

Date: November 21, 2021

Series: *Thanksgiving Prayer Service*

Title: *Give Thanks to God Our Father*

Text: James 5:6

Preacher: Mark Adams

Last year, Sue and I listened to a great book as we traveled. Its title is *The Great Good Thing: A Secular Jew Comes to Faith in Christ*. In it, popular novelist Andrew Klavan shares his faith story.

He tells how he was raised in a non-practicing Jewish home and that, as a result, for the first 45 years of his life, he lived as a *“philosophical agnostic and a practical atheist.”*

I want to share an excerpt from his book where Klavan explains some of the steps along his life journey that eventually led him to faith in Christ. He writes:

“Jesus never appeared to me while I lay drunk in the gutter. And yet, looking back on my life, I see that Christ was beckoning to me at every turn. When I was a child, He was there in the kindness of a Christian babysitter and the magic of a Christmas Eve spent at her house. When I was a troubled young man contemplating suicide, He was in the voice of a Christian baseball player who gave a radio interview that inspired me to go on. And always, He was in the day-to-day miracle of my marriage, a lifelong romance that taught me the reality of love---and slowly led me to contemplate the greater love that was its source and inspiration.

But perhaps most important for a novelist who insisted that ideas should make sense, Christ came to me in stories. Slowly, I came to understand that His life, words, sacrifice, and resurrection formed the hidden logic behind every novel, movie, or play that touched my deepest mind.

I was reading a story when that logic finally kicked in. I was in my forties, lying in bed with one of Patrick O'Brian's great seafaring adventure novels. One of the characters, whom I admired, said a prayer before going to sleep, and I thought to myself, ‘Well, if he can pray, so can I.’ I laid the book aside and whispered a three-word prayer in gratitude for the contentment I’d found, and for the work and people I loved: ‘Thank you, God.’

It was a small and even prideful prayer: a self-impressed intellectual’s hesitant experiment with faith. God’s response was an act of extravagant grace. I woke the next morning and everything had changed. There was a sudden clarity and brightness to familiar faces and objects; they were alive with meaning and with my own delight in them. I called this experience ‘the joy of my joy,’ and it came to me again whenever I prayed. Naturally I began to pray every day.”

This simple prayer of thanks eventually led to Klavan pray another prayer; life’s most important prayer in which he put his faith in Jesus. His journey to faith reminds me of James 5:16 where it says, **“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”** (NLT)

For well over 20 years now, here at Redland we have acknowledged the importance and power of prayers like that first prayer of Andrew Klavan. With this in mind, we have 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 I have seen. I’m thinking of the things I mentioned last week, the Trunk or Treat, the Gaga Pit, and the team of people who worked to welcome our Afghan family to our community.

But I’m also thankful for those members of the body who weeded the flower beds and trimmed the hedges, keeping our campus looking good.

I'm thankful for the notes from members in our community who have thanked us for the food pantry and how You used it to meet their physical needs in ways that enable us to show Your great love and grace.

I'm thankful for all the faith conversations that our *Grace In Store* ministry has made possible and for all the faithful volunteers who run it every Wednesday.

I'm thankful that our music ministry has taken root again and have been able to hear our choir again and our orchestra and our youth choir and our bells.

I'm thankful that in this pandemic I have only done ONE Covid funeral, for our brother Doug Davis. I'm so thankful that we know Doug is not dead---but more alive than he has ever been and with You---enjoying the glory of Heaven.

I'm thankful that Grace Groups are back on campus and for the work of Kevin and his teaching team who are working to start more groups.

I'm thankful for the additions to our church we have had this last year: 16---eight people making their profession of faith---and eight Christians moving their membership here. I consider that wonderful for a pandemic year.

I'm thankful for the way our church has responded to our drive to pay off the ROC.

I'm thankful that Upward is back and I get to spend time on the "front lines" in that ministry. I got my roster this week and several of the boys on my team are unchurched---plus I got my wish. Arya is on my team!

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---2021 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 at each service. So, let us now 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 offer our own.

Would you pray with me? *"Heavenly Father, Hear now these, the prayers of Your people:"*

8:30AM Service

Tom Cox

Heavenly Father, as we gather to worship You this Thanksgiving season let us remember Whom all thanks belong to. We have so much to be thankful for. Lord, You have blessed me in many ways – too many ways to count.

You have blessed me with two wonderful children who have given me much joy. And I am very grateful that You have elected them and accepted them into Your flock and blessed our lives. I can live my life in relative peace because of this and to You God I give all the glory and thanks.

Much has happened to me in this past year, and I know all of it was part of Your righteous plan.

My daughter graduated from college, became a schoolteacher, and got married. For me as a father, this was a lot of change, and it was scary. Since my daughter's happiness is a key to my happiness, I am grateful that You have given her joy and hope for the future. Although I will always worry,

I know that putting trust in You Lord has worked out well for me and my children as You continue to give us peace. Also, this year, my son graduated from seminary, landed a good job that will help him financially as he finds His role as your

servant, and has found a very nice church home in Louisville. Like my daughter, his future looks promising, and he seems happy on his current path. A path that You have laid out for him, Lord. Thank You.

There were some major personal disappointments this year as well, but strangely they have shaped me to be a better disciple of Yours, Lord. And even through the tough times, You have given me an abundance of peace and love.

I have felt unloved for many years until You put your arms around me this past year and showed me what true love is. Your love is something I can no longer ignore, and I now crave it. Thank You, God, for giving me a second chance.

Thank You for leading me to this church, Redland Baptist. Thank You for putting the right people in place here; from the pastoral leadership to the Sunday school worship leaders---to the ministerial leadership, to the congregation itself. All of whom have shown me love.

God, You showed us the very definition of love by sending Your only Son, the embodiment of love, to die for us because of our sins. You provided a way when there seemed to be no way. You put Redland Baptist Church in my life when there seemed to be no way. The people here have not only shown me love, but they have also shown that they are willing to hold me accountable as I continue my rough, imperfect journey to lifelong sanctification.

Lord, we are sinners in a sinful world. Please continue to help each one of us with our own unique struggles. Please forgive us and discipline us. Let us understand that Your discipline is a gift. God, we know there is not enough time on this side of Heaven to give You enough praise to match your worth. Please grant our wishes to bless You forever in Heaven. I ask that You continue to empower this church and bless it with the Holy Spirit, to reach out to others in need, to witness, to be an example of commitment to your Word---to continue to imitate the ways of Your Son our Savior by reaching out to the community to spread the good news and to love our neighbors.

I ask that You heal those who need healing, Lord. Let us be grateful for the prayer list that comes out from the church to help us with our daily prayers so we can shoulder each other's burdens and sicknesses. Please look over our families to keep them safe and happy and give them the peace that only You can provide. May we give You the glory God no matter what we may be struggling with, that we continue to praise You and thank You for every breath we take. Lord, please continue to give Pastor Mark the wisdom, the strength, and the tools to lead us in the way that best glorifies You according to Your will.

We love You and we pray for and beg for these things in the precious name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kara Liau ALuben

Dear God,

We would like to thank You for everything that You have given us. Thank You for this year and for helping us too. Thank You for letting us be here right now to worship You, especially because of Covid and many other bad things that is happening right now. We pray for those Who are in Heaven and for all the people who are suffering right now. Thank You for guiding us to make the right choices. Please let everyone live amazing life and continue to bless us all. Thank You for letting people continue real school and work. Because of You, we were all able to communicate in person and even helped many people recover from Covid. We are grateful that You guided the doctors, nurses and all the healthcare workers who took care of injured or sick people. We are also grateful that You helped people discover the vaccine for Covid. Thank You for helping everyone get through these tough years. People are starting to create businesses to donate to those who are in need. Just like "Operation Christmas" where we give things to other people who need our support and help.

*Please guide us and help us so that we can all live a humble and meaningful life...
Thank You so much. Amen!*

Coco and Lydie Kanda

Good Morning Church. My name is Coco Kanda, and these are my wife Lydie and our beautiful children Samuel, Rebecca and Jaden.

Let us pray:

Father God, This past year You have blessed our family in so many ways. Thank You for protecting our family during the pandemic. For good family time during the confinement, allowing us to grow closer to each other and closer to You. As a Good Shepherd, You provided for our needs and kept us under Your shadow. Father, our family is so thankful for our church and for our ministers who always found innovative ways to help us worship You and to serve Your people---either online or in-person, and to stay connected with our church family.

In many ways, during this time of uncertainty, we've seen Your mighty hand at times when we did not feel our best. When we had to face adversity, we remained prayerful and continued to trust You. As a family, during difficult times, we sought found peace and strength in repeatedly reminding ourselves of Your promises in the Bible. Our Faithful God, we are blessed to have experienced many times, that we truly have a covenant God Who hears us, stays near us and guides us by His Holy Spirit. Thank You also for many opportunities to be a blessing to so many of our people back home in Congo and around the world.

For Your Grace, we say with the psalmist:

“What mighty praise, O God, belongs to You in Zion. We will fulfill our vows to You, For You answer our prayers, all of us must come to You.”

*We pray with thanks, in the Mighty name of Your son Jesus, our Lord and Savior,
Amen*

Rob and Cheryl Burba

Rob

Father God, we come to You today with hearts of thanksgiving. We thank You because You are God. You are always faithful to demonstrate Your love toward us in so many ways. We thank You most for the gift of Your Son and the sacrifice He made for our sins. As we've come through the last year of pandemic, Father, we praise You because in all of the struggles and all of the anxious times we knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that “You Got This!”

We may not understand Your plan or “why” this had to happen, but God we know that You are in control, and You will work out Your will in this and every situation. We thank You for the tools like Zoom that allowed us to stay connected to one another in Grace Groups, deacon meetings, church business meetings---and sometimes just to say hello to the friends and family that we couldn't see in person.

Cheryl

Father we thank You for a church that would make the commitment to the technology needed to ensure we could all still worship together even when we couldn't be together in person. We thank You for all those who have given of themselves tirelessly on the AV team, the Hospitality team and in the background to make our online church services possible. And, Father, we thank You that we are able to worship together, in person, once again. While many are still concerned about the impacts of the pandemic, God, You continue to call us to be strong in our faith and trust You in all things.

Rob

Father we thank You for a church that can make a commitment to 5,000 faith conversations and persistently pursue and achieve that goal. We pray that those conversations will result in many new brothers and sisters in Christ. We also pray that our church, having seen how You helped us achieve this goal will also look for new and exciting ways---to see where You may be leading us to pursue other goals that seem beyond our capability to achieve. As Henry Blackaby said in Experiencing God, help us see where You are working in our community and join You there.

Cheryl

Father thank You for the opportunity and freedom that You have provided that I am able to take care of aging parents--- And providing safe travels for the many trips back and forth to Pennsylvania this year. Thank You that as we both turned 60 this year, it has been a year without any major illness in our family.

Rob

Father thank You for our “faith” family – members of this church, neighbors who are fellow believers and many friends near and far---who share our love for You and encourage us as we grow in the exercise of our faith. Thank You for the connections You have provided through our Grace Groups and how You have used these brothers and sisters in Christ to bless our lives---and challenge us to grow deeper in our relationship with You.

Cheryl

Father thank You for the many blessings You have given us. Bless us Father and guide us how best to share those blessings and use the gifts and talents You have given us for Your service and to bless others in Your name.

Rob

Father, we know there are many more ways that You have provided for us, watched over us, directed us and loved on us. Help us be thankful for all of the little things that You do for us every day. All these things we pray in Jesus precious Name. Amen

The Holmes Family

Anna

Thank You for the small things in life. This last year I have been so blessed to spend time with my family and learn more about You and Your faithfulness. Even in hard times, You lead our family to your peaceful rest. Thank You for sisters and friends who bring so much love and joy and encouragement in my faith. Thank You for Mom and Dad who love me so much and want me to follow You and what You say.

Faith

Our Father, Thank You for the beautiful sunrise that reminds me that Your mercies are new every morning. The four lovely unique seasons remind me that even though there are hard times, just like the seasons it changes and You are good through it all. Thank You for the towering mountains that remind You even though they are touch clouds, You are bigger still and nothing is impossible for You. Thank You for my family who make me laugh when it's hard and remind me of their love and how Your love is greater even then theirs. I am so thankful that this year my family and I got to travel to Yellowstone National Park. There were beautiful flowers and plenty of animals and even though there was a pandemic in the world You still took care of them and You care for us even more.

Jillian

Dear Heavenly Father,

*As I reflect on this past year, I am in awe of Your continual goodness and faithfulness to me. One example of this is Your handiwork and guidance in the planning and building of the gaga ball pit. There were so many different parts to the project, but You provided all the volunteers, materials, and time needed to complete it. Thank You for making me more reliant on You and growing me through the process. I pray that others will see Your faithfulness through the gaga ball pit, and You will receive the glory for it. =Finally, thank You for speaking truth to me through Your Word. I specifically appreciate how Hebrews 10:23 has been an encouragement to me and my family by reminding us that if “**...we hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, [...] He Who promised is faithful.**”*

Lauren

Lord, I thank You for the opportunity to come before Your throne of grace and praise Your name! You are kind and loving. You work all things together for our good and draw us closer to yourself when we walk through trials and pain. I praise You that Your burden is light, Your yoke is easy, and that we can bring all of our sorrows to You, to the foot of the cross. I praise You that during this pandemic, we have become more dependent on You to sustain us. We have become more mindful to submit each and every day into Your loving hands. You have promised to never leave nor forsake us and You have ALWAYS been faithful and will continue to be true to Your promises. You are constant in a world with so many

uncertainties. I thank You for the ministries of Redland that have been able to be in person this year, such as: Wave of Grace choir and handbells, Wednesday night dinners, Ignition and Fuel, American Heritage Girls, Upward basketball and the church library. I thank You for the fellowship of other believers and that we can share one another's joys, life celebrations, as well as help carry one another's burdens when life is difficult. Your provision is perfect.

Thank You for Your Holy Spirit that guides us, gives us wisdom to navigate through this life, and resides within us, so that we may be shining lights in a dark world! Thank You Lord Jesus that You make all things new. You are the CURE, you **"understand, redeem, and empower"** us!

Thank You for Pastors Mark, Bill, Kevin, and Peggy for teaching us Your Word, being Your faithful servants, and encouraging my family to draw close to You.

Brad

Thank You Father, for Your Son, Jesus, by Whose blood we are made clean and justified in Your sight. Thank You for setting us free from the bondage of sin, to walk according to Your Word, by Your grace. Thank You for my wife and daughters, who endeavor to walk worthy of their calling as Your beloved children. Lauren and I are so grateful for this precious time with them in their youth, to be made stewards over them, and prepare them for the years ahead. Thank You for the grace and gentleness You have bestowed upon them, and trained them to follow after You.

Thank You for our health, knowing that You hold all of our days in Your Hands. Moment by moment, You sustain us by Your mercy, and protect us from evil. Thank You for providing a home to shelter us and for our family to create memories together, a job to provide for our physical needs and to contribute to Your kingdom work---and a community of believers to encourage us to faith and good works. Thank You for the grace groups here at RBC, where we are sharpened by the study of Your Word. We pray You continue Your mighty work to sanctify us, as we learn to obey and follow Your teachings, and in doing so, become more like Christ our Savior

11:00AM Service

Grant Broadhurst

Well, God, You know what sort of year this has been for me. You've answered my prayers about so many things this year, have worked in my life and heart in so many ways, and have given me a sense of purpose I never knew possible.

And even when I offhandedly asked You for a bookshelf, you provided it so quickly. Most of all, God, You have provided me with the desire, ability, and opportunity to pursue this Masters in Apologetics at HBU. It's so strange how I've changed, and yet here I am. This year, I have studied the historical case for the resurrection of Jesus, the historical reliability of aspects of the New Testament, the case for the deity of Christ---reasons to believe in Your existence, and so much more. Thank You for this, God. It's changed my life. Please change my life more.

And You've been very patient with me during this time. This process has often been hard on me as I strive seek truth no matter what, but You have cared for me through it all. And it's true. It's really true. I had once feared that the oasis I loved so deeply would turn out to be a mirage, but the oasis has turned out to be stronger and deeper and clearer and more real than I ever hoped.

You're the foundation of reality, and reality bears the marks of Your hands.

So thank You, God, for giving me knowledge of You. Thank You, God, for making yourself known in the things that have been made and through Jesus of Nazareth. For I know Jesus came in the flesh and rose in the body. Reason leads straight to the cross and the empty tomb. But we still must come to the cross to receive the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of eternal life. But You didn't have to come, God. You didn't have to do anything for us, and yet out of love, You have.

In 2020, I saw your reality more strongly than ever before—and I thought I had seen it strongly before. In this past year--- I have seen your reality even more clearly, but what has grown increasingly clear to me is that You could have chosen any number of possible worlds, yet here we are. You didn't need to create the universe, but You did. You didn't need to create

the universe in such a way that it is fine-tuned for life, but You did. You didn't need to create human life, but You did. You didn't need to create the particular human beings that exist, but You did.

Somehow out of all the possibilities, God, You chose to create this world and these people and me. Our very existences are immensely improbable, and yet here we are. By creating us, You have given us a chance to participate in the cosmic adventure that is being alive and knowing You. Is there any gift like life, God? Without life, we can have no other gifts-- not even the gift of knowing You. So, thank You, God, for making us, giving us life, and giving us light to know You.

But we have all done evil things, and the wages of our sin is death. So You came to die on our behalf at our hands. He Who knew no sin became sin so that we might become righteous. But God, You didn't have to do that either. There's no indication that You gave the fallen angels any such offer of grace. Yet You chose to offer fallen humanity grace, eternal life, and a restored relationship with You. That's nothing to take for granted, God. Thank You, LORD.

So, this Thanksgiving, God, I thank You for all You have done, do, and will do. For I am painfully aware that You could have done otherwise, and yet here I am. Here we all are. Because of You.

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." - 1 Corinthians 13:12

In Jesus' name, amen.

Caden Liu

Dear God, thank You for Everything. Thank You for giving us Redland go to and that You gave us healthy bodies to protect us from covid-19 thank You. You protected us throughout these crazy months. Thank You for keeping the church strong. Thank You for giving me an amazing youth pastor who teaches me and helps me. Throughout these months none of my family members got covid and I also thank You that all of us are safe. There were many times that I could have gotten covid but instead, You protected me. I thank You that this year during youth we could go to Skycroft. Even though there were many people there none of the youth got covid. without You we all are nothing; a verse in 2nd Corinthians 5:17 says the old is gone, the new has come. It reminds me that if I trust in You my old self is gone and my new self is here. Thank You for giving us the technology so that during the first few months of covid-19 we could Watch Sunday service online. Even though I have done many things against You You still loved me. You still protected me even when sinned. You still helped and I thank You so very much. I thank You that You gave me parents with great wisdom to guide me as I turned thirteen this year.

Thank You that You gave me parents with patience to teach me and love me. Even though the toughest times, my parents forgave me. And I thank You for everything You gave. A house, a car, a bed, a family, and last of all a church to go to.

Thank You, God. I pray In Jesus' name Amen

Patrick Germain

Heavenly Father, I thank You for all You have done for me and my family. Thank You, Lord, for Your great love and blessings over our lives. In the middle of another covid 19 pandemic year, You have protected us from the virus. Lord, we thank You for that. Lord, we praise You and thank You for being with our son Deshawn when he got into car accident last month. Lord we know that You were the One Who kept him safe from his vehicle which was totaled.

Father we have so much to thank You for.

Thank You, Lord, for being our Protector. Thank You Lord, for being our Provider. Thank You, Lord, for how You have guided our steps this year. Thank You, Lord, for mercy, for the hunger for righteousness, for forgiveness, for purity, for providing for our needs. Father, thank You for the precious gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. We declare that every day is Thanksgiving Day to You oh Lord. For You are good. Your mercy endures forever.

We praise You and we glorify You. We shout out hallelujah, thank you Jesus. You are worthy of all the glory, of all the honor, and of all the praise. it's in the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

Owen Toomey

*Thank you God for--my teacher, Ms. Hadley---friends---my sister, Sydney, and my mom and dad
---Ms. Erica for teaching me piano---Tang Soo Do---Keeping my family healthy and safe through Coronavirus---for all the seasons*

These are some examples of how God had blessed me.

Blaine and Laurel Nesbitt

Dear God,

Thank You for bringing us here today. Thank You for the opportunity to be back in Your house with Your people. While this year has not been without trials and tribulations, we are so grateful for the blessings You gave us. Thank You for holding us close during those times. Thank You for the time spent with loved ones before they entered Your presence. Thank You for the health of our family. Thank You for the peace You've granted us regarding the unknown of our future.

We praise You and are so grateful for showing us that in this season of upcoming change and unknown that You are in control and everything is going to be okay. Thank You for showing us your love and presence even in the smallest moments, for those moments remind us to that if You care about the littlest things---imagine how much You care about the big things in our lives.

Lastly, thank You so much for our church. Thank You for bringing us to Redland. Thank You for a Pastor who speaks the truth in love. Thank You for a body of believers who love our family so well. Thank You for Sunday school teachers and Awanas teachers who invest week after week in our kids and love on them. We are so blessed by these individuals. Thank You for giving our son a love of church and learning about You. Guide us, protect us, and comfort us in this season of thanksgiving.

In Your name, Amen.

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 acknowledged all God has taught us in this study—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?