

“If We Remain Thankful We’ll Never Go Wrong”

By Chris Ulrich

Sunday, November 16th, 2014

Remain standing, if you would, please. Let’s bow our heads in a word of prayer, please. God, we just thank You this morning for Your Word; we thank You for Your Truth, and, God, for Your love. We just thank You, God, for this time of thanks, because there’s so many things throughout the year, God... we concentrate this month on this particular theme, but we just wanted, Lord God, to have that same mind throughout the year, God. We want to continue to love You, and worship You, and do what Your Word says to do, God. We ask for the message right now, God, that I would get out of the way, Lord God, that Your message would be delivered, God. That we would preach sound doctrine, God, that we would live sound doctrine, and that we would uphold what You would have us to uphold, and that we would be that testimony, God, that You would have us to be. I ask all these things in Jesus’ name, and the church said, amen.

Thank you; you may be seated. I just got word, and I know, Parrish, you had mentioned about several passings of family members of people that we know, people that are dear to our hearts... Brother Ed K had just spoke to me and a lot of us know Chris Labissiere, one of our brothers in the faith in Virginia. Actually, he was up here a couple of months ago. His sister was killed in a car accident this morning. I don’t know where that happened... Let’s keep him in prayer. I’m going to ask, again, if we could bow our heads and have a prayer on his behalf.

God, we know that this life is short, God, and we know that these things come along and test our faith, God. We pray right now a special prayer for Chris and his family, God, and that You would comfort them, God, and there will be a time of grieving, God, there will be a time of mourning, God, and that is appropriate. That’s what we need to do, God, but we pray that You’d wrap Your arms around him, God, in a loving way, God, in a Fatherly way, God. We just thank You, God, for being able to call upon You, God. We just pray, God, that we’re able to support him as best we can, but we know that You’re the one God that, ultimately, You’re the Comforter, God. We just want to ask this in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

We’ve been using the Scripture:

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

Thanksgiving is fast approaching. It certainly got cold quick, and I know, well, I suppose that a lot of us do like to talk about the weather, or hear about it, but that’s not going to be the focus today. I know that this is the time of year, especially as we get close to the new year, and I think Parrish mentioned this a couple of weeks ago, we have the time to kind of reflect, to kind of look back, and to kind of recharge our batteries. I know that the sermon you preached a couple of weeks ago, you mentioned that we have a lot of those times; it’s appropriate to have those memorials of remembrance, but we also need to live in the here and now. We also need to realize those blessings that God has for us today. Jesse, you talked about being thankful in hard times. That’s not easy; that takes an effort. I know that you said sometimes that complaining spirit comes upon you; well, it comes upon all of us, and I appreciate you using yourself as an example. You said when it does rear its head, you’ve just got to stop and just thank God. Especially at a time like this, where—Parrish, you mentioned, many people, many of those of you who have lost loved ones here recently. That’s not an easy thing. That’s something that, you know, I know the Bible says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,” but it’s still—we’re human beings. It’s an emotion that’s—the Bible talks about we can be fragile at times. It’s something where we’ve got to be

able to deal with it, and I'm not trying to be lighthearted, or just trying to say, "Oh, well, just get over it," because that's not what God is even saying. We have to understand that is part of the process of life. It's something about being ready to know God, ready to meet God, because that's what a lot of this is all about. The Bible talks about, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing..." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) So, we've got to understand that even those secret things, those times when we're alone, or maybe nobody knows about, that we've got to come clean before God.

I want to share a few things; I'm just kind of visiting here, for a moment. Many of you remember Pastor Wilson. He got married yesterday, and it was something that they had been engaged for a while; I don't exactly know the amount of time. It's something that we celebrate. I know that his wife—myself and Ed H. were down there back in April, and, those of you that were at the conference got to meet her—his wife name is Sonia. She's very active in the church, and it was one of those things where—really, I know that, because a lot of us remember him, and a lot of us know him on a very personal level, I wanted to share that. I had mentioned it to Parrish, and he said, "Yeah, why don't you mention that," so... I feel like that's something that, to be aware of, to celebrate, to rejoice with them, and be well-wishers.

I want to share one other thing: Who brought in these flowers this morning? Kathy? I've got to say, "Thank you," because it really brightens up the place. I know that—yeah, give the Lord a praise. It's a small thing, but I want you to know it's a big thing... Something like that, especially in a rented building, it's kind of nice to personalize things a little bit. I'm going to share something: A few years back, when Mike and Norma were hosting Bible studies, and, it was about this time of year, but, I remember going over there on a Wednesday night and Norma had really done a nice job decorating, and with the colors of October and Thanksgiving—and, yeah, I'm bragging on her a little bit, and Mike—but, I've just got to say, it's little images, and, I think, snapshots in time that we have, that's worth remembering. Things to be thankful for. A lot of times, they are memories. A lot of times they are—we're going to get into that a little more, here, later.

I'm going to jump right in. I'm going to jump right in, and get started on the first point. The first point today is that being thankful is not a sign of weakness. Now, let me explain that. If we have the fruit of the Spirit, and, Andy, I like how you mentioned that, the other night, at the Wednesday night study. Andy, and, actually, I've got to say, all this time, I had always thought, "It's fruits of the Spirit," because there's about, maybe ten or twelve characteristics of fruit of the Spirit that are listed. I would have said, "Oh, it's fruits of the Spirit." I appreciate that insight. Along with fruit of the Spirit of being thankful, is longsuffering. It's not an easy fruit of the Spirit to have, but it's something that's needful. If we are longsuffering, then there are times when we are going to do just that, put up with nonsense or garbage of the world. Especially the things that we don't have any control over... It could be politics, it could be the economy. I mean, that's something that has taken a front seat for a long time, and, you know, I've got to say, and this has nothing to do with politics, because that's one thing I stay away from, but, I believe looking at something like that that affects us so personally, there's trouble. It's not a matter of looking at it like, okay, God's in control... The Bible says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) So this isn't a scare tactic, or to say, vote this way or vote that way; it's not that at all. But, you know, there are plenty of people who refuse to be thankful and can't even comprehend why anyone would be thankful in the first place. "After all," they say, "what's there to be thankful for?" Just because we Christians aren't engaged in every single battle or conflict imaginable, but we continue to be thankful in the midst of a crooked and corrupt world. The Bible talks about that. I mean, this isn't something new, this has been going on for generations and hundreds of thousands of years. There's a verse that we're going to touch on later, but, this is something that we're all going to have to come to grips with: The Bible says that men loved darkness rather than light (John 3:19). If we take ourselves out of the equation of being a Christian, if we allow ourselves to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14), thinking that

any old lifestyle—just thinking that anything goes, we’re going to love darkness rather than light. That’s a fact. That’s something where it’s like, “Oh, well, I’m exempt from that,” or, “I think I can finagle my way around it.” No, you can’t. You can’t because, eventually, it’s going to catch up to you. We’re going to look at a verse here in Luke chapter 6, but I do believe in arming myself, and I said that—I know that’s not blowing anybody away—but I would say, there was an expression that one of the presidents from probably about a hundred years ago used, Teddy Roosevelt, he said, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.” This is the big stick that I’m talking about (holding up a Bible). I’m not talking about bats or weapons of mass destruction or anything else. That, right there, that’s going to protect us, that’s going to keep us, that’s going to give us the light that we need to live, that we need to survive.

Luke 6:35-36 *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

Ever hear someone bad mouth God? Use the Lord’s name in vain, talk about how they don’t believe in him? So, they’ll bad-mouth Him, and then turn around and say, “But I don’t believe in Him.” Why? I mean, why bad-mouth somebody that you don’t even believe in? That’s pretty contradictory, but, the Bible says, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” (Psalms 2:1) Or, they’ll say, “If God were real, how could all these bad things happen?” or “Christians are weak-minded people because they have to trust in someone they can’t even see.” And on and on and on and on it goes, or the accusations fly. Those of us that know Him, when we think about how incredible, and powerful, omniscient, omnipresent, whatever adjective you could use to describe how awesome God is, God even gave us that ability and that vocabulary to be able to even comprehend that. Then it’s a matter of looking at it like, you know what? “For in him we live, and move, and have our being...” (Acts 17:28) Every breath is from God, and that’s not a weak thing, and that’s not something where—yes, there’s a degree of vulnerability about that, but, when we trust in God—the Bible says, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5) We realize that we’re putting our trust in the Creator of the universe, the Creator of all history. It’s something where—I’m blown away by the creation of God more and more every day. And I want to be that way. Sometimes I just think—a lot of you remember Tom Hansen, he’s heading up our fellowship in Everett, Washington, now. He and I used to do a lot of walking out in the forest preserves in the county, McHenry, and the areas, but, there were times when we’d walk, and, you know, there were times when you could see—and I know this isn’t a mountainous area, but you could see some good distances sometimes that we’d be out there, and we thought, “You know, if it was just this area, that we can see, and if we figured, if just that were the creation, that’s a lot.” I mean, just look around, and this is kind of a small room in the big picture, that’s something; I didn’t create any of it. God gave us the wherewithal and the ability to be able to create, to be able to build, to be able to construct, and God is without beginning and without end. We look at something like that—my point, in this verse, here, God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil... Now, I think, if somebody is evil or unthankful, I’m thinking, “I’m never giving them anything again. I’m not going to treat them well; I’m going to avoid them like the plague...” And, I mean, something like that, where I think it’s like a normal state of mind. But, that’s not God. But, hear me, now, this isn’t to say that everybody’s getting away with everything, and they’re going to get to the end, and God’s going to say, “Well done! You mouthed off, you bad-mouthed Me, you used My name in vain, you didn’t tell people about Me, you cursed me out, but come on in to Heaven.” It doesn’t work like that. It’s going to be more like, “You know what? I gave you time and chance and opportunity after time and chance and opportunity.” The Bible talks about, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” (Titus 2:11) So, everybody has a chance, even if they say, “I didn’t have a chance! I didn’t know about it!” You had a chance. You had a chance. Everybody gets that chance. It might be right now. It might have been last

week; it might be coming. But, everybody is going to have a chance to hear the truth, to hear the truth of God, being born again, baptized in Jesus' name, living a righteous life, a godly life, a balanced life. This isn't talking about just a one-time experience, it's talking about a life, but, that's not intended to scare anybody, because it's a great life! There isn't any other way I'd want to live, and when I look back, at the time I've been a Christian, yeah, there've been times when it's been hard, there've been times when there've been sadness, there've been times when there've been tragedies, but, you know what? I keep coming to God, and I keep trusting God, and, you know what? there's nobody else I'd rather put my trust in. Again, it's not like we're not being—the Bible says that, "...God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love..." (Hebrews 6:10) and there is a day of vengeance against those that curse God, against those that oppose God, against those that speak evil. Even though God allows it for a period of time, it's one of those things where nobody gets away with it forever.

On the thankful side of this, did you ever hear, or did you ever talk to somebody, or did you ever read about somebody that was in a catastrophic disaster, I mean, a tornado just destroyed everything they had, or a fire, or a hurricane, and they were like, "Thank God we survived! Thank God we're alive!" You know, I'm not saying—obviously, everybody doesn't survive. There's so many times, and that's on the news, that to me, I think is a little slanted in the wrong direction, but, when they highlight something like that, I just look at it like, "Wow!" That, to me, is something to thank God for. I know we had a fire in our house when I was 14—and it wasn't my fault—it was actually me and a couple of friends, all of us, working together. It was an accident, obviously, but, what I have to say is that it caused \$50,000 worth of damage (which, back then was—well, it still is kind of a lot of money). Thank God we had insurance. We had to move to relocate for about 5 months, and it was kind of drudgery. It was kind of like—I remember on my paper route at the time, and riding by and seeing it as they were rebuilding, and residing, and putting a garage on. It wasn't really a pleasant time. I mean, my dad had lost his job just a few months prior to that, so it was real domino-effect type of things that had happened that year. But he got another job; they rebuilt the house, and, as painful and unfortunate as that was, we were all thankful that we survived. I'm not saying that we were Christians at the time. We weren't; I wasn't. I think sometimes it takes things like that sometimes to galvanize us, to make us really what is really important.

I know a lot of us do like the NFL, here, but, sometimes you hear these guys say, you know, when they have done a very good job—and I think in all pro sports—of highlighting veterans. For those of you who are veterans here today, and those of you that are currently serving, thank you. And, a lot of times these athletes will say, "It is just a game." It's one of those things where it's like, you look at real life and death, you look at real circumstances of what really matters, and that's a good perspective to have. It is just a game, but, real life, we're talking about Judgment Day, we're talking about what does God expect from us? How does God want us to live?

I'm going to share a verse, here; it's a very short verse, but I think it encapsulates a lot of what we have to have, a lot of the way we need to think, a lot of the way we need to be. I'm talking about a mentality, and a direction going forward.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

We're all pretty well aware that Thanksgiving is something that we revisit every year. It's a national holiday; there's a lot of history in it, here in America. I know that, personally, I have a lot of good memories of Thanksgiving, you know, gathering of family, getting to watch some football, enjoying a great meal, or just getting the day off—a little time to unwind. And I know that, if the Lord tarries His coming, next year we're going to have a time to give thanks, we're going to have a time of thanksgiving, and we're going to have a celebration, and remembrance, and memorial. But you know what? This is my second

point: Being thankful never gets old. God is telling us right here to give thanks in everything and that this is the will of God for us to do, and we shouldn't let being thankful ever get old.

If we remain thankful, things will go wrong, but we will never go wrong. That also happens to be the title of today's message. Greg, if you're paying attention back there. Greg shared—I'm just going to share a personal part of my testimony, just for a moment, here. This was about twenty years ago, and just, one night, just driving down the road—and I believe that God will speak to us, in His small, still voice; I'm not talking about magic, or hocus-pocus. I'm just talking about God. How many believe God speaks to us? This one particular night—I don't even remember who I was with—I just remember driving down the road, and I believe that small, still voice spoke to me, and said, "If you remain thankful, you'll never go wrong." It wasn't something where it was like, "Let me write that down," but, it was one of those things where it's like, it got my attention. And, it was one of those things where it was like, "No doubt about it, that's the voice of God." I'm not smart enough to just make up something like that on my own. But, you could see something like that, that's backed up in the Scriptures... You know what? things will go wrong; there will be problems, there will be sadness, there will be misfortune, oppression, tragedies, deaths... But if we remain thankful we will never go wrong. There is a difference there.

I'd like to take a few minutes, now, and I'm not really looking for, in particular, for anybody to share a lengthy testimony, but I'd like to hear your hearts. I'd like to actually give some time to people; I'd like to hear what they have to say. You know, it could be just a one-word statement about what you are thankful for. It could be a short couple of sentences. I'd like to open it up right now; I know that everybody's kind of looking at me, but it's something that, hopefully—if you're a little afraid to,, that's fine, but I'd like to hear some people, and you could just, you know...

Ed K: Forgiveness and grace.

Brent: Just growing in God and having confidence. It takes a long time to gain confidence. Everybody has gotten in trouble, but, the way God deals with it, it's not just God.

Odell: Just ability. The reason why I say ability, is because when you have the ability, speech, walk, touch, feel... You do all the things that God asks you to do with ability.

Donna: Two things: Freedom to worship, and the ministry, that we can have a safety in our sisters and brothers, and a closeness, and that we can depend on each other.

Amen. That's huge; that's fellowship.

Beverly: My salvation.

Barb: A made-up mind.

Mark: I'm thankful to have friends, because, if you don't have friends, you don't have anything.

I agree; I agree, you have to.

Stephanie: I'm thankful to be here.

Amen. It's good to have you, too.

Sonia: I'm thankful for a lot of things, but, today, and lately, I have been thankful for the desire that God has given me to continue to fight through this journey.

Amen.

Mike H: I'm thankful to God for working through people, like Mr. and Mrs. Finch(?), so I can know the truth.

Alex: God is patient with us.

Pat: God's love and truth.

Lena: My marriage and family.

Ed H: What I like about God is He's my helper. He's here to help me in every situation.

Mike H: I want to thank God for working with Terry to baptize me.

Amen. That's huge.

Beverly: I'm really thankful to be able to help my fellow residents at the nursing home, in small ways.

Small things do make a difference; they stand out.

Several years ago, and some of you may remember this, and some of you may not, but our general pastor, Pastor Paine preached a sermon titled "Attitude of Gratitude." How many remember that? I do, that happens to be one of my all-time favorites because it's not just about right now, or just for a certain period of time, it's about all time. It's about something that's on-going. I remember, a few years ago, Ken A and a couple of us were talking, and Ken was like, "You know, one thing I like—" we were just kind of talking about different things, and he said, "One thing that I really appreciate about Pastor Paine is that he's thankful. He's just thankful." To me, that's a great legacy to have. It's something, you know when you have a leader like that, and I'm not just throwing him a bouquet of roses, and this message isn't about him, it's about Jesus Christ and our walk with God. But, I think that we can't hesitate to take time out to tell people while they're still here and offer some support, and show some appreciation. I'm going to share a verse that myself, and Parrish and Jesse, we were sitting down for fellowship a couple of weeks ago, and I was like, "Yeah, there's this verse..." and then I draw a blank. Parrish was like, "Sure." They were sitting there like, "Okay, come on, come on..." But the verse was, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." (Proverbs 27:2) It's really about—we're not here to pat ourselves on the back, but, you know what? I appreciate when people can do nice things for me. Just last week, Laygoze and Lorraine had a couple of us over, Ed H, and Mike H, and, you know. They really—we threw down. I mean, I gained six pounds in one sitting; I kid you not. Mark L, he does a lot of cooking, and he's like, "Hey, I made some chorizo and egg." He's like, "What do you think?" and I'm like, "I'll give you an eight, on a scale of one to ten. This I like, this I like, this was great; I would have used some refried beans..." You know, just little things like that, but, on the other end of the scale, it's nice to be able to things for others, too. It's not about gaining acclaim, or, it's not about, "Well, you owe me one, now," strings attached... It's not, "Oh, now I've got something to dangle over their head." Christianity is not about that. It's not about any strings attached at all.

I just want to share one more thing about Pastor Paine, and his testimony, because I have a personal story that I want to go into a little bit. A lot of us remember him sharing about his mom; his mom had a cerebral hemorrhage when he was a young boy. I think he was about ten. He'd shared this on a number of occasions through all the years that we've known him. It wasn't anything where—he wasn't asking for sympathy, it was just a matter of it was something that happened; they dealt with it as a family. It was a difficult thing, and it was one of those things where it was like, not a pleasant memory, but it was a major event that impacted his life. It helped to shape who he was.

Getting into the attitude of gratitude, I'm going to touch on that in a minute, but I want to share something that—I actually talked to my mom about this the other day—this happened, probably about thirty-five years ago, and it happened right round this time of year, right around Thanksgiving. We were planning a trip to visit my mom's parents down in Delaware and they were supposed to be home, this was probably three o'clock in the afternoon. My mom worked for a hospital; my dad, at the time, he worked for Regal Beloit. The plan was for them to get home, we'll get on the road, this was like Tuesday, a couple of days before Thanksgiving. Well, I'm ready to get on the road; I've always liked road-tripping—even then, too. I remember, three-thirty rolls around, and now it just seems like it's getting a little late. Now it's four o'clock, and I'm getting a little worried. My brother and I are like, "Where do you think they went?" We called the hospital; they weren't able to reach her. My dad, I don't know if he went to the hospital... I was asking my mom the other day—it's not like they were irresponsible, not at all. They're still together. I feel like they raised us well; I feel like we had a good upbringing. Thank God for that. Four-thirty, and, at that time, my father's mother was still alive, my grandmother. I called her on the phone; she came over. Between my brother, my grandmother and myself, just wondering, "What happened?" This was before cell phones, of course. We were thinking maybe they were in an accident. It was panic. I felt like it was just—I was crying, and my brother, and, "What happened?" and it was like the kind of thing where, now five o'clock rolls around, five-thirty. They finally get home. My grandmother kind of gave them a little bit of a tongue-lashing, and it was like—you know, we got over it. But it was one of those things where it was like a snapshot in time, where it was like, what would I have done? What would I have done if they had have been killed? [Editor's note: The following sentence was in Chris' original notes, but didn't make it into the actual sermon: "My mom worked at the hospital so she ended up getting delayed and my dad had gone there and waited for her."]

I want to segue into, I know there's people here who lost a parent or both parents at a young age, or people that have suffered wrongs that aren't easy to overcome, aren't easy to just, "I forgive," to get a healing from. A lot of times these memories mold us and shape us into what we become, positively or negatively. I would say, getting back to that attitude of gratitude. Again, I shared that about Pastor Paine and his mom; that always touched my heart, because it was like, I thought, "What if that would have happened to me?" How would I have dealt with that, you know? We have a death or a tragedy, and, again, Parrish, you mentioned about so many passings, you know, people's parents or siblings. I've got to say that I appreciated what you shared last week, Lena. It was very strengthening, because she'd lost her sister, and their mom lost her daughter, down in South Carolina. It was one of those things where it was like Jesse, you asked her to share right at the beginning of service; it really set the tone. It was one of those things where it's like there's plenty of emotions that we're going to deal with that are like a roller-coaster; they can be challenging. But I think the one question we're going to ask ourselves is "Why me? Why do I have to endure this illness, this tragedy, this sadness?" Even then we can't stop being thankful. And we can't think that our situation is so isolated either, that we begin to grow a root of bitterness, because the Bible talks about that. It says, "...a root of bitterness...and thereby many be defiled..." (Hebrews 12:15) Being thankful never gets old unless we allow it to get old, but it also gives us strength to keep ourselves going.

I have one last point, but it's a brief one, so I'm going to call this a ½ point. Kind of have a little fun putting that in there, but... It has to do with, what we're thankful about is just about always something

we've experienced or something in the past, but it could also be right now. I want to expound on that a little. Nothing wrong with that, it's just a fact. I know that right now I'm thankful that gas prices are down. I know it might not seem like it's a big thing, but, guess what, when I've got to whip these out (holding up his wallet), and it's like cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching... \$4.25 a gallon or whatever. In Chicago it's always high; I go up to Kenosha. I know some of you live up there, so you're blessed. I know that last week Ed H and myself cleaned out the gutters of the apartment building, and to some that might not seem very significant but, it's good to get it done; it's good just to have the ability to just do something like that. Get it done, and let it get cold. And I'm thankful that last winter finally ended, but guess what, here it comes again. While we're there, for just a moment here, Parrish has shared this many times, so I'm going to reshare it, because I'm not sure that he really understands the kind of power that he has with God in his prayers. He prayed, last winter, for a cold, cold winter to kill off all the mosquitoes, and all the gnats, and all the flies... Well, it killed everything, rodents, whatever, I don't know; were there any deer left, Brent? We're going to read one last verse, and then I'm going to make some closing points. This is going to be our main Scripture for the day. But, as I was saying, a lot of what we're thankful for is in the past, or it can be current, but, you know, we do have something to look forward to: We might not have a promise of tomorrow but that promise of eternal life is absolutely something to strive for.

John 3:14-21 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

So, this is probably one of the most famous passages and sometimes might even get watered down a little because of its popularity. People might think, "Oh, I've heard that one." You know, back in the Seventies there was a guy, he wore a rainbow afro. A white guy, actually. He was at sports events, that, he would hold up a "John3:16" sign, and it was like, you'd see him at the Superbowl, or you'd see him at, you know, the World Series, and it was like... Back then, I didn't even know what it was; I didn't even know it was a Bible verse, which tells you, you know, we weren't really raised religiously. That verse shouldn't have any less of an impact, just because it is kind of popular; just because it is well known.

I'm going to share this in closing. About 10 years ago, I worked for a company, Grainger; I started working for them about 1998. This was 2006, so, I got a different opportunity; I got a job up in Milwaukee. I left on good terms. I would have to say that I was really worn out, you know? I was really at my wit end; I mean, the job that I had had at the time, it was just relentless pace, and it was just tiring... I took this other job, and I remember, maybe a couple of months into it, I think we had a men's fellowship that George H had coordinated, I think it was at the planetarium, down in Chicago... So, we went down there, and I remember just, during the course of the day—and, again, like I mentioned before about that still small voice of God; it's not one of those things that I'd ever take lightly, or just, "Oh, God spoke to me just now..." "God spoke to me just now..." "God spoke to me just now..." because, when you hear that sometimes, from some people, it's like, "Oh, yeah, they're the mouthpiece of God!" They kind of act like anything they do or say is anointed—that's not the case. But, I don't want to fail to give credit to God, and say, "Oh, I just thought of that myself." I'm going to give credit to God in all things. So, this one particular day, and I believe it was God, just said, "You've got a lot more things to be thankful for than

things to worry about.” So, little did I know what the next couple of days would hold in store, but, I remember the very next day, which was a Sunday, sitting in a church service, and I remember just looking around and thinking—you know, I had this real sort of depression, where it was like “Why did I take this job?” I mean, now I’m having, like, buyer’s remorse, or regrets, or second thoughts. I’m thinking, “Well, I’ve just got to tough it out and just do it.” Well, I go up there, the very next day—this was about eight o’clock in the morning—the owner said, “Can I talk to you for a minute?” I said, “No!” No, I said yes. So, I go into his office, and he’s like, “It’s not working out.” I mean, it was like, I’m just sitting there, thinking to myself, “I can’t believe that you offered and gave me this job; I left another company that I had worked for, for almost ten years, and, two months into it, you’re going to say, ‘It’s not working out?’” I felt like, you know... I felt like doing a few things on my way out, but I wasn’t armed, so, you know, and I was a Christian, too, so I’m not going to flip out on the guy, or egg the guy’s building, you know. I collected my belongings. Out of a job after leaving this other company. I’ve got say, I remember telling people, here at the church, and I’m going to share something that Ed K did that I’m still thankful for, that really ministered. I remember telling him, “Oh, yeah, I lost my job,” and Ed’s reaction on his face, sad for my sake, and just like, “I can’t believe that...” and I appreciate that ministering. You can’t imagine how much, still to this day; as I was putting this together last night, it was like, things like that, like I said, you’re thankful for things that happened, and, yes, we’re thankful for right now, and, yes, we’re thankful for the promise of eternal life, but I think that things like that help to mold us and shape us and make us who we are. So, anyway, I contacted my former boss and he said, “I don’t have anything right now. They had back-filled the position, I’m afraid.” Well, about a month later, he did—he said he would contact me on this day, and he did. He said, “I think we can get you back in.” To this day, I’m like—I’m still with that company to this day. That’s now eight years later. It was pretty devastating and I know of people here who have been in that boat and it’s not comfortable. I had to get on unemployment for a while... I’m like, tightening the belt, and rethinking finances. Malcolm, I appreciate what you shared, just in the last few weeks, you said that you had some struggles, but you said that every bill that you had was paid for. I mean, it’s things like that you’ve got to be thankful for, because, if you’re not, you may end up getting bitter about it, or maybe even indifferent. It’s a matter of, just because we’re not thankful, and we’re not bitter, being indifferent isn’t what God wants us to think like, either. That is a fact. Thank God I did eventually get back with that company, but, you know what? What really changed more than anything was my perspective of just being thankful. You know that being thankful does take an effort; it’s not like we just naturally have that thinking all the time, but if we remain thankful, we’ll never go wrong.

I’d like to thank you for your time, thank you for your attention, and thank you for your participation. God bless you.