**A Thankful Heart**

**FBC Albemarle**

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It turns out that Mom was right, but for more reasons than she knew. It may have been when someone gave you a gift or a compliment or extended some act of kindness toward you. Your first impulse may have been to enjoy the good thing that had come your way but your mother's words made clear that your first priority should be to thank the other person.

When Mom taught us to say “thank you,” she didn’t probably think about how it would affect the bottom line of corporations. A recently released 10-year study of 200,000 managers and employees revealed that saying "thank you" in the business world results in bigger profits. When people are thanked for what they do, they are more motivated, and often, their productivity improves. This, of course, translates into more dollars. What's more, those leaders who do the thanking often gain competitive advantage in the workplace because others like them and tend to support their projects.

Not surprisingly, then, business leaders are encouraged to find opportunities to thank everyone from interns and mailroom employees to those farther up the corporate ladder. There is even a business article in which the author provides a list of 28 expressions of gratitude for those leaders who are too "thanksgivingly" challenged to come up with their own -- including such simple phrases as "I'm truly grateful," "Your contribution is important" and "You make my job so much easier."

Of course, laying it all out like that makes it sound like nothing more than a business ploy, disingenuous, or just another practice to boost a company's bottom line. And apparently, there's something to that, for it seems that the expressions of thanksgiving do make the recipients feel good, even if the one extending them is doing it solely for strategic reasons. As long as it sounds sincere, it's effective.

Even if it works in the business world, there is no way to fake it with God. God sees past our façade and looks directly into our hearts. He knows our intentions and will not be manipulated by those who try to “thank” God in order to receive additional blessings.

With Thanksgiving holiday just a few days away, we should examine our hearts to see if we are truly thankful for the blessings in our lives. We should pray as the psalmist said in Psalm 139, “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” Then we should pray as King David prayed in Psalm 51, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Do our “thank you’s” truly come from a grateful heart or do they have ulterior motives?

When we are filled with earnest thanksgiving, we are motivated to worship our God. Worship is the natural response (and the right response) to God’s goodness and faithfulness. Today’s psalm is a reminder to us that everyday should be Thanksgiving. Everyday should be filled with worship because of what God has done for his people. Everyday should be a celebration. But I wonder what people around us see in us and through us? Do people see a thankful heart? Or do they see a person filled with anxiety and selfish motives? Do people notice you living a worshipful lifestyle or do they just see you in worship on Sunday morning?

When we recognize the blessings in our lives, we are compelled to worship God. We understand that though we are not worthy of God’s blessings, He is bountiful in blessings and faithful in his love. Our authentic worship ushers us into God’s presence and reminds us of his goodness. Because God desires a full relationship with each of us, our worship becomes a lifestyle rather than something we do just on Sunday mornings. So, what does a lifestyle of worship look like? Let’s turn to Psalm 100 to find our answer to this question.

First, worship is joyful. “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.” Being filled with joy is more than being filled with excitement and happiness. Excitement and happiness are often circumstantial and momentary. However, being filled with joy is the result of being close to God. Paul says that joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit is only developed in our lives when we are in tune with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Each day, we can live a lifestyle of worship filled with joy because joy is not circumstantial. Even though we might be going through difficult times or simply having a crummy day, we can still be filled with joy because we have an eternal relationship with our Lord. We are filled with the hope of knowing Jesus and the grace of Christ. Paul, while in prison, encouraged the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Phil. 4:4-8) Joy is produced in our lives when we are connected to the vine as Jesus taught in John 15.

So shouting for joy and singing joyful songs should be parts of our worship. However, more than just literal shouts and loud music, worship is about our hearts being filled with joy and being expressed outwardly through our actions.

Not only should our lifestyle of worship be joyful, our worship should be filled with thanksgiving and praise. The psalmist wrote, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.” Being thankful is an attitude of the heart more than a verbal response.

We’ve all been around people that do not have a thankful heart. These people have a sense of entitlement and believe that it’s their world and we just have the privilege of living in it. Verse 5 says, “For the Lord is good and his love endures forever…” It doesn’t say, “For Andy is good and his love endures forever…” We must always remember that God is the giver of all good gifts and not ourselves.

So how do we develop an attitude of thanksgiving? We make it a habit to count our blessings on a regular basis. We take time to recount the blessings in our lives. In every moment of life we have an opportunity to find something worth being amazed by. The more we consciously do it, the more likely it will become a habit that leads to an attitude of thankfulness.

This week, let’s take some time in midst of the hustle and bustle of getting the house cleaned and meal prepared to examine our hearts to be sure we have a lifestyle of worship filled with joy and thanksgiving. Every good gift in our lives is from God and we need to thank God daily and offer our worship to him because he is worthy. Let us give thanks for the Lord is good and his love endures forever.