

Well, it is a great weekend to be thankful. It's a great weekend to remember who God is and what He's done. It's a great weekend to live with a spirit of gratitude. So before we continue, can I just tell you, God's been so good. Hasn't He been good? Hasn't He been good to you? Hasn't He crowned your year with goodness? Hasn't He carried you like a father carries the child? Hasn't He protected you? Hasn't He surrounded you? Hasn't He given you every gift that you need, everything you need for your life? Hasn't He been just so good? See, one of our values at Valley Creek is we want to live with a spirit of gratitude. We want to do everything we do with the spirit of gratitude, this sense of gratefulness that wells up inside of us, this sense of thankfulness that's at the forefront of our thoughts and our interactions and our praise and our worship, a gratitude for who God is, for His goodness. You see, living with a spirit of gratitude is just simply recognizing that gratitude is the normal response to the grace of God in my life.

Like when I've experienced the grace of God, gratitude is what overflows from me. Check it out in Thessalonians 5:16, what it says about a spirit of gratitude, not just as a one-time event, as a lifestyle. Look at this. It says, "Rejoice always, pray continuously, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Sometimes you'll hear people say, I just want to know what God's will is for my life. You know what this says? His will for your life is living with a spirit of gratitude. His will for your life is to like pray continually, to actually rejoice always and to give thanks all the time. Sometimes we make it way more complicated than it needs to be. Like God's will for your life is just to have a grateful heart, to live with this kind of sense of gratitude that wells up inside of you for all that God is and all that God has done

So then what is this spirit of gratitude? What does it mean to live thankful? Well, the first thing I think is this, that a spirit of gratitude is just humility expressed. It's a humility expressed because it says I recognize I'm not the owner of my life. Everything I have and everything that's in front of me, it comes from God. He's the owner of my life. And so in humility, I want to express a level of ownership conveying to Him that He leads it, He owns it, He has it in His possession. Everything that I have and everything that I am, it comes from God. It's just a humility expressed when I have a grateful heart. In Luke chapter 17, Jesus tells a story about men that had leprosy. Leprosy is this horrible skin disease that would keep you separated from society. And so there are 10 lepers that cry out to Jesus and they say, 'Master, have pity on us.' See, they knew that Jesus could do what he said he could do. And so they believed it and they cried out to him.

And he looked at them and he said, okay, here's what we're going to do. Go ahead and show yourself to the priest. And it says, "As they went, they were healed." But then it says that one of them returned back when he recognized what had happened to him and he had a spirit of gratitude. And the passage says that he threw himself down at Jesus's feet. Humility expressed. He threw himself down at Jesus's feet. And Jesus looked at that man and said, where's the other nine? Where was 90 percent of this miracle? There's only 10 percent in front

of me, one out of 10 returned. And he looked at the man and said, did none of them come back? And he's like, no, it's just me. I came back to say thanks. And Jesus looks at him and says, rise from like being on your face, humbly expressing your gratitude, rise, your faith has made you well. And in that moment his gratitude unlocked a wholeness, a salvation, a completeness that the other nine didn't experience.

The other nine experienced a healing of their body. He experienced the healing of his heart, he experienced a healing of his whole self. Humbly expressing gratitude led him to a breakthrough he wouldn't otherwise never known. So then a spirit of gratitude is just humility expressed. A spirit of gratitude also honors God for who He is and what He's done in His ownership of my whole life. You see, when I honor God with gratitude I just say, my life is not my own, it was purchased with a high cost. Jesus purchased my life. He's the one in control of it. Listen to some of these ways the Scripture even talks about. I'm just going to speak these out over you. Listen to how much ownership God has in our life. Listen to how much He's given. "Everything comes from you." "we've only given you what comes from your hand." "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." "The world and all its people belong to him." "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above, coming from the father of the lights." God says about himself, "For all the animals in the forest are mine. I own the cattle on a thousand hills."

Everything that we have, right thinking, right living, a clean state and a fresh start comes from God by way of Christ Jesus. So then a spirit of gratitude just honors God for that ownership, for who He is, for what He's given us. It's all His. Thank you God for who you are, for what you've done, for what you've given us. It's all yours. When I live with a spirit of gratitude I live with a spirit of honor. I live with a posture of honor, of thanking God for what He's done. So it's humility expressed, it's a posture of honor. And then finally, a spirit of gratitude just keeps our heart soft.

You see, a spirit of gratitude gives me a soft heart. It's really the antidote to a spirit of entitlement. And man, there is a spirit of entitlement in the world right now. There's a spirit of discontent in the world right now. There's a spirit of I deserve, I should have gotten, it should have worked out this way. And so what gratitude does it keeps my heart soft. I think one of the scariest things of this past season is the level of discontent that's crept into most of our lives in some way or another. So a spirit of gratitude starts to keep our heart soft because discontentment can make my heart hard a spirit of gratitude softens those hard places because the discontentment inside of me could start to really harden my heart. There's actually a passage in Hebrews 3 that says, "Don't harden your heart like they did in the rebellion." What's it talking about? It's saying that way back when, when the Israelites left Egypt and they had to follow Moses and leave their life of slavery that they honestly lived with a hard heart of discontentment, a hard heart of entitlement.

So much so that they would say things like, you gave us the wrong food. Why do we have to leave this place? Our leadership stinks. What's going on? We wish we could go back. And it began to harden them on the inside. Can I tell you? I think that's happening across society. I think it's happening in so many hearts right now that it's the goodness of God to give us a time and a place in a weekend like this to let gratitude soften what the world's trying to harden, your heart, to remind you of all that God has done of who He is. So gratitude keeps my heart softened. Parents, you know if you see entitlement in your own kids you want to like get that out of there as fast as possible. Like I see that spirit of Talmud, go mow the lawn or start a soup kitchen. I don't even care, just go. And you see it and you like respond to it when you see it like in your children.

Okay, what about when it's in you? What about when it starts to show its face, it rears its head inside of you? See, a spirit of gratitude keeps my heart softened. It allows me to not harden my heart like they did way back when to remember what God has done to remember who He is. So a spirit of gratitude, the normal response to the grace of God in your life, it's humility expressed, it honors God and it helps keep your heart soft. And that is what we're doing today. So I'm going to invite you to experience something altogether. Go ahead and take out that card that you received when you came in. You got this card that just says "thankful" on the front of it. I invite you to grab a pen. On the back side of this card, it is blank. It's an open space and today we're all going to write the same thing at the same time.

We'll make it easy. We're all going to write this, God, would you create in me a spirit of gratitude? God, would you create in me a spirit of gratitude? Even humbly asking Him to go first and creating you that spirit to remind you of His goodness, to be the one that helps draw you to his grace. That's a great way to start. Even that is humble to have to write it down. Even that honors God to have to write it down. Even that starts to soften your heart as you write it down. God, would you create in me a spirit of gratitude? Take a pen, write that down right now.

See, I believe by faith that even as you write that down, as you take a moment and just write -- we all do it together, right? God, would you create in me a spirit of gratitude? Everyone, all together at the same time, that prayer, that willingness, that desire to actually live with the spirit of Gratitude, can you imagine what that will do when it goes through each of us as individuals and across our whole church family all at once? The humility, the honor, the softening of our hearts. That's the goodness of God. And to finish out our special time today, we get to do something that I love and we haven't gotten to do in a long time. And that is, we get to take communion together. So as our people begin to rise to pass out communion, I want to invite you that communion is simply for those that have said yes to Jesus and it's a reminder of who Jesus is and what he's done and so you're welcome to take communion with us today if that's true for you.

So communion is the perfect way to finish our kind of thankful weekend, our gratitude weekend because communion is simply a recognition and a reminder of who Jesus is and what he had done. And what I think is fascinating is that the word in the Greek in the New Testament for thank you is actually the word that we understand or we connect to the word communion, it's the word eucharisto. You might remember the old word for communion is the word eucharist. That's because it actually means literally thank you in Greek. That is communion means thank you and thank you is to commune with God, to commune with Him, to thank Him for who He is and what He's done and all that He's given us in our life.

And there's actually a story when two guys are walking down the road with Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, and they didn't recognize him. And it was after he's resurrected and they were talking amongst themselves about all that had occurred in the previous season. They were recalling how things had played out over the last few days. And really they're surprised by what had happened and thinking that Jesus was gone. And as they talked, Jesus himself started to walk with them down the road. And they didn't recognize it at first. They didn't have eyes to see what was happening. And he talked and he spoke to them all about who he was and what he had done and what he had accomplished when he went to the cross and through his resurrection via the prophets but they didn't actually recognize it was Jesus. He was talking to him all about Scripture and who he -- you know, what the prophecies were about him. And it says that once they got to the home that they were at and they invited him into dinner, Jesus broke bread and gave thanks.

And at once their eyes were opened. That is when they took communion, when they had that breaking of bread moment, when they had that gratitude moment, that giving thanks moment something broke through, something broke off. Their eyes were opened and they were able to see the resurrected Jesus fully for who he was fully for his goodness in their life. At that moment, everything changed for them. I just believe by faith that as we choose to take communion together, that our eyes will be opened. As we choose to engage this with grateful hearts, our eyes will be opened. As we choose to honor God and come humbly before him and live with a soft heart, our eyes will be open.

We'll see the resurrected Jesus for who he is and for what he's done. So grab your communion elements there. Have you been waiting for a breakthrough? Have you needed an opening of your heart, of your eyes? Have you been wondering about the goodness of God in your life? Can I just tell you, this is the goodness of God in your life. This is the reminder of who Jesus is and what he's done. 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, broken so that you could be made whole. And every time you take the bread, every time you commune with me and give thanks, do this in remembrance of me. Let's take the bread together.

In the same way, Jesus took the cup. He said, this cup is like a new promise between God and man for the forgiveness of sins no longer will you have to work for your forgiveness, I've already

"Spirit of Gratitude"

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done that. No longer will you have to try to seek forgiveness of your own merit or your own ability or your own your own goodness, you can lean into my goodness, into my forgiveness, into what my spilled blood means for you. So he took the cup and he said to them, this is it. This is the forgiveness of sins for you and they took it together. So Jesus, thank you for all that you've done, for who you are, for your goodness in our life and for your finished work. We do not take it lightly.

We do not forget. We choose to remember today with a spirit of gratitude everything you've done and who you are. We love you, Jesus. In your name.