

So that's the Lord, abounding in love, filled with compassion, faithful to you and to generations of your family. So thank You, God, for Your goodness to us. We just choose to worship You. You're worthy of our gratitude and our praise, and we love You Jesus, in Your name, Amen. Alright, go ahead and find your seats for me. So one of our values, one of the things we value very highly at Valley Creek is that we live with a spirit of gratitude. Gratitude, what is that? Well that's the normal response to God's grace in our life. Like, normal response, not a one-time-a-year during-a-holiday response, the normal response to God's goodness and realizing how He's been so good to me and what He's done for me and gratitude is just what pours out from that.

So the normal response to God's grace and that's a big part of who we are because living with a spirit of gratitude isn't just about a day, it's about a lifestyle. It's not about a holiday, it's about an all-the-time reality being like, I'm surrounded by the grace of God and He's so good to me and He's so good to me, and He's so kind and He does abound in love and He has compassion. He's faithful through generations of my life and my family. So we're so thankful that we get to experience the gratitude towards God today as a people and it's important because gratitude is part of how God wants us to live and it's really part of how He wants the entire world to exist and to function. Check this out in Romans, Chapter 1: "They knew God, but they wouldn't worship Him as God or even give Him thanks and they'd be like begin to think of foolish ideas of what God was like as a result, their minds became dark and confused." That's an amazing verse by the way. There's another version of that it says, "their thinking became futile."

Have you ever had a time in your life when you're like, "Man my mind just feels like I can't get it together like I can't figure it out, my words are all jumbled, I just can't like, I'm in a fog all the time." I think it's interesting that we often blame that on our calendars and our schedule, and the things that are kind of going on around us more than we blame it on a lack of worship and a lack of gratitude. So like an external factor of like, "Oh this is happening to me, my mind is getting all, you know all confused, chaotic" versus "I probably am not having an opportunity to just focus on worship and gratitude in my life" and I think we see a lot of that in the world and scientists are just starting to now understand how much gratitude releases like clear-mindedness. We've always known that gratitude was important to like physical health, but there's a ton of studies that are coming I got to read one just recently about how gratitude actually will release the hormones in your mind in a way that will cause, it will almost be like grease on the cogs of a wheel. So in order for the cogs to work in order for the machine of your mind to really work with clarity and with thought, gratitude actually greases that for you.

It helps it run together well and I think that's important because when you have more gratitude, you have more ability to think to cognate and just you have more wisdom. Not only are you smarter, just you're wise, able to adapt, able to be flexible, more capacity, more potential. It's almost like gratitude is really good for us and we're just learning that and figuring out what the Bible is known all along, which is when we don't worship God or give Him thanks, our minds

become dark, our thinking becomes foolish and confused. So it's God's goodness to us to be aware of Him and to be grateful for His goodness. It's one of the main reasons that God tells us to give thanks with a grateful heart.

Recognizing His goodness in our life and God is so good to us that He actually wants us to give thanks to Him, so it will help us. So God is so good to us, He wants us to give Him thanks, so it can help us, so our minds become clear, our thinking can align itself with the kingdom of Heaven, that's just what His goodness is like. The word gratitude is actually derived from the Latin word "gratia" this is pretty cool. So "gratia" is the word in Latin that means grace. So our word for gratitude comes from an original word for grace and that makes a lot of sense because grace is what we have to be so thankful for. Grace is really God's undeserved favor and His supernatural empowerment in every area of our life. His undeserved favor and His supernatural empowerment. His undeserved favor is the internal part of it. It comes to us the favor of God into our life. The supernatural empowerment is the external part what shows to other people how it goes out to others.

So then gratitude has really a couple components. It's got an internal reality and it's got an external reality. The internal reality starts with a humility in my heart. A humility in my heart that says, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who dwell in it. That is, I didn't get here on my own, it's God that got me here. I have a humble enough heart to receive it and say, "Thank You God that it came from You. Thank You that everything I have comes from You. You are the provider of every good thing in my life. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, it comes from the Father." So a humble heart, the internal reality of a humble heart says, "Yeah I just I didn't do this, God did, my life, what I have, my family, any part of health that I have, it all comes from Him," but it takes a humble heart to be able to recognize that a heart that says, "It wasn't on me, it was on Him." It's acknowledging Him as deserving and worthy of our gratitude.

It's also a posture of our mind, heart and mind, that is gratitude is a posture of thinking grateful thoughts. This says live thanks, it could just as quickly say think thanks, which is a lot more fun to say think thanks because think thanks is how we should be, all of our thoughts should be able to just take over in our minds and say "I just have a lot to be grateful for, I'm thankful for and then...." and be able to fill that in in our thoughts. Part of how we live it is that we think it, a posture of our minds, humble heart, a posture of our minds and then an expression. You see, it's important the gratitude is intentionally expressed both to God and to others. Intentionally expressed until I express my gratitude, I'm thankful for or I think it or I speak it to God or I speak it to someone else until I express it in that way. It's only a thought until I actually take time to consider it to dwell on it, to say thank you to God for it. I'm just I'm having a nice thought about some nice things, it's gratitude when it becomes expressed. Psalm 107 has a verse that says "Give thanks to the Lord for He's good." Give thanks to the Lord for He's good. That's a great way to think about expressing it. I give thanks because God is good.

So we want to take a moment right now to actually practice a spirit of gratitude to actually practice, giving thanks, a humble heart, a posture of the mind and expression of gratitude. When you came in, you got a card, go ahead and take that and grab a pen, it looks like this, go ahead and pull out that card and grab a pen because we want to take a little bit of time right now to do exactly that we want to express our gratitude. On the back of this, there are 10 spaces. So I'm going to give you 5 minutes to begin to consider and write down just 10 things you're thankful for. Sometimes it's harder than you think that it is because we spend so little time dwelling on such things. So little time letting our minds go to all the things that are instead of all the things that are not. So little time thinking about what we have instead of what we don't have. So it's important to go through an exercise like this, so 10 minutes to begin to write down just 10 things you're thankful for. If it's difficult to start, just start with the simple things; I woke up today, I got to come to church, I have provision, I ate meals this week and then let that move your mind into deeper and deeper areas of gratitude for what God has done in your life and for who He's been to you. A humble heart, a posture of the mind and an expression of gratitude, 5 minutes may we begin to write down what we're thankful for.

Okay, so that was 10 of what could be about 10,000. For some of you, I bet that was really easy and you're thinking I need a bigger card and for others you might have stretched a little bit. Man, I'd encourage you, the more that we do that the easier it is to do. The more that we practice it, the more that you can take it on, kind of with every thought begins to be a thought of gratitude, every moment begins to be expressed in gratitude and so we're really just practicing our faith today by saying we're going to do something here together, like you can do all the time. I'd encourage you, make use of this exact thing like, on a weekly basis. Take time, write it down, speak to the Lord about it. Let all the things you have to be thankful for, begin to cover over and take over the things that you're not. All the things that you have to be thankful for begin to be a louder voice in your heart and your mind than the things that you feel like you're missing or haven't happened.

So the next thing we want to do is we want to take communion together. So I'm going to invite our teams to come forward because communion is one of the very best ways to let gratitude build in our hearts, humble hearts, a posture of the mind and an expression of our thankfulness to God. Communion is for anybody who's put their faith in Jesus and so if that's you, you're welcome to take communion here at Valley Creek. We'd love to experience that with you because communion reminds us of all that we have to be thankful for, all that we have in Jesus to be thankful for. It represents His finished work, what He's done and what He continues to do. What He's done when He finished the work in His death, burial, and resurrection what He continues to do as we take communion and He reminds us of fresh grace today.

I was re-reading in Luke Chapter 22 where Jesus took communion with his disciples and I was really struck this time because I read something I hadn't remembered reading before. When He takes the communion with his disciples, one of the things He says is, "When I take this cup, I will not take it again until I enter the kingdom." He says, "I will not take it again until I enter the

kingdom," that is, "I won't drink of the cup again," but what He didn't say is, "You won't do it until you enter the kingdom." He said, "I will," because He knew it was about to happen in the next 24 hours that He'd be taken by Roman authorities and He'd be hung on a cross until He was dead, buried, and then He'd rise again in three days, but He didn't say "you won't take it again," because from the time that Jesus put the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven from the time that the curtain of the temple was torn in two, the kingdom opened up and it's never been closed again. The kingdom was available and it's still available. The kingdom was a reality and it still is a reality right now today as we choose to take communion together.

So for Jesus that was His last time on earth to take it. For this, this is one of many times that we get to remember what Jesus has done with a heart of gratitude and I'm so thankful for that. As we were writing on the cards and even as I prepared to talk with you guys today I do sense that there's some places in your heart that are hurting and I know this time of year there's some places that represent loss of a family member or of memories or of expectations. I'm going to believe by faith that as we get ready to take communion right now that the healing power of Jesus is going to come and heal some of those places that feel embittered and broken and hurting and maybe you just feel a little lost right now, may you be found in Jesus' name, maybe your heart feels a little sore and it's really hard to write down ten things, may you be filled with fresh grace in Jesus name.

Maybe it's been a really hard start to the holiday season because of who's not here and how it doesn't look. May you be reminded of what Jesus did and the power of His finished work in Jesus' name. So on the night he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and He said, "This is like My body it's going to be broken for you. I'm going to be broken so that you can be made whole." Right before He did it, He gave thanks to His Father in heaven and then He broke it, and then He reminded His disciples. He reminded His disciples of what He was about to do, and He said "Every time you eat of it, may you remember what I've done for you." Let's take the bread together. And the same way, He took the cup He said, "This is a cup of a new agreement between God and mankind. No longer is it going to be based on what you can do or can't do, who you think you are or who you think you're not, it's about what I'm going to do, who I am, the work that I've finished, what I'm going to do for the forgiveness of your sins and to usher in a new reality of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven."

"So every time you take of this cup remember My blood, the sacrifice made, and how I'm making all things new." Let's take it together. So thank You, Jesus, for Your goodness to us, for a chance to even remember You and be reminded of all that we have to be grateful for, we're so grateful, we're so grateful God, I'm so grateful. Thank You Jesus that every time we take communion, it's fresh grace in our life, so because of fresh grace we can have fresh gratitude. Because of fresh grace, we can have a fresh thankfulness in our hearts and our minds. So that's what we do right now, we're filled with a gratitude towards You and what You've done, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Right so here's what we're going to do now, this is going to be kind of fun. We're going to take one more step, in just a moment I'm going to invite you to stand, I'm going to invite you to take your card and bring it right down here to the platform and set it on the platform as a sign of sacrifice, as a symbol of gratitude, as a moment with Jesus, a kingdom moment with Jesus. To come on down front, set it right here as an expression of all that you had to be thankful for. You can come with your family, you can come on your own, whatever you want to do, but I invite you to stand up as the worship team leads us in this final song and begin to display all that we have to be thankful for. Jesus we're so grateful, Jesus You're so good and Jesus we express that gratitude to You right now.