Attitude of Gratitude: Created for Gratitude
Psalm 95:1-7
Sunday, November 8, 2026

It's now November. We're a few weeks from Thanksgiving. And this is the first Sunday in our Attitude of Gratitude sermon series. And in this series, we're going to talk about living lives of thanksgiving. And in particular, today we're going to explore the question of why we should be grateful. I mean, what, really is there to be grateful for?

And, beyond the obvious answer that the election is over, the answer is simple: gratitude is how we were created to live.

And I think that's what we see in today's scripture. Today's Psalm is one of praise and thanksgiving. Scholars think it was probably written for one of the Hebrew harvest festivals, sort of the ancient Hebrew equivalent of our own Thanksgiving. But instead of eating turkey and watching football with the family, the ancient Hebrews celebrated their Thanksgiving by going to the Temple and singing hymns of thanksgiving and praise to God.

Hymns like this one. So, they sang things like, "O come, let us **sing** to the Lord; let us make a **joyful noise** to the rock of our salvation! **2** Let us come into his presence with **thanksgiving"** (vv 1-2).

And, of course, these psalms of praise and thanksgiving include an explanation of why the people should praise and thank God, as we see in v3: "**3** For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods." In other words, God is God. God is king. God, by his nature, is worthy of thanksgiving and praise.

But that's not all. As the Lord of all, God has created. So, the Psalmist says: "[4] In his hand are the **depths of the earth**; the **heights of the mountains** are his also. [5] The **sea** is his, for he made it, and the **dry land**, which his hands have formed." God created the earth, the mountains, the sea, and the dry land. God is worthy of our thanksgiving and praise not just for who He is, but also because he created the universe and everything in it.

And that "everything" isn't limited to the world around us. It also includes us: "[6] O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, **our Maker**!" In other words, we praise and offer our thanksgiving to God because, among other things, God created us. God gave each one of us the breath of life.

And finally, the Psalmist tells us in v. 7 that God is our good shepherd. He didn't just create us and then leave us to fend for ourselves. He takes care of us. As the Psalmist says in another famous Psalm, he leads us by still waters, he restores our souls. Our God, our creator, our sustainer, loves us.

And so, in this Psalm, we get a sense of what we read elsewhere in scripture—that we have been created to live in God's love. God created us out of God's love to live in a divine, trinitarian, eternal relationship of love with our God. God has sustained us through that love. And God has enabled us to live in that love for all eternity through the life, death, and resurrection of his son Jesus.

There's only one reasonable way for us to respond: worship, praise, and thanksgiving. The Shorter Westminster Catechism—a summary of Presbyterian doctrine--summarizes it this way: "The chief purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

So, thanksgiving and praise isn't just a good thing, it's what we were created for.

Which raises an obvious question, at least to me: why is it so hard? Why does so much of the world live in anger and resentment and bitterness and rage, rather than thanksgiving? Why do so many of us tend to focus on the things we don't have rather than the things we do? Why do we live in fear of the future, worrying that we won't have what we'll need to cope with what's coming instead of thanking God for what He has already given us. Why is that?

And it probably won't come as a surprise to you that I think it's a reflection of our fallen human nature. In our fallen state, life is all about me. It's about taking care of me, looking out for me, and focusing all of my time and attention and resources on me.

And a big manifestation of that fallenness is our consumer culture. We've talked about this before. We live in a culture that's all about selling us stuff. You connect to any kind of media and you're going to be bombarded with ads trying to get you to buy stuff. You drive down the highway and you're going to see billboard after billboard trying to get you to buy stuff.

And what pretty much every one of these advertisements has in common is the intention to make us feel incomplete or inferior; to fill us with FOMO: fear of missing out; to make us feel like we don't measure up; to make us feel like we are pretty much worthless and miserable, but if we'll just buy what they're selling, we'll be complete and fulfilled. Their aim is to keep us focused on what we don't have, instead of what we do have; to keep us in a perpetual low-grade state of **IN**gratitude.

And, as you may have noticed over the last several months, it works the same way with the politicians. So many of the political ads we've recently been exposed to were focused on

telling us that we don't have enough money, we don't have enough protection for our money. We don't have enough security. We don't have enough safety. But if we just vote for them, we'll get all those things and, in the immortal words of Napoleon Dynamite, our wildest dreams will come true.

What it all boils down to is fear; fear of not having enough, fear of not being enough. Our culture breeds and promotes fear. And as miserable as that fear is for us who are living in it, here's the important thing: fear is the opposite of the love we were created for. It's the opposite of the thanksgiving we were created to live in.

So, what's the answer? Well, the apostle John tells us in his first letter: "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). The deeper we go in God's love, the less we will allow ourselves to be sucked into the fear.

And there are a lot of different ways we can go deeper into God's love. One of the most important is spiritual practices; things like prayer, silence, solitude, study of God's word. And one of the most important of these practices is worship, which is just another way of saying thanksgiving. Gratitude is a spiritual practice. Regularly taking stock of all the ways God has blessed us and thanking God for them is a spiritual practice. It's one of the practices, like generosity and prayer, that brings us closer to God. And, in the process, it brings us closer to who we were created to be. Living with an attitude of gratitude actually helps us to become more grateful. Focusing on the good things in our life helps us to see more of God's goodness.

It's kind of like the "blue car" phenomenon. Y'all know about that, right? Let's say you're "hypothetically" thinking about buying an electric blue, second generation Tacoma pickup. Up

until that point, you probably wouldn't have even noticed the blue Tacomas. But suddenly, you're seeing them all over the place. Because you're thinking about them, you see them.

Gratitude works the same way. The more you think about the things you're grateful for, the more things you're able to find to be grateful for.

Which brings us to my last question. What are some practical ways we can practice gratitude? Well, there a lot of things we can do, but I'm going to give you two.

First, pay attention to the messages you're getting from the media. Evaluate them critically. Don't let the advertisers get away with making you focus on what you don't have.

And second, celebrate what you do have. Count your blessings every day. I actually do this every morning and every evening. Focusing on the good stuff—focusing on God's blessings—makes it easier to see them everywhere.

And I would suggest going one step beyond counting. Write them down. There's something about writing a thing down that helps it to stick. That's why we have the post-its out there in the atrium. So, I invite you as you leave, or at any point in the next few weeks, to write down what you're thankful for and then post it so we all can see.