

## Media Notes

There will be a Word of Witness video which I will introduce.

At Joys and Concerns, there is a picture to share from the Butler County Times-Gazette with the MLK Day of Service.

In the sermon, there is a quote at the beginning and three scripture references throughout.



## Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about being thankful for God's goodness and grace and for what God has done.

### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because it helps us be thankful, not matter what our circumstances.

### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This is the fourth sermon in the Today series. It is preached after having been away for most of the week at the Great Plains Orders and Fellowship gathering in Lincoln.

### ***What are the next action steps?***

Look for things for which to be thankful  
Write about your thankfulness  
Choose to be thankful

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news for us today is in the words of the Psalmist - God is good and God's faithful love lasts forever.

## Metadata

1. Topic(s)
  1. Gratitude
2. Sermon Books of the Bible
  1. Luke
  2. Psalms
3. Series
  1. Today

3rd Sunday after the Epiphany [Green]  
Today - I am thankful.  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1BiyGxT>

January 25, 2015  
Psalm 118:21-29  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,447  
Video is not available online

4. Speaker
  1. Andrew Conard
5. Tags
  1. grateful, gratitude, thankful, thankfulness, thank you, God, work, action, being, character

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## Table of Contents

<b>Psalm 118:21-29, CEB</b>	<b>5</b>
Response to Scripture	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Sermon Starter Video	
Series Review	
Sermon Notes and Scripture Study	
<b>Opening</b>	<b>6</b>
Prayer	
Story - Thank You Notes	
Transition	
<b>Challenge to be Thankful</b>	<b>6</b>
Transition	
<b>Psalm Types</b>	<b>7</b>
Prayers for Help (Laments)	
Songs of Thanksgiving	
Hymns	
Royal Psalms	
Transition	
<b>Thankful for What God has Done</b>	<b>8</b>
Illustration: Thank you for Actions	
Illustration: Exodus	
Illustration: Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection	
Transition	
<b>Thankful for God's Goodness and Grace</b>	<b>9</b>
Illustration: Suspicious of Thank You	
Transition	
<b>Jesus Heals a Samaritan</b>	<b>10</b>
Commentary	

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Transition

**I am thankful**

**11**

Good News

Call to Action

Look for it

Write about It

Choose to be Thankful

Invitation

Closing Prayer

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## Psalm 118:21-29, CEB

21 I thank you because you answered me, because you were my saving help.  
22 The stone rejected by the builders is now the main foundation stone!  
23 This has happened because of the Lord; it is astounding in our sight!  
24 This is the day the Lord acted; we will rejoice and celebrate in it!  
25 Lord, please save us! Lord, please let us succeed!  
26 The one who enters in the Lord's name is blessed; we bless all of you from the Lord's house.  
27 The Lord is God! He has shined a light on us! So lead the festival offering with ropes all the way to the horns of the altar.  
28 You are my God—I will give thanks to you! You are my God—I will lift you up high!  
29 Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever.

## Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

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\*\*\* Start Sermon Timer \*\*\*

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## Series Review

We are continuing our series of sermons focused on how we can be the people who God wants us to be and do the things God designed us to do, Today.

The sermon this morning will focus on being thankful. We will consider two approaches to being thankful and I will share some practical tips about how to be more thankful.

## Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

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## Opening

### Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

### Story - Thank You Notes

Thankful people are happier and healthier.

This the premise of an article I read recently from Fast Company. The author writes: "While developing an "attitude of gratitude" might seem like just another platitude, there's science indicating it's actually good for us.

The formal study of [the benefits of gratitude or being thankful] is relatively young, but researchers have found that gratitude can

- enhance well-being
- improve romantic relationships, among other benefits.
- [improve outcomes for acute cardiac patients, according to a 2011 study.]<sup>1</sup>

"Erin Olivo, clinical psychologist and Columbia University assistant clinical professor of Medical Psychology, writes:

"The people for whom gratitude is more of a trait than a state, we see that those people tend to be healthier. They tend to be happier. They have stronger social connections and stronger relationships. There's some evidence that people who are more optimistic or have a grateful attitude have higher immune functioning."<sup>2</sup>

### Transition

"With those wide-ranging benefits, who wouldn't want to be more grateful?"<sup>3</sup>  
However, it can be a challenge on a daily basis.

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## Challenge to be Thankful

We don't get gifts every day.

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<sup>1</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier", Fast Company, November 26, 2014, accessed January 24, 2015, <http://www.fastcompany.com/3039076/why-thankful-people-are-happier-and-healthier>

<sup>2</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier"

<sup>3</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier"

There are difficulties and challenges in our life.  
Things don't always go how we might hope that they would.  
The doctor has news for us that we really did not want to hear.  
The promotion or the raise that you were hoping for is not going to happen.  
Relationships with family and friends are not what they might be.  
We turn on the news and it seems there is violence everywhere.

### ***Transition***

So, how can we say, I am thankful today... much less every day? Let's look to the scripture to see what we can find in response to this question.

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## **Psalm Types**

To begin, I want to remind you of some background information about the scripture which read from Psalms.

"[Psalm 118 is part of] a collection of prayers and songs composed throughout Israel's history. Its title, "Psalms," is derived from a Greek term meaning "song."<sup>4</sup>

"The psalms fall generally into certain types or categories that reflect usage in various contexts, especially in the worship life of ancient Israel."<sup>5</sup> They included:

### **Prayers for Help (Laments)**

"The largest category of psalms is composed of prayers for help—often called laments—either on the part of the individual or the community as a whole. ... They were prayed in situations of severed distress..."<sup>6</sup>

### **Songs of Thanksgiving**

Here the psalmist sings praise to God in gratitude for the help that was given, frequently giving some account of the distress and God's deliverance."<sup>7</sup>

### **Hymns**

"Here the congregation is called to praise or declare its intent to praise the Lord, and reasons for that praise are then given either briefly or at length. These usually have

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick D. Miller, "Psalms" in The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books (eds. Wayne A. Meeks et al.; New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 797.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick D. Miller "Psalms." 798.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick D. Miller "Psalms." 798.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick D. Miller "Psalms." 799.

to do with the character and power of God demonstrated in the works of creation and in God's acts of faithfulness and love toward Israel."<sup>8</sup>

## Royal Psalms

"A number of psalms enter around the king and so have been called royal psalms."<sup>9</sup>

### *Transition*

Psalm 118 is song of thanksgiving. It expresses gratitude for God and it gives us a model for how we can be thankful today.

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## Thankful for What God has Done

Here again the words from Psalm 118:21:

"I thank you because you answered me, because you were my saving help."<sup>10</sup>

In this verse we see that the author has asked God for something particular, likely help in time of distress, and God responded directly to the request—you were my saving help.

This is a pretty clear cut reason to say thank you to God and one of the ways of being thankful with which we are most familiar.

### **Illustration: Thank you for Actions**

There are all kinds of ways to reasons to say thank you in every day life.

- Someone holds the door open for you when you are carrying a heavy load
- A driver slows down to let you turn out onto Central
- A co-worker helps you out on an important project
- You receive a gift

These are common sense for us.

Throughout the scriptures there are examples of God's action for which the people of God respond in gratitude and thanksgiving.

### **Illustration: Exodus**

The defining story of the Old Testament is the story of the Exodus. You remember that this is the story of God's deliverance of the people of Israel who had been living as slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. It begins the journey of the people to the promised land and continues to be a point of reference for our Jewish brothers and sisters. Even to this day, faithful Jews give thanks to God for God's saving work in the Exodus.

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<sup>8</sup> Patrick D. Miller "Psalms." 799.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick D. Miller "Psalms." 799.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 119:21, CEB.



## Illustration: Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection

The defining story of the New Testament is the story of Jesus. We continue to give thanks to God for Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Even to this day, faithful Christians give thanks to God for God's saving work on the cross and with the resurrection of Jesus.

### Transition

We can be thankful for things that others do for us.  
The people of Israel continue to be thankful for God's actions in the Exodus.  
As Christians, we continue to be thankful for Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

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## Thankful for God's Goodness and Grace

Psalm 118 also gives us another model of being thankful. We can be thankful for God's goodness and grace.

Here again these words from Psalm 118:28-29:

You are my God—I will give thanks to you! You are my God—I will lift you up high!

Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever."<sup>11</sup>

Do you hear the difference?

We give thanks because God is God – God is our god.

We give thanks because God is good and God's faithful love lasts forever.

This is not about being thankful for particular actions. This is about being thankful for God being good and God's posture of grace toward us.

## Illustration: Suspicious of Thank You

Have you ever been suspicious of someone saying thank you? You know, when someone is a little too nice? Then you try to review in your mind – What did I do to help this person out? Are they trying to get something from me? Setting me up for something in the future? Those things may be true or people may genuinely be nice without any reason or ulterior motive.

This begins to give us an idea of what the Psalmist is expressing:

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*You are my God—I will give thanks to you! You are my God—I will lift you up high! Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever."*<sup>12</sup>

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The author of 1 Thessalonians writes it like this:

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<sup>11</sup> Psalm 118:27-29

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 118:27-29

“Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”<sup>13</sup>

### ***Transition***

One of the stories of Jesus gives us an example of both being thankful for both God’s actions and God’s goodness and grace. You may remember the story of when Jesus heals a Samaritan. It goes like this...

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## **Jesus Heals a Samaritan**

“On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, they raised their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, show us mercy!”

When Jesus saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” As they left, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan.

Jesus replied, “Weren’t ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up and go. Your faith has healed you.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Commentary**

These ten men were healed from a disease which kept them on the outside of society. All of them were healed but only one heads back toward Jesus.

What he does first is praise God.

Before he says thank you to Jesus, he praises God.

He is thankful for God’s goodness and grace.

Then he is thankful for Jesus’ actions of healing.

### ***Transition***

This switches our ordinary expectations and models both giving thanks for who God is and for God’s action in our lives.

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, CEB.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 17:11-19, CEB.

## **I am thankful**

### **Good News**

The good news for us today is in the words of the Psalmist - God is good and God's faithful love lasts forever.

We can be thankful today because of God's grace and goodness – who God is.  
We can be thankful today because of God's continued work in the world.

### **Call to Action**

From Fast Company, here are some tangible ways that you can train yourself to be more grateful.<sup>15</sup>

#### ***Look for it***

Instead of paying attention to what you don't have, shift your focus and be mindful of the everyday things that you would miss if you didn't have them. There's always something for which to be grateful, even during difficult times.<sup>16</sup>

#### ***Write about It***

Keep a gratitude journal. "By writing down the things for which you're grateful on a regular basis, you begin to focus more on them. Thank-you notes are also a good opportunity to express your gratitude and give you a forum to detail some of those deeper gratitude insights you've learned to uncover."<sup>17</sup>

#### ***Choose to be Thankful***

"Even when times are difficult, we can practice being more positive and grateful by actively seeking out and focusing on things for which we can be grateful."<sup>18</sup>

### **Invitation**

I invite you to be thankful today for who God is and what God has done.  
Will you pray with me?

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God, Thank you for who you are; your goodness and grace are overwhelming. Thank you.

Thank you for what you have done, especially in Jesus Christ. Thank you.

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<sup>15</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier"

<sup>16</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier"

<sup>17</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier"

<sup>18</sup> Gwen Morgan. "Why Thankful People are Happier and Healthier"

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We give thanks to you because you are good, because your faithful love lasts forever.  
Amen.

	8:30 AM	11:00 AM
Sermon Time	15:30	17:26