

Date: November 20, 2022

Series: *Thanks-Prayer!*

Title: *Thanking God Who is Good All the Time*

Text: Hebrews 12:28

Preacher: Mark Adams

David Seamands tells the story of a Pastor named William Stidger---who lived back in the very early thirties during those hard years we refer to as The Great Depression. One day Stidger was seated with a group of friends in a restaurant. Everyone was talking about the depression: how terrible it was, the suffering people, rich people committing suicide, the jobless, the whole thing.

The conversation got more and more miserable as it went on. One of the ministers in the group, suddenly broke in and said, *"I don't know what I'm going to do, because in two or three weeks I have to preach a sermon on Thanksgiving Day. I want to say something affirmative. What can I say that's affirmative in a period of world depression like this?"*

And as the minister spoke, Stidger said it was like the Spirit of God spoke to him: *"Why don't you give thanks to those people who have been a blessing in your life and affirm them during this terrible time?"*

He began to think about that. The thought came to his mind of a schoolteacher very dear to him, a wonderful teacher of poetry and English literature from years ago---who had gone out of her way to put a great love of literature and verse in him. It affected all his writings and his preaching. So, he sat down and wrote a letter to this woman, now up in years. It was only a matter of days until he got a reply in the feeble scrawl of the aged.

"My Dear Willy"--Stidger says at that time he was about 50 years of age and was bald, and no one had called him Willy for a long time--so just the opening sentence warmed his heart. Here's the letter:

"My Dear Willy: I can't tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely, and like the last leaf of autumn lingering behind. You'll be interested to know that I taught in school for more than fifty years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has done in many years."

Stidger says, *"I'm not sentimental, but I found myself weeping over that note."* Then he thought of a kindly bishop, now retired, an old man who had recently faced the death of his wife and was all alone. This bishop had taken a lot of time, given him advice and counsel and love when he first began his ministry. So, he sat down and wrote the old bishop. In two days a reply came back.

"My Dear Will: Your letter was so beautiful, so real, that as I sat reading it in my study, tears fell from my eyes, tears of gratitude. Before I realized what I was doing, I rose from my chair and I called my wife to share it with her, forgetting she was gone. You'll never know how much your letter has warmed my spirit. I have been walking around in the glow of your letter all day long."

For nearly 25 years now, here at Redland we have acknowledged the importance and power---of thanking God---in good times and in bad times because as that first minister forgot---we know---we have experienced the fact that God is good--
-ALL THE TIME. That is why we have always set aside---the Sunday before Thanksgiving as a service of prayer.

And this year---just as He has done every year---God has given us much to thank Him for.

I am thankful for the numerous examples of a healthy church body at work that I have seen. I'm thinking of the things Trunk or Treat, the growth of our men's ministry under the leadership of Tom Cox. I'm thankful for all the dedicated Redlanders who worked to help our Afghan families get to doctor appointments, and immigration attorney meetings---Redlanders who bravely taught Parwana to drive---and get her license---and help them find a new home in Woodbridge,

VA. I'm thankful for all the amazing, hard-working Redlanders who worked to make last week's Amani sale a success. It was wonderful having an Executive Employee at Amani---our own Cathie Burke---working with us again this year.

I'm thankful for our American Heritage Girls who worked hard to clean out our prayer garden. I'm thankful for the healing of our church we have seen this past year as more Grace Groups came back in the wake of Covid. Another example we enjoyed last week as our Gospel Choir, Kids for Praise, and Grace Notes Bells led in worship for the first time since the pandemic.

I'm thankful for the additions to our church we have had this last year: 27---12 people making their profession of faith and 15 Christians moving their membership here. I consider that wonderful for a post-pandemic year.

I'm thankful for the way we continue to see the ROC do what we felt God telling us it would do: *"Give families what they want in order to give them what they need---Jesus."* I'm thankful for Kenn and his crew and the many hours of work they have already put in before Upward season actually begins. Their labors are one reason we have 500 kids enrolled---and 100 of those players represent families who have no church home. I'm thankful that the mortgage for the ROC is paid in full. I'm thankful for my new UPWARD team---we are the *Golden Eagles* and two of my kids do not have a church home.

Well, I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME and, as He has been in the past, this year---2022 He has once again been VERY good to this church! Our loving Heavenly Father continues to shower His blessings on us.

Hebrews 12:28 encourages us to: ***"be thankful and so WORSHIP God acceptably with reverence and awe."*** Hence the need for a service like this. At my request five individuals or couples have prepared prayers for this purpose. They are going to come one at a time to share them. Bill will lead us in a song of thanks between each prayer.

So, let's get started. Let's enter a time of conversational prayer---a time of communicating together with God---eyes and ears open---as we hear these prayers of thanks and then later, offer our own.

"Heavenly Father, Hear now these, the prayers of Your people:"

8:30AM Service

Rachel Freese

"Dear Lord, thank You for this day that we get to gather in Your house to worship You together---and for this special time to offer You prayers of Thanksgiving for the many things that You've blessed us with in the last year. I want to thank You, Lord, so much, for all the many ways You've provided for me in the last year---from getting to stay with my parents and having so much time to rest from my year overseas, to providing clarity for me that that is what I needed upon returning---to enter into a season of rest in which I didn't try to have a full-time job but sought out Christian counseling and extra time with You and direction from You, Jesus. And thank You so much, Lord, for how You have met with me and how You blessed me with the wonderful Christian counselor that You hand-picked for me. And I do thank You for how You've been working to heal my heart and soul, and to grow me in this season. I also want to thank You for the many people that You've placed in my life to come alongside me this year, especially my family and this wonderful church family, Lord. And I just thank You for the blessing that they've been to me, how they've welcomed me so much, in the Grace groups, in the sanctuary choir and the Gospel choir, at Grace in Store--with Awanas and Kids for Praise, at RBC Camp, the Amani sale, and Operation Christmas Child. Thank You for all the things I've gotten to be a part of, and for how You've been growing me through different experiences in this safe and comfortable environment with loving people---where I also get to learn from experienced servants of the Lord. Thank, Lord, You also for how You've been bringing some possible additional clarity for my life as to what You have in store for me in the future, even if it may be well down the road. I just pray that You would continue to guide me, Lord. And thank You for the possible vision of the orphanage/school/shelter in East Asia that You might have me start someday. Thank You for how all of the gifts You've given me could be used through that---and I thank You in advance that You will continue to prepare me for it if that is what You have for me, or for whatever it is You do have in mind for me.

Thank You for the up-coming training out in Missouri that You may have planned for me and given me as the light for my next step---and I thank You that You will make it clear if it is Your will for me to go to it by continuing to guide me with Your peace and making straight the path You have for me, Lord. And thank You for the many promises You've given us in Your Word and have been impressing on my heart in the last few years---including that You are always with us, no matter what we've done, if we have accepted You, Jesus, as our Savior. And thank You for dying on the cross for us, and for what all that that means for us---that we get to be adopted by You, our heavenly Father---and be seen as holy and blameless in Your sight because of Christ's perfect sacrifice for us. Thank You for then sending Your Holy Spirit to live in us and bless in so many ways, through giving us the strength we need each day, comforting us through hard times---teaching us new things, and guiding us to all that You have for us, among other wonderful things. And thank You that You do guide all of us Your children, as we seek You and pray for your guidance. Thank You for all of these things, Lord, and all of the other blessings you have showered me with this year, in Jesus's Name, Amen."

Owen Toomey

*Thank you God for the things you have blessed me with this year. I was really thankful for my family when they helped me get through Covid. They changed their plans so that I was not lonely when needing to recover by myself. I also had a really special time with my family on trips this year to New York and London. We were able to do special things as a family together. I am thankful for friends at my school, at church and in my neighborhood and lots of other places too. This year, my friends were very kind and helped me to gather over 100 cans of food for the Grace in Store food pantry. They also donated at least 10 blankets and other things for an animal shelter. I was overjoyed and happy because everyone was so kind and I knew it would help a lot. Thank you God for all the wonderful things that happened to me over the past year and for helping me through hard things.
Amen.*

Geoff and Jane Thomas (video)

Father God, we come to thank you for all that you have provided. We know that you are the Creator – you have provided everything that exists. Genesis Ch 1 Vs 1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” We thank you for that act of creation. You are the only God. You made the universe and keep it in place. We thank you for our lives and all that we have. We thank you for giving us free will so that we can choose to love You. You could make your creatures do what you want. But you let us decide. Even when we decide to harm ourselves. We thank you for becoming man and dying at the hands of your creations to redeem us. I thank you for gifting me with a mind to think with, and a heart to love with. Thanks for family, friends and purpose.

I give thanks for my family – who live near and far. I give thanks for the neighborhood we live in.

I give thanks for the ladies in my neighborhood bible study who led me to my Christian life. I give thanks for Redland Baptist Church and my church family. And I give thanks to God who is with me always.

Gregg and Amy Freese

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you so much for your goodness to us. You continue to show yourself faithful, and we are honored and blessed. We thank you for improved health for all of us. We thank you for walking beside Daniel last Christmas when he had blood clots in his lungs, and seeing him through that.

We know that you continue to be with him, and we are thankful.

We thank you for another year with Amy's parents. We know that this is a gift from you, and we are thankful. Lord, we thank you for our three wonderful children. They are such a blessing to us! We thank you, Father, that they are all following You. They each have challenges in their lives, which as parents, is hard for us, because we want them always to have smooth paths to walk on. But we know that you are working good in all things, and that you are growing them in their walk with you. We are honored, Father, to know that You have plans to prosper them, to give them hope and a future. Lord, we are thankful.

Father, thank you so much for the blessing of grandchildren! We love Eleanor and Cyrus so much! You know that we wish that we could spend every waking moment with them, but Father, we are so thankful for video chats, and for the precious times that we are together! Thank you for their health, and that they are growing up in a loving family that honors You, and in a nurturing church family as well. Father, this is a gift from You, and we are thankful. Lord, we thank you for providing meaningful jobs for us, in caring communities. Thank You for the opportunities that You provide for us

*to minister in Your name in our workplaces. This is a gift from You, and we are thankful. Father, we thank You for providing housing for us. Thank You for a considerate landlady. Lord, this is a gift from You, and we are thankful. Lord, we thank you for placing us here in this church fellowship. It is a wonderful expression of Your loving family, and we are thankful. Father, most of all, we are thankful for the gift of Your Son, Who came to earth to provide us a way to come to You. He took our sins upon Himself, stood in our place, and received the punishment for those sins—punishment that we should have borne, and offered us the gift of salvation. Father, this is the greatest gift of all, and we are supremely grateful and thankful. May we honor You in all that we say, do, and think.
In Jesus' Name, Amen*

Meredith Westcott

Dear God,

Thank you for this morning and for the ability to gather together. Thank you for the staff at Redland who work so hard to aid all of us in glorifying you and learning more about you and our relationship with you. God, thank you for all the blessings you have given me this past year like good friendships and a loving family. God, I ask that you help me invest in these relationships, that I deepen them and use every opportunity I have to show your love to the people that surround me. God, I also thank you for all the people you have put into my life that continue to teach me like my parents, my teachers, my swim coach, the church leaders here---and every adult in my life that teaches me more and more about you, your love, and myself. God, I thank you for all the opportunities you give me: educational opportunities, serving opportunities, and opportunities right here at Redland---like choir, handbells, American Heritage Girls, and youth group. I especially thank you for youth group, for all the lessons it has taught me, relationships it has helped build, and life-changing experiences it has given me---like the winter retreat and Crossing camp. God, I praise you for sending your son, Jesus, to die on the cross for the sins of each and every person here. I ask that you help us better understand the extent of your love, better listen to what you tell us, and lead lives more pleasing to you. God, I thank you for this country we live in that has been founded in light of your word.

Thank you for the wonderful leaders in the past who have steered our country well. God, I ask that you be with us as a nation as we are so divided. I pray that the government you have put over us becomes God-fearing and begins to work in a way that keeps your commands. God, I thank you for providing me with a safe, warm house and the ability to eat three square meals a day. God, I ask that you help all of us that are so fortunate empathize with people who don't have this. God, allow us to find ways to serve those in need and show them your love as you have commanded us so many times. God, I thank you for the faith of the staff here at Redland, strong faith that is so impactful on the faith of others. I ask that you would keep speaking to them, God. I also pray that they would keep turning to you in their times of trouble and find you a great refuge. God, I thank you for all the progress this country has made coming out of COVID.

I praise you that everything has opened up once again and that we can live our lives almost as we once did. God, I ask that you use the lockdowns to make a contrast in our minds of what really matters most. Help us to pursue those things. God, I also ask that you use COVID to remind all of us of what incredible gifts you give to us in everyday life. God I thank you for every high this year and every low, and I pray that each have and will bring everyone closer to you. In Jesus' name, Amen

11:00AM Service

Jennifer Saunders

God, I have so much to be thankful for, things seen and unseen that you have done in my life. You know the times I have been ungrateful, You know when I've complained and hated my circumstances and how much I cry out to you in what seems "desperate" times. Yet you are always with me. You always hear and listen to me. You are always guiding me back to you. Though life might seem a bit disappointing at times, I am thankful for all that you have allowed, have done and are doing in my life. For the decisions I have made, whether good or bad...you always use them for Your good. I am thankful for the lessons and the blessings that come from them. I felt God redirecting me from college ministry to something else but wasn't sure what that was. I was without a job for 2 years starting in 2019 and living at home or traveling to friends just to get away from home for a bit. It wasn't easy to accept that was my life. What was worse was I kept applying for jobs, kept interviewing, and kept getting rejection after rejection. I had no idea what the Lord was doing. It was during that time where God and I wrestled a lot. I got angry with God, I screamed at Him, I was disappointed and in despair. As I look back now on this time though, I had the most intimate moments with the Lord. He and I became so close. I spent so much time with Him and even though I felt hurt and hopeless, God always gave me His

peace. He was always revealing Himself to me whether it was through a sunset, a rock on the ground, a conversation with a friend, or lights on a Christmas tree. I had peace despite the uncertainty and disappointment and for that I was thankful. I was thankful God was there the whole time and I'm very grateful for that time...it brought me closer to Him and grew my faith.

Ann Voskamp, a Christian writer, wrote in her Bible Study, 'Waymaker,' 'Deserts are not places of despair---deserts are sacred spaces of divine dialogue. Unless we give thanks for the hard gifts, we've miscounted the gifts.' She also wrote, 'Thanksgiving always precedes the miracle of more God.' This year has brought some changes. I became a homeowner and a dog owner.

I heard the Lord tell me last winter that I was going to find a place of my own by springtime. I am thankful for Vicki Robinson who helped me in that process of finding a home. I now live in a cozy place where I have the freedom to decorate in my style. I had waited for something like this for a very long time. God had always provided when I needed a place to live though which was pretty much the whole time I was in full time ministry and the 2 years after. I am so thankful for the people He placed in my life through the years, including Peggy Peek who gladly and lovingly opened her home to make it mine as well. I also have to thank Camden.

The Lords promises were evident during that time of waiting' **'The Lord works all things together for good.'** **And He does immeasurably more than all we could ever ask or imagine.'** I know I need to always remind myself of this during times of waiting. Thank you, Lord, for providing and guiding. Whatever happens is because of you. I believe you have what's best for me. Speaking of what's best, I am so thankful for my dog, Gracie! God, I strongly believe you are the one who gave me that name for her. Not only was she rescued by your grace, but it is by your grace that you have given her to me. I am so thankful to have her as my companion, to care for, to unconditionally love, and nurture. She truly is a gift from above and I am so thankful to God for bringing her into my life. Everywhere I have lived, there has always been a dog---a roommate's dog. I take care of the dog because I love and care for them a lot, and to me, they just bring so much joy. God knew I always needed one in my life. I grew attached to so many that it was always so difficult and sad when I had to leave them. Now I have one of my own.

And God I know not everyone can say this, but I am so thankful for my parents. They have been nothing but supportive, understanding, positive, incredibly generous and loving through all the seasons of my life. The faith they have in you is evident in their response to the way my life has been playing out. The Lord truly is taking care of me. Father, I trust You and Your sovereign plan.

Thank you that you are leading me to fulfill your purposes. I'm not going to fear rejection. I can rest in your promises, and rest knowing you are my Father, knowing you are my true Shepherd, my caregiver, the truest friend and companion. Thank you, God, that I can participate in this moment with you and experience life with you. I may walk with uncertainty, but I'm certain about my walk with You. God, You are always faithful, and you are always good. I am so grateful.

Finn Miller

Dear Lord,

You have shown me so much this year; your wisdom, your might, and your forgiveness. I've seen amazing things in your beautiful world. You can make anything and humble anyone! You are a light in the darkness and I don't know what tomorrow will hold but I know you will be there. You have given me such wonderful parents and friends to comfort me. I know that when I pray to you, you will always understand. I'm so thankful our family is in our new home and for all the fun I have had in it with my brothers and sister. Thank you Lord for all the adventures I've had here. God, I would like to ask you, if it is your will, that we would be able to stay here in Maryland, and at this church. You can make the flowers grow, you can make the heaven's pour, you can make the trees strong. You made man's mouth and the singing birds. You made the Earth's crust. God, I thank you for all you have made, all you have given and all you have shown me this year, but most of all, Lord, I am thankful for Jesus. He gave his life for me.

Amen

Geoff and Jane Thomas (video)

Father God, we come to thank you for all that you have provided. We know that you are the Creator – you have provided everything that exists. Genesis Ch 1 Vs 1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We thank you for that act of creation. You are the only God. You made the universe and keep it in place. We thank you for our lives and all that we have. We thank you for giving us free will so that we can choose to love You. You could make your creatures do what you want. But you let us decide. Even when we decide to harm ourselves. We thank you for becoming man and

dying at the hands of your creations to redeem us. I thank you for gifting me with a mind to think with, and a heart to love with. Thanks for family, friends and purpose.

I give thanks for my family – who live near and far. I give thanks for the neighborhood we live in.

I give thanks for the ladies in my neighborhood bible study who led me to my Christian life. I give thanks for Redland Baptist Church and my church family. And I give thanks to God who is with me always.

Fred and Vicki Robinson

Almighty God in Heaven,

Your name is excellent and worthy of all praise, glory and honor. We humble ourselves before you this morning to give You thanks for your unconditional love, the abundance of your provision, your grace, mercy and long suffering. We thank You for our salvation and the gift of your beloved son Jesus who was the overpayment for our sins, past, present and future.

Thank You for the gift of eternal life. We thank You for Redland, our church family and the opportunity to serve. Thank You for our marriage and for our children, Jolie and Errol and our son-in-law, TJ. Thank You for their love, career successes and especially for their submission to You and dependence on You for guidance. We're so thankful for our parents and that all 4 of them remain a part of our lives and we're still able to enjoy and love them in their advanced ages. Thank You for protecting our extended family and all of the ones we love. This past year, we've been blessed with the opportunity to serve along with many other Redlanders in helping the Arya and Sabri families become acclimated to our area and meet many of their day-to-day needs after having fled Afghanistan. We know that we are only the vessel for the many blessings you've bestowed upon them. And, for this we're grateful. We're thankful for Fred and all of the medical professionals that have endured and continue to endure the demands of being in the profession as a result of Covid and the pandemic. We're grateful that although Covid still exists, it is significantly weakened in the number and severity of cases. We pray for continued protection and guidance. Please God, also continue to use us as You see fit to further your kingdom for your glory. Amen

Brad and Heidi Chaney

Brad - *Father, this is a year in which it is easy to thank You. One thing to thank You for is our jobs. I had been laid off from my job, and You were working in the background without my knowledge, leading me to change my professional membership a few months earlier---and that change led to my new job. Our son Nathan, after several years of success, was assigned a new manager who became a problem for Nathan, and you quickly led Nathan to a new job that was an improvement in pay and duties. Our son Kal had struggled with not finding more than part-time employment, and you led him to a new permanent full-time position with better pay and benefits such as health insurance. Heidi has been happy to be stable in her job. Of course, there are a lot of things that we tend to take for granted until they are missing, but for which you deserve thanks, such as good health and a good home.*

Heidi - *We also thank you for the warm acceptance we have received here at Redland Baptist, and for the teaching, preaching, and music that we have enjoyed. We're enjoying the chance to sing in choir, and I am enjoying the chance to play in the orchestra and to play chimes. It has been many years since I played the saxophone, and it is good to get back to it. We also enjoy the wonderful library here. We are thankful for the missions emphasis the deacons give each week. It is a joy to be a part of a church looks beyond its walls. We give thanks for the evangelistic emphasis RBC has. The first Sunday I was here a year ago, there were 2 large cylinders here on stage. One of the cylinders had 5000 marbles in it – representing the feeding of the 5000. It was dumped into the other cylinder signifying 5000 people who had been reached with the gospel message of Jesus. All of this while we were in the midst of the pandemic, wearing face masks and social distancing. Thank you, Father, not just for missions-minded pastors, but also a missions-minded congregation. We thank you for working through Child Evangelism Fellowship around the world. We thank you for bringing in Dorcas Byrd as the state director after a long search. We thank you that after many years of praying for a Montgomery County coordinator you have raised one up in Karen Silva, a former member of this congregation.*

Finally, we thank you for the openness of several new churches in Montgomery County to adopting a school to hold a Good News Club---so the children in our public schools will have an opportunity to hear about who you are, and your love for them. We pray that through this ministry many will come to you as their Lord and Savior. We also pray that these children and their families will desire to become established in a local church for growth and discipleship.

Brad - *You also know how not every Thanksgiving has been filled with good circumstances. We think of the Thanksgiving several years ago when Heidi's brother had committed suicide just a few days earlier---and that was after the death of*

Heidi's mother and our pastor in the previous two months. I don't know how we would have handled that without your help, and that experience reminds us that there is much more to thank you for than just our circumstances.

Heidi - *You are the God who created heaven and earth, who placed beauty all around us, even in flowers, butterflies, and individual snowflakes. Our most powerful weapons, like nuclear bombs, are nothing compared to the power of the sun or even of tropical storms. Our computers and libraries have nothing compared to the wisdom you have. Our attempts to be good are flawed, while everything about you is good.*

Brad - *What is most amazing is how you came for us. I know I wasn't seeking you, but you placed people around me to lead me to you. And you sent Jesus so we could see your nature, and especially your love. You support us in our troubles, and you promise a future that is greater than anything we can imagine. We know, and you know, that we don't deserve such gifts, but you give them anyway.*

Thank you.

Now it is your chance to JOIN in this time of thanks-praying. Let us all bow our heads and all thank God, praying together at the same time. Pray out loud if you want; in your seat or on your knees, but pray and thank God for all of His blessings.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Father God, We are Your people—the sheep of Your pasture and we have come this morning to worship You with glad and joyful songs---inspired by Who You are and for What You have done.

*For, "**You are good and Your love endures forever; Your faithfulness continues through all generations.**" And all God's people said....A-MEN*

Perhaps as we have prayed—you have remembered the many ways He has blessed your life. And as you did, you felt the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit to give back to God in some way. You may feel led to come forward and publicly show your thanks to God—by recommitting your life to Him---or by joining this church as we use all that God provides us with to minister to this community.

You may want to acknowledge for the first time that God gave His Son to die for you—and today publicly give Him your life as you accept Him as Savior and Lord.

But however God leads won't you come and share your decision with us?