

**Gratitude & Preparation**  
**Pastor John Rosensteel**

**Big Idea:** Gratitude is being thankful for what we have been given.  
**Purpose:** To encourage people to be thankful for what they have been given.  
**Passage:** Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26

**Public Reading of Scripture – Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26**

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.  
His love endures forever.*  
*Give thanks to the God of gods.  
His love endures forever.*  
*Give thanks to the Lord of lords:  
His love endures forever.*  
*to him who alone does great wonders,  
His love endures forever.*  
*who by His understanding made the heavens,  
His love endures forever.*  
*who spread out the earth upon the waters,  
His love endures forever.*  
*who made the great lights—  
His love endures forever.*  
*the sun to govern the day,  
His love endures forever.*  
*the moon and stars to govern the night;  
His love endures forever.*

*He remembered us in our low estate  
His love endures forever.*  
*and freed us from our enemies.  
His love endures forever*  
*He gives food to every creature.  
His love endures forever.*  
*Give thanks to the God of heaven.  
His love endures forever.*

**Thanksgiving/Gratitude**

***The History of Thanksgiving***

-Our Thanksgiving celebrations are loosely modeled after a harvest feast in 1621. Only half of the pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower survived that first winter but that spring, they still took time to thank God for all God had given them. They were joined by about 90 local Native Americans for a feast of gratitude. After that first feast, the New England colonists regularly had days of thanksgiving to celebrate all they had been given.

-The U.S. Continental Congress enacted a National Day of Thanksgiving after finishing the Constitution, but after 1789 it was left up to the discretion of the states. In 1863 during the Civil War, a popular magazine editor, Sarah Hale, encouraged President Lincoln to renew a

national day of thanksgiving to promote gratitude and unity during a dark chapter in our nation's history. Lincoln did just that and on October 3, 1863, Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving our first national holiday. It was meant to be celebrated the last Thursday of every month.

-About six months previously, Lincoln said these words when he issued a Proclamation appointing a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer.

*We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God.*

*We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.*

*It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.*

(Proclamation 97, Appointing a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, March 30, 1863)

-The first pilgrims and Abraham Lincoln were followers of Jesus. They understood that it is imperative to practice gratitude regularly but especially when things are hard.

### ***Defining Gratitude***

-What does the word *gratitude* mean? The root word comes from the Latin and means *for thanks* or *freely*. In the Greek, the root word for gratitude is grace. The Greek word for *thanksgiving* means *good grace*. There is an unbreakable connection between the experience of grace and the expression of gratitude. People who struggle to practice gratitude also struggle to appreciate and experience grace. My working definition of gratitude is ***being thankful for what we have been given***. Or more simply—***an attitude shaped by grace***.

*-Grace is something you can never get but can only be given. There's no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about any more than you can deserve the taste of raspberries and cream or earn good looks or bring about your own birth.*

*A good sleep is grace and so are good dreams. Most tears are grace. The smell of rain is grace. Somebody loving you is grace. Loving somebody is grace. Have you ever **tried** to love somebody?*

*A crucial eccentricity of the Christian faith is the assertion that people are saved by grace. There's nothing you have to do. There's nothing you have to*

*do. There's nothing you have to do. The grace of God means something like: "Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are, because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you."*

*There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift too." (Frederick Buechner)*

-When someone is not grateful, they are referred to as an *ingrate*. An ingrate takes things for granted. A grateful person sees everything is a gift. An ingrate has a scarcity mindset. There is never enough. A grateful person has an abundance mindset. There is more than enough. Ingrates ask *why me* from a victim mindset. Grateful people ask *why me* from the perspective of being the most blessed people in the world.



An ingrate is Scrooge or the Grinch before their transformations.

A grateful person is Buddy the Elf. We watch Elf every year as a family. I love the scene when he is first experiencing New York or when he takes Jovie on a date.



He is so grateful. *It's the best coffee in the world.* He is so full of wonder. G.K. Chesterton has been called the Patron Saint of Gratitude. Chesterton defined *gratitude* as *happiness doubled by wonder*.

-Pastor and author John Ortberg observes that gratitude consists of three things. They all start with *bene* which is Latin for *good*. John says that *gratitude is a by-product of an awareness of God's goodness*. Gratitude must have a *benefactor* and *benefits*. A benefactor is someone who gives good gifts. The benefits are the good gifts.

We recognized this in our responsive reading from Psalm 136. The worship leader in Psalm 136 was prompting the people to be aware of God's goodness by responding to the good gifts God has given with the words - *His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good - His love endures forever.* His love, His *hesed*, love that never quits, endures forever. David writes,

*Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103:2-5)*

We can certainly express gratitude to one another but ultimately all gratitude is directed to God because *all is grace*. Every good gift ultimately comes from God. James writes, *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.* (James 1:17a) I once heard someone say the most difficult thing about being an atheist is that you have no one to thank.

-Gratitude requires a **benefactor** and **benefits**. Gratitude also must have a **beneficiary**. The good gifts must be given and received by someone. David recognizes his position as a beneficiary when he says to his people *But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.* (1 Chronicles 29:14) Or Paul asks the Corinthian church the rhetorical question *What do you have that you did not receive?* A key characteristic of followers of Jesus is that we recognize we are beneficiaries. Ronald Rolheiser said that to be a saint is to be fueled by gratitude.

-With all due respect to John Ortberg, I would add a fourth component to gratitude. Gratitude must have a **benediction**. *Benediction* means a *good word*. We offer a benediction by naming our good gifts. This is what is going on in Psalm 136 - we are naming good gifts. *Gratitude*, as my friend Tyler says, *is the spiritual practice of connecting the gifts to the giver*. For gratitude to come to life in our minds and hearts and communities we must practice it. Study after study has shown that practicing gratitude changes our hearts and our minds and our cultures. Israel spent 1/3 of their year feasting and celebrating the good gifts they had been given. It can change us from being ingrates to being grateful. We can change from being Scrooges and Grinches to Buddy the Elf. There are many ways to practice gratitude. Each of these practices revolves around two basic steps.

### ***Practicing Gratitude***

#### **1. Recognize the gift**

-The Hebrew word for **gratitude** means **count our gifts**

-One form of martial arts incorporates seeing with *soft eyes*— seeing widely—**gratitude is seeing with soft eyes**

-Some people have a **gratitude journal** or a **gratitude jar**

#### **2. Say thank you to the giver**

-Of the 9 lepers Jesus healed, only one came back to say thank you

-Benedictions in Jesus' day: 18 in the morning—*Blessed are You, God*; 18 at midday—*Blessed are You, Lord who abundantly forgives*; 18 at night—*Blessed are You, God*

-Recite Psalm 136 around the table (Thanksgiving meal)

-Say thank you to people who embody God's goodness

-Create gratitude letters or gratitude boards

### ***Day-ye-nu***

-Years ago, I learned about a traditional song sung during the Jewish Passover. It is called *Day-ye-nu* (*die-ay-new*). It is 1,000 years old. The *Day-ye-nu* contains 15 stanzas celebrating 15 gifts God has given. It is sung while banging on the table. After each stanza everyone shouts - *Day-ye-nu!* (*It would have been enough*). This is a beautiful idea meant to celebrate the good gifts God has given and to cultivate gratitude.

I think of something as simple as a regular family dinner. *It would have been enough* that God gave us food. But God gave us tasty food made by my wife who is an awesome cook. *It would have been enough* to have a great meal but we are enjoying it in our home which is safe and warm and lit. *It would be enough* to have a meal in our home but our daughters are present with us creating forever memories. *It would have been enough* to have a tasty meal in our home with our daughters but I also tell a hilarious dad joke that gets groans and eye rolls. I could go on and on. It would have been enough—but God has given us so much more. One pastor said Day-ye-nu is a way of saying – *God, thanks for overdoing it.*

-My Grandma on my mom's side passed away many years ago but I have wonderful memories of her. She was a lovely soul. She had a challenging life but was bubbling over with gratitude. I remember she would join us every Christmas. Of course, we got her gifts. But every Christmas it seemed like she was genuinely surprised to get gifts. All she cared about was being with us. Every single time we would hand her a gift she would respond *For me?* and giggle a bit. It was so infectious. That is the heart behind Day-ye-nu. It is the opposite of entitlement. It is recognizing the good gifts God has given. It is a way of saying *For me?* And a way of thanking God for the good gifts God has given. Day-ye-nu connects the gift to the giver.

### ***Preparation for Advent***

-In *It's a Wonderful Life*, the angel Clarence showed George Bailey what might not have been, but what was—Day-ye-nu. When we recognize what might not have been but is we are grateful.

-Advent is the season we celebrate the greatest gift that has ever been given

### ***What is Advent?***

-The liturgical church calendar is designed to help us enter into and reenact the Story of God's mission on earth. Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year. It begins on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Christmas and ends Christmas Eve. Christmas is the first of 7 feasts, starting December 25 and running for 12 days, ending on January 5, the day before Epiphany.

- Celebrated since 5<sup>th</sup> century, the word *Advent* comes from a Latin word meaning *coming* or *arrival*, *adventus redemptoris*—the coming of the Redeemer, the season of the church calendar that is looking back at the first arrival, looking forward to the second arrival.

### ***Advent at New Hope***

#### **✂ The Advent Story series**

-Starting next Sunday, we'll be in a series celebrating 4 aspects of the **Advent Story**: the *plot*, the *promise*, the *patience* and the *presence* of Advent. We hope you'll join us here or online

## ✧ Advent Wreath

-Advent is traditionally celebrated with an **Advent wreath** which is comprised of 4 candles, one lit on each Sunday of Advent, each one representing a part of the season: week one: *hope*—week two: *peace*—week three: *joy*—week four: *love*—with a central *Jesus* candle lit on Christmas Eve. We have simple Advent wreath kits with candles and instructions in lobby, free while supplies last.

## ✧ Advent Devotional

-Our team has created a **Prayers and Passages Guide**, a devotional filled with daily prayers and Scripture readings to be used with Advent Wreath. It is available online at [newhopepdx.org/events](http://newhopepdx.org/events).

## ✧ Carol Sing

-**Thursday December 8 at 6:30pm**, you are invited to join us here for an old-fashioned **Carol Sing**. Bring a festive mug for cocoa, wear your favorite Christmas sweater and let the kids come in their Christmas PJs!

## ✧ Christmas Eve

-This year, our **Candlelight Christmas Eve** services will be **Saturday, December 24, at 1 and 3pm**. Invite your friends and family to join you for this family-friendly celebration, complete with a children's choir!

## *Preparing for Advent*

-Normally, the day after Thanksgiving, it feels like we're shot out of a canon into January—where we land exhausted, stressed, carrying extra pounds, in debt, and distant from God and others.

-There is a new way: How can we emerge from Advent/Christmas rested, healthy, more generous, more grateful, and closer to God and others? We have to prepare. That's what Advent teaches us.

## *Advent Offering*

-Each year our leadership in conjunction with our Justice Team chooses 2-3 partners or trusted organizational friendships to receive God's generosity through us during the Advent Season. This year's offering involves two partners, one local and one global, each facing great stress in the midst of their work.

-Our local partner is **First Image**. This partner works compassionately and graciously with women experiencing unsupported pregnancy; they also work with those grieving a pregnancy loss. In a time of heightened passions, a time in which one of their buildings was set on fire, we want to stand with them. Asked what some of their greatest needs are in this season, Executive Director, Luke Cirillo, said, "Security enhancements are a big deal, and serve both our clients and our staff to create an environment that is safe." They have spent 50K+ and anticipate the need of another 40-60K to upgrade security in their Portland Area locations.

-Our global partner is *Refugee Care Collective*, one of New Hope's Trusted Friends and no stranger to this community. We admire their work deeply; they line up with our Justice Values and like other Trusted Friends organizations.

Oregon is becoming a place of refuge for many fleeing violence and war. Refugee Care Collective is welcoming and walking with families through restart kits, family and youth mentorship, and emergency relief. Giving a one-time donation through our Advent Offering this year to support this work would help create home for our new neighbors as they rebuild their lives."

### **Benediction**

*-Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100:4-5)*