



# ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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## From the Pastor's Desk

*"Bless the LORD O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD O my Soul, and do not forget all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."* Psalm 103:1-5



This Psalm has become one of my favorite Psalms. A number of years ago, I received a nice piece of dogwood from Paul and Lorraine Grimsbo. One of the legends of Dogwood is that it was the tree from which the cross of Christ was made. Now Dogwood trees are small in trunk with twisted branches, which have beautiful blossoms in the spring, reminding us of life, newness of life we receive from our Lord Jesus. The small trunk will never produce large enough pieces of wood to ever form a cross again. I wondered what I should do with this nice piece of Dogwood. I found out that Duaine Harmon does some scroll work in his spare time and I gave him the piece of Dogwood and he carved out the words from his scroll saw, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul," the beginning of Psalm 103. It sits upon my book shelf in my office in front of my Bibles. So every time I wish to use one of my Bibles, I must pick up the piece of Dogwood and I am reminded to "Bless the Lord, O my Soul" each time before I open the Word of Scriptures. It is a nice reminder for me to give thanks to the Lord, opening my heart and mind to God's gifts and blessings even before I study God's Word.

There are several passages of scriptures that remind us or encourage us to give thanks to the Lord. The Psalmists lists several reasons. *"Do not forget all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles."* Wow, this short list is full of blessings to which we can give thanks our whole life time and it wouldn't be enough. The Lord forgives all our sins. Bless the Lord. The Lord heals our diseases. Bless the Lord. The Lord crowns us with steadfast love and mercy. Bless the Lord. The Lord satisfies us with good as long as we live. Bless the Lord. The Lord blesses us in great abundance.

Many times we give thanks to the Lord before we eat a meal. As we give thanks, we are reminded that the Lord has provided in abundance once again. Take a simple lunch of sandwich with sliced turkey, a piece of lettuce, a slice of tomato, a slice of cheese with some chips and a glass of milk. The Lord provided the sun and the rain to nourish the wheat and the grass of the fields. Cows were able to eat the grass to produce the milk for the cheese and for the glass of milk. The Lord nurtured from the earth the lettuce and tomatoes. The turkey ate of the produce of the earth so that it grew and became a protein of meat for the sandwich. Potatoes grew in the earth. Farmers harvested the potatoes. Truckers brought the potatoes to a factory. Someone unloaded the potatoes into bins to be washed. Someone created the machines to slice the potatoes and cook them to make them chips. Someone created the machines and others operated the machines that

were able to package the chips. Another trucker brought the chips to the store, where people stocked them on the shelves, a checker helped you pay for the chips and stock them in your bag. All so you could have a sandwich, with turkey, lettuce, a slice of tomato, a slice of cheese, with some chips and a glass of milk. The Lord provides and blesses in abundance.

Over and over again when we stop to thank the Lord we see a blessing of abundance. Martin Luther reminded us of this truth, when we pray for Daily Bread as we pray the Lord's Prayer. Luther wrote, *"What does Daily Bread mean? Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."* As I mentioned, when we stop to think about what to give thanks to the Lord, we perceive how the Lord blesses us in abundance over and over again.



As Luther describes our "Daily Bread" and the Psalmist reminds us of all the benefits the Lord bestows upon us, we begin to perceive how much the Lord loves to bless us with good things. If we were to sit down and ask for all the individual blessings listed as Daily Bread and all the benefits listed by the Psalmist, we would have to get up an hour earlier just to get a start on our requests. When we pray for our Daily bread, Luther helps us understand the breadth of that request and answer. The Lord loves to bless us with our Daily bread and more even when we forget to ask. So when we pause from our busyness of rushing here to there to accomplish the many tasks and demands placed upon our time and energies, we begin to catch a glimpse of God surrounding us with love. As we consider all the blessings of family, friends, food, clothing, shelter, forgiveness, healing, redemption from sin and death, what can we give the Lord in return? The Psalmist gives us an answer. We can give the gift of love and thanks to the Lord. *"Bless the Lord, O My Soul."* We can give a blessing unto the Lord with our thanks. We can warm the heart of our Lord and bring a smile upon his face by giving a word of thanks.

We celebrate the Day of Thanksgiving with our family and friends with a great feast, a celebration of the harvest the Lord has provided. As we gather together around family tables and we give thanks for the food, we are giving a blessing to God. Let us bless the Lord for all the blessings each day. Let us bless the Lord who blesses us with a gift of love, a gift of thanks. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, bless his Holy Name.

*Pastor Randy*



# WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



Many of us grew up with three rhetorical questions before we knew what rhetorical meant. The first was, "Were you born in a barn?" That usually came when we left a door open, or didn't clean up our room.

The second was, "When will you ever grow up?" Which was a question usually asked us by our siblings, as we carried out a carefully planned, relentless program of persecution.

The third one was, "Have you forgotten something?" That was the parental reprimand, usually for not saying thank you after receiving some gift.

When we read stories like the "Ten Lepers" (Luke 17:11-19), the "mother in each us" cries out to the nine, "**Have you forgotten something?**"

The story is told of an extremely active two year old named Sarah. She was always busy, always moving and always in a hurry... because at two, she had already realized that there are so many exciting things to do and see and experience in this incredible world God has given us.

One day Sarah interrupted her play-time just long enough to run into the kitchen in search of a mid-afternoon snack. Hurriedly, she said to her mother: "Banana, Momma, Banana!"

Her mother, handed her a banana. Sarah quickly grabbed the banana and turned to rush back out of the kitchen. However, before she took very many steps, her mother said: "Sarah, come back. What are the magic words?" Sarah screeched to a halt, turned back around and said: "Please! Thank You! You're Welcome! God Bless You! And I Love You, Mommy!"

The magic words Sarah's mother was looking for were of course "Thank you." She got more than that... those all were the words she was looking for... all words that re-orientate how we think and move forward... words that changes the world around us... words that acknowledge there is one before us greater than we.

**"Please! Thank You! You're Welcome!  
God Bless You! And I Love You.**

Perhaps this is the key to living in the kingdom of God here on earth. Before we profess what we believe or confess or help or do - we are called simply to see... that is, to point out blessing, to claim mercy, to name grace. In the story of the "Ten Lepers", all ten

are made well. But one has something more. He has seen Jesus, recognized his blessing and rejoiced in it, and that changed his course of action and behavior. And because he sees what has happened, the man is not just healed, but is made whole, restored, drawn back into relationship with God and humanity. In all these ways he has been, if we must choose a single word, saved.

There is a story about a man who was completely depressed. He had lost faith in himself, in other people he found no joy in living. One rainy morning this man went to a small neighborhood restaurant for breakfast. Although several people were at the diner, no one was speaking to anyone else. This miserable man was hunched over the counter, stirring his coffee with a spoon.

In one of the small booths along the window was a young mother with a little girl. They had just been served their food when the little girl broke the sad silence by almost shouting, "Momma, why don't we say our prayers here?" The waitress who had just served their breakfast turned around and said, "Sure, honey, we pray here. Will you say the prayer for us?" And she turned and looked at the rest of the people in the restaurant and said, "Bow your heads." Surprisingly, one by one, the heads went down. The little girl then bowed her head, folded her hands, and said, "God is great, God is good, and we thank him for our food. Amen."

That prayer changed the entire atmosphere. People began to talk with one another. The waitress said, "We should do that every morning."

"All of a sudden," reflected the man, "my whole frame of mind started to improve. From that little girl's example, I started to thank God for all that I did have and stop majoring in all that I didn't have. I started to be grateful."

We all understand and appreciate the importance of gratitude. How it can radically change attitudes, relationships, situations. We are taught this lesson early. "Thank you" - changes lives...our lives...and all the lives around us.

Gratitude is more than an "attitude", it is a way of life. It's the way of life in the kingdom of God. "Thy kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven.

**"Have you forgotten something?"**

*Wanderings and Wonderings, Pastor Bill Peters*

