards would abuse the women. But that never happened in their section because the guards didn't want to go where the fleas were.

And they began to thank God for the fleas. Thank you for the fleas, Lord. Thank you for the fleas.

We're so grateful for these fleas. You see, there's always something to thank God for. Sunday school teacher was trying to teach her little children about that, and so she got them in a circle and, you know, these little four and five year olds.

And she said, let's just go around the circle and each one of you, you know, you just tell something you're thankful for. She got this one little four year old boy, these big old honking glasses, right? And he said, I just want to thank God for my glasses. He said, my glasses keep the boys from hitting me and they keep the girls from kissing me.

Just so thankful for my glasses. It's always something to be thankful for. Every good and perfect gift comes from God.

In John one over 16, John says of of his goodness, we have received grace upon grace. It's the picture of the ways of the ocean. Just one wave of grace after another wave of grace, after another wave of grace, after another wave of grace, the goodness of God in your life, in my life, it just keeps coming at us and at us and at us so much to be thankful for.

And we not only need to be thankful for what we think are the big things in life. We need to be thankful for the little things. The junior high teacher was doing an assignment with her.

The kids in her class, and so she assigned them to kind of, you know, get in groups or work individually. And she wanted them to come up with what they thought are the seven wonders of the world. After a few minutes, she gathered all of the sheets of the students, what they thought were the seven wonders of the world.

And the consensus was that they were the Great Pyramids, the Taj Mahal, St. Peter's Basilica, the Panama Canal, the Empire State Building, the Grand Canyon, and the Great Wall of China. As the teacher was gathering all the papers back from the students, she noticed that there was this one junior high girl in her class who seemed to be having a hard time with the assignment. And she said to her, she said, what's wrong, sweetheart? She says, are you having a hard time coming up with seven things that you think are the great wonders of the world? And she said, well, no.

She said, actually, I'm having a hard time limiting it to what I think are the seven wonders of the world. There are so many of them, she said. And her teacher said, well, why don't you just read out what you have and maybe the rest of us can help you.

This girl read the following. She said, I think the seven wonders of the world are to see, to hear, to taste, to touch, to love, to laugh, and to know God. Always something to be thankful for.

Not only the great things, but the little things in life. May God give all of us grateful hearts. A second thing we can learn from this man in Luke chapter 17.

Is the response he had in gratitude. The reason for his gratitude was the grace and the goodness of God in his life. Secondly, the response in gratitude that he had, what did he do? He went back and gave Jesus thanks.

Verse 15, one of them, when he saw that he was healed, he returned and with a loud voice, he glorified God. He fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving him thanks. How awesome.

I want to be like that. You know, I suppose it is possible in one sense to be grateful, but not give thanks. Being grateful is something that's in our heart.

Giving thanks is something that we do. It's possible to feel grateful, but not give thanks. And yet in another sense, I don't know that it is possible to be grateful and not give thanks.

Because if one truly is grateful, man, they can't but help wanting to do something to express their thanks. It's almost like fire and heat. If you have fire, you have heat.

If you have a grateful heart, it will want to express itself in thanks. And that's what we need to do toward God as we begin to think about his grace and his goodness in our life. We can't help but being like this one man who went to give thanks.

That's why I like being in church. I just love going to church because I like to worship the Lord and give thanks, just to praise him and bless him for all of his goodness in my life. But I fear so many times we might feel grateful, but not give thanks, not really go out of our way to give thanks.

I don't know if you've heard the story of President Abraham Lincoln, one of the great leaders of our country. And one of the reasons why Abraham Lincoln was so great is he had a connection with the people. In the afternoons, he had a period of time, several hours, where he would actually open the Oval Office.

And anyone who wanted to make an appointment to come and talk to him, they could. And so you can imagine that particular time of day was pretty crowded. You know, people wanted to come and ask him about this and asking about that and asking about the other thing.

And there was one sweet old lady who she made an appointment to see him. She was ushered into the Oval Office, and she sat down in the chair across the desk from that great President Abraham Lincoln. And he looked at her, and he said, he said, Welcome, Madam.

He said, What may I do for you? And she looked up at him, and she reached out, and she grabbed his little basket, and she put it up on his desk. And she said to him, she said, Mr. President, I haven't come here today to ask anything from you. She said, I just made some cookies for you.

They're in the basket. She said, I just wanted to come today and thank you for being such a great president. I just want you to know I appreciate you.

As the story goes, a tear began to run down that long face of Abraham Lincoln. And he looked at her, and he said, Madam, he said, In being a president, so many people have come into my office and have sat where you have sat, but you are the first one to come in and say thank you. I thought, you know, how often

I'm like all those other people, but I want to be like that one lady who came and gave thanks.

I like Psalm 103 and verse 1. The psalmist says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all of His benefits. In other words, as we begin to think of the grace and goodness of God in our life, we need to start to put down, to count, to think about each one of those blessings and to give God thanks for those things.

There was a young lady named Barbara Kipfer who was challenged to do that, to forget not all of God's benefits. As a teenager, someone challenged her to do that. And so she got one of these spiral notebooks.

And every night before she went to bed, she would just pull out the spiral notebook and she would write down a few things that she was thankful for, a few things that she was grateful for. Each day she did that. She filled up one book and then another book and then another book and then another book.

And over the next 20 years, she filled out dozens of those spiral notebooks. What she wrote down is in a book you can buy called 14,000 Things to be Thankful for. 14,000 things.

Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not any one of his benefits. In the history of the church, there was a great hymn writer, a great songwriter named Frances Havergill. And she did something like that.

What she would do is each day at the end of the day, she would get the calendar and she would write on the calendar a few things she was thankful for, a few things that she was grateful for. It became a great blessing in her life. And she eventually wrote a famous song of the church, a song called Count Your Blessings.

Let me read some of the words she wrote. She wrote, When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does your cross seem heavy you are called to bear? Count your blessings, every doubt will fly, and you will be singing as the days go by.

Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God has done. Bless the Lord, oh my soul.

And forget not any one of his benefits. Count your blessings. A few years ago there was a pastor named Jack Hinton from back in North Carolina and he was invited to go and do some ministry in a leper colony in Tobago.

And in one of the evening sessions, it was his responsibility to lead all of the lepers in singing. And he led them in a few songs and then he realized, well, we have time for one more song. So he just said to the group of lepers that were there, he said, Does any of you have a song you want to sing? Well, this lady, she stood up in the back and he hadn't noticed her until that moment.

And when she stood up, man, it just, it really took him back for a second. The only thing about leprosy, you know, it just eats away at the body. And so here was this lady and her, you know, her ears were almost gone and her nose was almost gone and the flesh was being eaten away from her lips.

And she stood up and she raised her hand that had no fingers on it. Anybody have a song you want to sing? She stood up, she raised up her hand and she said, Can we sing the song Count Your Blessings?

That's awesome. Man, I want to be like that.

I don't want to grumble and complain about things I don't have in my life. I want to be like this man here who realized the grace of God and did something about it. Who went and praised the Lord.

I want to be like that leprous woman who said, You know what? I want to sing Count Your Blessings. God, help us to have thankful, grateful hearts. But there's a third and final thing that we can learn from this leprous man who was healed in Luke 17 and that is what we call the result of his gratitude.

The reason for it, he saw the grace of God. The response in it, he went and gave thanks. The result of it, what happened? The only one of the ten who went back, what happened? Verse 19, Jesus said to him, Arise and go your way.

Your faith has made you well. The word well there is an important word. In Greek it means blessed, saved and blessed.

Hey, ten people were healed that day. Only one was saved and blessed. This man got to enjoy a blessing that the other nine did not.

Did you know that there is a special blessing for people who are thankful and grateful? When you're thankful and grateful, it not only blesses God and blesses other people, it actually blesses you. There's something in giving thanks and being grateful that will have an impact, that will have an effect on you. I think this is why the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5.18, In everything give thanks for this is the will of God for you.

God is a blessing God. You know, you read Genesis 1, day one and he blessed it. Day two and he blessed it.

Day three and he blessed it. Day four and he blessed it. I mean, he's a blessing God and he wants you to experience his blessing and goodness in your life.

And it's when you and I are grateful and thankful that not only do we bless God and bless other people, but we are blessed. Now this, by the way, is something that medical science is learning. I always love how science finally catches up with the Bible, right? The Bible tells you to do things all the time because God knows what's good for you, what's best for you, right? And then after a while, you know, science really, medical science figures out, oh my goodness, this is good for you.

Being grateful, being thankful, do you know that's good for you? Medical science is learning that. You can look up an article on WebMD called, listen, called Boost Your Health with a Dose of Gratitude. The subline, if you want to get healthier, be thankful.

Can I just read you a portion of the article? It says, can a grateful heart enhance your health? A growing body of research says, yes. Gratitude as a conscious practice offers a whole host of health benefits. A series of studies show gratitude promotes physical and emotional well-being, improves one's ability to cope with stress, and bolsters positive interaction with other people.

Furthermore, research shows grateful individuals report having more energy and less physical complaints than their non-grateful counterparts, end quote. Gratitude is not only good for your heart, it's good for your health. This man went away blessed because he was grateful and because he was thankful.

He got to experience something that didn't happen to somebody else. There's something about gratitude and thankfulness that has a transforming impact on you and on me. I'm reminded of the story many years ago of a missionary over in China, and it was tough.

And in his missionary work, he was getting very discouraged. In fact, he was depressed. And so he decided to just take a little time away and go and visit one of the other mission stations.

He thought, you know, maybe I can just get a different perspective on things, and maybe the Lord will speak to me. And so he made his way over to another mission station. And when he got there, he went into the dining room to eat, and he looked up.

And on the wall, he saw a sign, and two words changed his life. It was a little sign that just simply said, Try Thanksgiving. Try Thanksgiving.

He went back to his room, and he just, he got down on his knees, and he began to worship the Lord. Lord, I'm sorry that I've been angry and upset and discouraged and depressed about all that's not going on in my life, and I've not been realizing all of the blessings that you bring to me. I just want to worship you and praise you.

And do you know what happened? His perspective in life totally changed. It totally turned around for the person who was thankful and grateful. There's a blessing in it.

There's a special blessing in it. I was reminded of this a couple of weeks ago when we connected with some friends of ours. They're pastors back in Ohio.

For one of their anniversaries, some people got together, and they gave them as a gift a Greek island cruise. And they were having a great time on this island cruise, and they went to this one island called Minas. And when they went into the port of Minas, the particular slip where the boat was supposed to go into, there were two smaller ships on either side, and it was very narrow.

And so the captain, he went down on the deck. He had a walkie-talkie, and he was talking to this person and that person. And it took him almost an hour to maneuver this big cruise ship into this small little slip.

It was quite amazing. And our friends Bill and Harriet, you know, they were standing on the deck watching all this, just tripping out, right? I mean, this is pretty amazing. And when they finally got it in and, you know, roped all down, they just, a group of them, they just began to cheer, you know.

They went back to their room, and Harriet said, you know, she said, I think we should write a thank you note to the captain. She sat down and just wrote a little note. Thank you so much for being such a great captain.

They went to the ship steward, and they said, could you give this to the captain? He said, sure, no problem. A few hours later, there was a knock on their cabin door. It was the steward.

He had an envelope in his hand. He said, this envelope is from the captain. It's for you.

They opened it up. It was a personal invitation to have dinner that night with the captain. The captain usually, you know, ate in his own little special dining room, but that night, he ate with all of the passengers, and he had our friends Bill and Harriet sit right next to him.

And he told them, he said, you know, you're the first people who have ever given me a thank you note for being a captain. Man, and I heard that, and I thought, man, they got a special blessing because they were thankful, because they were grateful. And I thought, man, I want to be like that.

I want to have an attitude of gratitude. That's what we learned from this leprous man who was healed so long ago, to have an attitude of gratitude. What do we learn from this, man? We have learned the reason for gratitude is to see everything in life as a gracious gift from God.

Everything. What do we learn from this man? We have learned the response in gratitude that we ought to have is to give thanks, not just be grateful, but to give thanks. We've learned that the result of gratitude that can happen in your life and my life is the blessing of God.

It's not only good for your heart, it's good for your health. There's a blessing that's there. God help us to have grateful hearts, grateful for so many things, but especially grateful for Jesus Christ.

Back at the Civil War, there was a man who received a draft notice to go into the war. He lived in New York, and when he got the notice, he was quite concerned. His wife had died about a year before that, and he had a few kids and a farm.

He thought, man, if I go off to war, what's going to happen with my kids? What's going to happen with the farm? And there was a young man in the town where he lived who heard about it, and he went over and he said, you know what? I heard about your situation that you got this draft notice. He said, I'll go in your place. So they went down to the draft office, and arrangements were made, and this young man went in the place of this other man.

A few weeks later, a notice came back that that young man was killed in one of the battles, and this farmer, this father, he thought, that was me. He took my place. So he went down to the, you know, the army office, and he said, you know, I'd like to do something for that person who took my place.

He said that when he'd bring his body back, he says, I want to bury him in the village churchyard, and he did. And he had a headstone put on this man's grave, and under his name, he put these words, he died for me. He died for me.

And every week he would go, and he would put flowers on that, that gravestone. He died for me. He died for me.

He died for me. I thought, man, what a picture of Jesus. He died for me.

He died for you. What grateful hearts we ought to have. A wonderful man of God, George Herbert, wrote these words.

I finish with them. A prayer. He wrote, O Lord, you have given us all things richly to enjoy.

We ask of you just one more thing. Give us grateful hearts. Lord, we come this morning with such great gratitude in our hearts for all of your many blessings.

We pause for a moment, Lord, and we think of your provision, our house, our car, our clothes, our job. We think of your protection. We think of the people you've put in our lives.

You are so good to us, so gracious to us. We come, Lord, to give you thanks today. And we know as we do, not only will you be blessed, but we will be blessed.

And you want that blessing for us. Help us, Lord, we pray, to have an attitude of gratitude. And God, we pray for anyone who might be here this morning who does not know Jesus Christ as their Savior and their Lord, who does not have a personal relationship with you, who does not have the assurance that their sins are forgiven and that they're on their way to heaven.

We pray that right now, by your Holy Spirit, you would draw people to you, open up the hearts of those who don't know you, and we'll thank you for it. In Jesus' name, we pray.

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