

“Being Thankful”

By Brother Parrish Lee

Sunday, November 27th, 2016

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, everyone. My, my. You know, in the old days, in the old days, you know, before we had TV and internet or even radio, in the old days, down in the parts where they didn't have a whole lot, this was just the introduction service. I've heard tell that they would have it, and they might have had a little break, but some of them would just keep going. They didn't need a whole lot of people, when it was time to come present yourself before the Lord... You know, I can't talk about that. We've got something to do. You know what? The Bible says the Lord inhabits the praises of His people. He inhabits that. Isn't it wonderful when God inhabits? You don't ever want that to go away, you don't ever want that presence to stop.

Well, actually, today, if you've been to our services after Thanksgiving for the last few years, you may remember that we have a time where other people in the congregation come and say thanks. Other people come, and they give their thanks and their presence before the Lord. And, that's what we're doing today. We're actually sharing the pulpit with our congregation—certain people in our congregation, today. To start off, we'd like to ask three people in particular. We'd like to ask Brother Damien, if he would come, our Sister Gloria, right after him, and, after that, our Sister Ashley, if they would come, and bring thanks before the Lord. Could we give them a praise, as they come?

Damien: Good morning. I just have a few things that I definitely want to go over, but, I thank God, I thank God for, first of all, for life. Had God not, obviously, I wouldn't be here. I thank God for, every day, giving me a chance to redeem myself. When I wake up, and I pray, you know, God lets me know that, “This is your opportunity to, if you haven't gotten everything right, to make things right.” I've got a few Scriptures that I wanted to read today. I want to make sure I read them this time, because last time, I just kind of... Okay, so, the first Scripture I want to talk about today—I mentioned thanking God for life. I thank God, also, for allowing me to have a soft heart, a softness in my heart and to have a willing soul. The Bible says that we battle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). All right, the next Scripture I want to talk about, it's in John 6:29, and, as I was thinking about this, I was thinking about how God—and I'm just kind of fighting back the tears because; if it happens, I'm sorry. I'm trying; I've kind of turned into a crier, every time I read the Word... All right, in John 6:29, it says, “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” And, I believe that I have to work at it, every day, because there's times that it's hard to believe that certain things happen; I've had people at work talk to me about, “Hey, do you really believe in Noah's Ark, and all that stuff?” I said, “If that didn't happen, then none of this is possible, because everything goes in a line. From Genesis to Revelation, it's a story. The next Scripture that I just wanted to mention is John 2:27-29. Of course, a lot of people know about Doubting Thomas: “Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” The third thing I'm thankful for is God saving me. In Acts, obviously, the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus gave the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19, He said, **“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”** Then, we go in Acts, where Peter was speaking, that verse matches that, Acts 2:38, they were conflicted in their heart, they were pricked in their heart, and they said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be

baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And, I’m just thankful that I had the opportunity of being born again. These are the words of eternal life. I can’t—there’s nothing else in this world that we need, you know? There’s a lot of wants in this world, and I’m just thankful that God has saved me, and I’m really working the field to be a testimony to others. Let your light so shine... I’m trying to be a testimony. I told Parrish before, that I never, personally, you know, like Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), you know, talked to somebody, and they say, “Hey, here is water, what hindereth me to be baptized?” “Oh, oh, let’s do it!” I’ve never personally had that. I’ve had that—I’ve been a branch, I’ve been a part of the work. God showed me that. “You’ve done your part.” I have to be a testimony. So, every single day, I’m waking up, I’m living for Him. Okay, the fourth thing I’m thankful for is God being my example. Mister Lee kind of shared it before, Jesus being our example, when He was born, being baptized, when He went and saw John. And, John the Baptist wanted Him to baptize him, and Jesus said, “Suffer it to be so now...” Help me out, Mister Lee, I’m kind of drawing a blank right now. “...for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” So, being that example. I’m off the milk, I know that (1 Peter 2:2). It may be puree, but I’m getting close to meat (1 Corinthians 3:2). I thank God. And, after Jesus was baptized, He went and fasted, and He was tempted of the devil. That—Pastor Paine was mentioning that. Jesus showed us, by example, how we can overcome the devil, and there is no excuse for me. I know that. I’ve learned more in the past year than I have ever known, and I thank God. I thank God for strengthening me. The Bible says trust in the Lord with all thine heart (Proverbs 3:5). In Proverbs 3:6, “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” So, if I’m not acknowledging Him, I can’t wonder why my paths are going this way and that way. And, I also have to seek. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). The last thing I kind of want to share is in John 13:34. There’s a lot there that was going through my mind, and I really wanted to talk about: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another...” I think this one thing that, you know, that God has blessed me to have that charity, to be able to talk to people, and I’m still working on it, because, things happen. Like Parrish said, “You know what? Somebody pop you in the head, you want to pop them back. Somebody say something to you, or you see something;; ‘Hey, I got to get to work, I’ve got to do this and that.’” Like I said. “...as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” I thank God for everything. One of the biggest things that I always think about is life in general. Life is like, to me, a test. An open-book test, right? It’s an open-book test, because, at the end, once we’re all done, once we’re dead. A lot of people talk about, “Okay, when the Lord returns,” but, if you die, that’s it. You don’t have any other chances to go back and do anything, so, today is the day that you have to make sure that you are following, seeking, trusting, going out getting people saved. I love the Lord. Thank you.

Gloria: Good morning, church. I’m kind of new at this, so please be patient. When Parrish asked me to say a few things about what I was thankful for, I thought, “Where do I start? There’s so many of them.” I thank God every day that He wakes me up, that He gives me the chance to worship Him. I’m thankful that He died on the cross, so that I might live. I’m thankful for the little things, the mountains and the streams and the birds, the flowers. And, I’m thankful for Parrish, and all of you. I’m thankful for my daughter; she’s always there when I need her, and my son-in-law, Bill, although I don’t know if he wanted me to mention him, but he’s always been there for me, and he’s done a lot for me. I’m thankful that God brought me back to where I am, today. I pray to Him every day. I have daily obstacles I go through, working on just an inning. I’m just glad that I’m here. And, here, I’ll be here; I feel like my family, you’re my family, now. I just want to thank Him for dying for me.

Ashley: I’ve got a bit of a serious face, because I’m a crier, too. I’ve got tissues, though, so I’m ready. We’re thanking God, too, right? Thanking Him all the time. I’m going to share a little of my testimony, and, then, I’ll share some Scriptures, and kind of, how they relate to where I’m at in my life.

So, I was born to a mother—there were three of us, and she raised us on her own. So, I was abandoned by my father at the age of two, that I remember, and that left some big holes inside of me. And, so, I developed this attitude of, “Well, if nobody’s going to take care of me, then I’m going to do it, myself.” And, well, that left me lonely and desolate and finding so many different ways to cope with the pain that I felt inside, which brought me here. Here I received hugs that I didn’t know I needed, relationships I never knew I would have, a husband that is so encouraging and uplifting. But, the truth is, I’m thankful for that pain that brought me through to the Lord. I’m also thankful, because, if I didn’t experience the things that I went through, I could not relate to any of you. I have developed such special relationships with people here, because I relate to you. Because God so fit to say, “You know what, Ashley? Just because the world said that, ‘You’re not good enough, and that you’re not going to be anything, and I’m going to rip everything you have from you at a very young age,’” God said, “No, and I’m going to use that. And I’m going to use you in a mighty way!” I mean, to minister to these youth—I’m sorry—I often say, “If somebody said, ‘I believe in you. I love you. I know you; and I love you, still,’ where would I be?” But the truth is, I’m right where I need to be. Because I can say that to you, and you, and you, and all of you, “I love you.” And God loves me, which is unconditional, which is in spite of what the world is doing, and trying to take you from. I know for a fact that that is a lie, and that God is going to use each and every one of you, no matter if you’re young, or no matter if you’re older. There is a plan.

So, I have a Scripture: In Romans—let me make sure I have it right—Romans 5:3: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4)And patience, experience; and experience, hope:” I have hope. I have tribulation; without the tribulation, I couldn’t even experience the true hope, the mercy, the grace, and the love that is unwavering in God. I would never had said that I’m thankful that my dad left me when I was a little girl, but, guess what? I’ve got a great husband and father to my children, because I felt what that was like, okay? And I allowed God to use that to guide me to the right path. And, if we just say, “God, what would you have me to do?” But, be humble, because, in that pain, in that brokenness, that’s where God will meet you. You don’t have to check all the boxes to meet God, God was already there. God was with you through all of those things, and He’s never going to leave you, nor forsake you. And I know that to be a fact, because I’m not perfect. And the list goes on. So, I am so thankful for those trials, those tribulations that will bring me closer to God.

And then I have another Scripture: Colossians 3:1-2, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” If I am constantly allowing Satan to distract me, allowing Satan to muddy me up with the things that he says about me, or does, in my circumstances, then I’m not setting my affections on things above. Of course I’m going to be discouraged, and I’m going to be weighed down. But, as soon as I lift my eyes to Heaven, and I say, “God, I know You’re there. One day, all this will be worth it. Then, and only then, will I be able to continue in that hope, and in that trial, and in that walk. So, thank you for letting me share.

In just a moment, we’re going to have Brother Greg and Sister Alma share, but, before we do, I didn’t get a chance to introduce—but, it’s not really introducing; he’s a brother, he’s been here many times—just going to ask him to come up and share. Brother Jay Hunemuller. He used to talk about his testimony to me, but I think I’ll just let him share. Brother Jay?

Jay: I appreciate Brother Parrish, and I could say, definitely, the same thing about him. I’m thankful—well, he asked, what does Jesus mean to me? And He’s the lover of my soul. That’s what He is to me at all times, and, when we lose sight of that, when we lose—you know, because we’re all human, we all get distracted by things, sometimes, but the truth is it’s what He is, it’s what He does. He wants the best for us. Spiritually, He wants us to be with Him now, so we can be with Him later. Yeah,

and that's the way we get to live our lives. So, that's what I'm thankful for, I'm thankful just to be loved by God and to love God, and that I have—you know, that it extends to His people. Because, you know, He gave two commandments: Love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself. You can't see God, but you can see your neighbor. So, that's really the only thing we can see with each other, is that we love each other, and God sees all the rest. So, thankful, blessed, and I appreciate everyone here; I love you all.

Thank you, Jay, we appreciate you.

Greg: I was asked to share what I'm thankful for, and, needless to say, it's been said a few times already, there's a whole lot; there's a whole bunch of things to be thankful for. But, just to grab a few—and the way this happened, Parrish asked me—was it Thanksgiving? No, the day before Thanksgiving—and, then, so, I'm all happy about Thanksgiving, and, then we heard about Jesse happened, and I'm thinking, "Hmmm. Wow, so, Satan tries to throw a curveball at what we're thankful for, huh? Hmmm. So, okay, me, like so many others, we'll just be thankful through a few tears, you know? And, that's how it is. I mean, this—life happens, but we are to always remain thankful. According to the Scriptures, we should always be thankful. And, so, it does make it a little harder to think about what you're thankful for, but, then, all you have to do is look around a little bit. And, what I'm really thankful for is baptism in Jesus' name, because the Bible says we get the Holy Ghost. It's a promise, that we get the Holy Ghost comes with baptism in Jesus' name. When we get the Holy Ghost, that means every one here, that's been baptized in Jesus' name, has got that Spirit, the Holy Spirit, living inside of them. So, when we're congregating like this, God is all around us. He's all around us out there, but He's all around us in this ministry. If we would just pay attention to one another, and listen to what each other has to say, you could learn a whole lot. I've learned a whole lot from brothers and sisters in the ministry. I came here off the street; I was a drug addict, and homeless, and seeking God, and God took that one out of the three and sent me to this ministry, and the elders in this ministry I've learned so much from. I mean Philip, and Ken Avellino, and Brother Rich Brand, I mean, just, wherever I turned, it was a piece of God here, and a piece of God there because they've got God's Spirit living inside them. And, I was even ridiculed when I first came to the ministry, because, where they were at, at the time. I went to the altar, I was coming there—that's when the building was open every day of the week—and I was coming inside, and I said, "I don't want anyone to talk to me." I went straight to the altar about this, because I wanted to make sure I came to the right place. And, when I got right to the altar, Bill Blackwell stopped me. Some of you don't know him, but he's a brother in our ministry, I think he's in Norfolk right now. And he says, "Hey, Greg," and it was like God sent him to meet me at the altar. "You know, people are going to try to knock you down for your stand in Christ," and he was answering all the prayers that I was going to pray about. Wow! And then, after that, all of that, then he says, "Do you want to have a prayer?" And I said, "That's what I came here for." And, you know, I started realizing, God knows, God knows everything we're going to go through, and He's beckoning us, calling us closer to Him, calling us. So, I'm just thankful that God put me in a ministry where people are serious about Him. Like I said, young or old—I hope you youngsters are listening, too. If you just look around, God is there. If you just go and talk to Ken Avellino, God is in him; he's got something to say. Or Octavio, or just—you may just look around, look around you. Ask somebody, or listen to what they have to say, because it could just be God's Spirit, speaking through them, to you, and, if you would listen, you'll learn and grow. I'm just so thankful, and I do have a Scripture. It's in 1 Corinthians 15:57. It says: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And, along with that, I heard one preacher say, or, it was in a song, I think, they said, "I read the last chapter of the Book—I read the last chapter and the last verse of the Book"—which is the Bible—"and, we win." And, if we overcome, like the Bible says, and the Bible shows us how to overcome, we

win. We win, and it's a good feeling to win. If you just stick with Jesus. In the end—we're going to go through a lot of things—but, in the end, we win. Amen.

Alma: Well, first of all, I'm thankful for that man, because he's my husband. There's a lot of things that I'm thankful for, but, going back to before I was baptized. Because I didn't have a terrible upbringing, but I did go through some things, and one of the things was, in a way, I felt like God was calling me, because I used to watch the TV a lot, and I looked at all the things that were happening in the world, and, to me, it was hurting me. I felt the pain that everybody else was feeling, and I felt miserable. And, I didn't know what to do with all of that. But, when I came to this ministry, twelve years ago, that's when I discovered what I can do if I just pray about it. Prayers, whether they're answered or not by God, God answers to all of those. And, I know, because, recently, I was praying for God to give me the strength to share with people, and He has given me that. And, I prayed to feel that joy when I first got baptized, and He had given me back that joy. And, I prayed that when I share with people, that I would not be so afraid that I can't speak, and He has given me that. So, if you think that praying, it's not happening right away, and it's not working, it is working. Because God is listening to it, but He's getting you ready, He's getting you ready to receive that blessing. He's not going to just throw it at you and you're not ready for it, and then you miss it. You have to wait for it. And, I used to be really patient; I lost my patience at one point, and I have to learn to be patient again. So, it's like you have to learn, every day, everything you already knew. And, I'm also thankful for my mom and my dad. My mom doesn't know how to read and write, and she's not the most knowledgeable person, but, with what God has given her, she has been able to teach me what I needed to learn, so I love my mom, no matter what, because she's the perfect mom that God gave me. And I love my dad. And he used to be really strict. He's not as much, now, but he's still strict, but he's the perfect dad for me, because what God gave him, the ability that he has, he was able to upbring me, and that's why I'm the woman that I am now. And, even though he is who he is, I still love him, and I still show respect, because, if I don't show respect towards my parents, how am I going to respect God? It's like what the Bible says: Honor thy father and thy mother (Exodus 20:12) and that's why I will do it. It's what God told me to do, and that's why I'm going to continue to do it. I'm thankful for my husband. I'm thankful for my daughter Jailed, and, I don't know if you guys know this, but that girl knows more of the Bible than I do. And, I'm thankful for that, because that means that God is already shaping her to be the woman that she's going to be when she grows up, when she becomes twenty, twenty-five, thirty. And, it's going to help her in her career, it's going to help her in her social life, it's going to help her, even in this ministry. And, He has, God has a blessing for all of us, and I'm thankful that He has put me in this ministry with all of you because, now, all of you are my family. You're my brothers and my sisters. And, you are there for me, and I'm there for you. So, if you need anything from me, I give thanks to God that I'm here and able to be there for you.

So, I guess we already know: the message has already been preached. Somebody said I thank Him for strengthening me, and for softening my heart. Somebody said I thank Him for just bringing me back. Somebody said I thank Him for everything He's brought me through, and everything He has brought me to. Somebody said I'm thankful for God's deliverance and where He's brought me to, because right here is where God wants to use me. Somebody else said I'm thankful for Him giving me the strength to share and the joy of my salvation. And I'm thankful that God listens, and answers, and acknowledges to me that He's in attendance to my prayers. And, so, our theme for the month was from Mark 8:6 "And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people." Saints, prayer is extremely important, and prayer has its place. According to the Bible, it says that we are to pray without ceasing. Praise and worship have their place. Extremely important part of our make-up, our Christianity, our faith, and, truly, our salvation, because, as the Bible says, He inhabits the praises of His

people. Even evangelism has its place, for the Bible says that the Lord Jesus Himself sent them out two by two. And study, yes, studying has its place, for the Bible says that is one of the ways that you prove that—we show ourselves approved unto God. But, from the Book of First Thessalonians—I think about three of y'all quoted it. It says:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

So, yes, we thank God in our prayers, and, yes, we thank God in our worship. We thank God in our fellowship. We thank God in our evangelism. And, we thank God in our study. And, yes, we thank God in our troubles. We thank God in our trials. We thank Him for the mountains, and we thank Him in the valleys, we thank Him for all the things He's brought us through. As our sister sang, if we never went through those things, we wouldn't know how thoroughly God could solve them, we wouldn't know the extent, personally, of what God could do. And, the only Scripture I want to share, really is:

Luke 17:17-19 *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*

Arise, go your way, because your faith has made you whole. Whole, not just meaning healed, whole also, here, means, saved. And it also means, made you safe. With faith, hath not just made you healed, but it also has taken and made you safe. In other words, you now have One that is over you, showering you, protecting you, and with you, because of your faith that you thanked God. So what would be like to be healed, and not made whole? What would it be like for God to just take away the ailment in your physical body and your soul be crying out and hungry and malnourished? What would it be like to the God did not finish the work He wanted to do in our lives because we didn't finish thanking Him for what He had already done for us? You see, true love, true love, and I'm about to close, true love doesn't look for a return. True love does not expect stuff coming back. Because the Bible says that charity seeketh not her own. The true thanks, the true thanks is the acknowledgement of what has just happened. That is the acknowledgement of a blessing of such—of something that was here. True thanks or true gratitude is accompanying real true love. And, in closing, God has just set it up right, He set it up so perfectly, so we would like to give true thanks to the One who first gave the true love. True love on Calvary's Hill. That is simple, let us give the Lord true thanks.