

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

September 13, 2026 *"Psalms: Songs of the Soul. A song of Thanksgiving"*

I Intro.

We're moving into fall and we're in the middle of a unique series. There's a lot going on at NCC and you'll want to keep up with everything that's happening. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

Music holds such an integral and important place and purpose in our world. Music can do things that no other medium can do. Music enhances what's happening in a movie or TV show. You can only listen to a score and guess what's happening in that scene without even watching it. Music is walkout music for baseball players. It's halftime shows. It riles a crowd up at sporting events. (Zombie Nation - Crazy Train). And what's up with Sweet Caroline? And just imagine worship without...worship. Songs connect with a deep part of our soul. Something happens when we hear a song that brings back memories, or connects the inside of us with something greater outside of ourselves. And it still doesn't compare to how important songs were to the ancient Israelites.

We're in the second Sunday of our series about the Psalms called: **"Songs of the Soul"**. The psalms were written as a way for the people of God, in community, to experience the presence of God, about everyday things. These psalms fill their souls. That's what music can do. It's why we have a time of worship. Last week we hit a psalm of lament. (Fun wasn't it?) Today, a psalm of thanksgiving.

III Sunday.

I'm going to go all around this specific psalm theme for a couple of reasons. One, I want to show you a video, because I just discovered it...accidentally. It's so amazing I want to share it. Two, this video shows us a powerful truth, about how we're made. That we don't always tap into. There are amazing things God has placed inside of us that don't come alive until they're awakened inside of us and we're made aware of them. If we don't tap into our inner divine self, all the things God has placed inside of us, we're missing the fullness of life that God desires for us. And has designed us for. Have you ever discovered a feature on your phone or in your car that you didn't know you had? And that one new thing becomes an essential thing for you. I found out about 'quick tap' that allows me to turn on my flashlight with two quick taps.

We showed this video in worship, and I wanted to post the link in our devotional.

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I am just so amazed we all have that inside of us...and we don't know it. We just need a little push, guidance, inspiration, instruction, to open up this thing inside of us that just brings a new joy to life. And I believe the type of psalm we're hitting today does just that.

I want to make the same claim that unique and amazing things are built inside of us. Divinely placed things are hidden inside of us. And there is an automatic response that kicks in when we do one thing specifically. When we practice out loud voicing of thankfulness, there are things that happen inside of our body, physically and spiritually, that only expressing gratitude can open up. I can't help but believe this is why all through scripture there are teachings, and calls, to practice thankfulness and gratitude... continually. Of course, because we're 'the church', we tend to frame it in the context of shaming you, and guiltting you to be grateful. **What's wrong with you?! ? With all that God has done for you, why can't you just be more grateful?!**

For some reason the church likes to turn beautiful gifts into painful obligations.

When we look at the benefits of practicing gratitude, thankfulness. When we understand those scriptures that talk about being grateful from a perspective of God's love and desire for us to share all the good things in life. Practicing gratitude doesn't become a command loaded with guilt and shame for not being grateful. We begin to understand practicing thankfulness as a gift. A practice that unlocks all sorts of good stuff inside of us that brings us joy and peace.

So, don't think of practicing gratitude, thankfulness, as some joyless, guilt induced, discipline to make us less entitled and more appreciative. But see thankfulness as a gift that God has given us to unlock all of the wonderful and beautiful things that God has placed inside of us. When we come together as the body of Christ, to worship and celebrate communally all the good things God has given us, then something happens inside of us that can only come from expressing thankfulness.

We'll point out some things in this psalm about thankfulness that will help us unlock specific things God has placed within us. This psalm only uses the word thankfulness once. And if you do a search through the psalms, you will find a lot of the psalms labeled as psalms of thanksgiving do the same thing. It seems that the word thankfulness doesn't need to be said out loud. Thankfulness should be seen as just the regular practice of gratitude. But all through this psalm, you'll see important elements that make up a grateful heart and spirit. And how we can live a life of thankfulness. Practicing a life of gratitude will unlock, open, release things inside of us that bring joy to our life.

We're going to walk through the different elements that talk about what's at the heart of thankfulness. This will be an interactive devotional. I will ask you to participate, answering questions as we move through this specific psalm.

Psalm 116

1. Faithfulness of God. This is where true thankfulness begins.

I love the LORD because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath! Death wrapped its ropes around me; the terrors of the grave overtook me. I saw only trouble and sorrow. ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "Please, LORD, save me!"

We're going to start specifically here. Psalm 116 doesn't begin with generating a list of all the external things we're grateful for. Health, a roof over our head, friends, job, family, etc. It expresses thankfulness for the faithfulness of God. It's simply recognizing what we are thankful for. It's in full on awareness of the faithfulness of God that gives us the courage to call out to him.

QUESTIONS.

How have you experienced God's faithfulness?

What gives you the courage to call upon God?

A good starting point for living in thankfulness is taking the focus off of ourselves. Our wants and needs. And placing our focus, attention, onto God.

2. Experiencing God's presence.

How kind the LORD is! How good he is! So merciful, this God of ours! The LORD protects those of childlike faith; I was facing death, and he saved me. Let my soul be at rest again, for the LORD has been good to me. He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

This is very specific about the nature of God, rather than listing tangible things. It names how God has been there. How the psalmist finds rest, sabbath, green pastures in God. And how we can respond to God's presence in our lives. It recognizes how our life would be without God that brings thankfulness. This is the ability to express gratitude without rattling off a list of specifics.

QUESTIONS.

How do you find rest in God?

And sometimes thankfulness isn't just listing off all the things God has done for you. But sometimes it's how you have experienced God's presence in your life.

3. Recognizing the need, in thankfulness, there is a constant awareness of being in the presence of God.

And so I walk in the LORD's presence as I live here on earth! I believed in you, so I said, "I am deeply troubled, LORD." In my anxiety I cried out to you, "These people are all liars!" What can I offer the LORD for all he has done for me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the LORD's name for saving me. I will keep my promises to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

Gratitude and thankfulness isn't just a feeling we have. It's something that is real and tangible, that causes a noticeable reaction within us. Thankfulness grows out of us because of our awareness of the presence of God. Deep soul searching for how we can appropriately respond to the goodness of God. Genuine thankfulness moves you to commit to YOUR future with God.

QUESTIONS.

How are you different because of being in the presence of God?

Thankfulness is a catalyst that triggers something specific inside of you that moves you to...move. Practicing thankfulness unlocks something that God has already placed in you.

4. Thankfulness realigns relationships.

The LORD cares deeply when his loved ones die. O LORD, I am your servant; yes, I am your servant, born into your household; you have freed me from my chains. I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people- in the house of the LORD in the heart of Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

Thankfulness realigns our relationships. With God...and with others. We cannot take for granted our relationship with God, when we consider what he has done for us. And that realization of what we've received, moves us to share with others. In addition, I will not only MAKE vows, but I will KEEP them also. With God and with others. True gratitude leads us to just live our life differently. Changes the

course of our life forever, and that proves the nature of our thankfulness.

QUESTIONS.

How can you specifically live in thankfulness in your relationship with God?

How would others experience thankfulness from being around you?

When people experience you, they should easily see and feel the gratefulness you just have for everything in life. It's not toxic positivity or spiritual bypassing. You're not denying how difficult life can be. But you're growing a maturity, a groundedness, in which you can experience thankfulness even in the most difficult of times.

IV Challenge.

Thankfulness is relationship focused...not benefit focused. You can see that in this last part of Psalm 116. True thankfulness unlocks a selflessness that seeks to pursue relationships with God and others. And to be freed from what we want to gain from it. We practice thankfulness, not only because we're called to. We practice thankfulness because it's good for us. Thankfulness releases our soul from things that hold us hostage, that steal our joy. It unlocks sacred and divine things within us that are good for us.

What are those things that practicing thankfulness can unlock?

Humility. Generosity. Resilience. Perspective. Presence. Contentment. Peace. Joy. Identity-who and whose you are.

All of these are already in you. You don't have to strive, strain, or hustle to acquire these. They're gifts...already placed inside of you. You just need to sing songs of thankfulness to unlock these things already inside of you.

Challenge this week. Find ANY song that makes you experience thankfulness...and put it on repeat. You don't have to play it continually, but have it in your head. Let it wake you up in the morning, and quiet you to sleep at night. And every morning when you get up, and just before you go to bed. Name just one thing you're thankful for. Something you have and about God. The psalm of thankfulness is a gift that will awaken all sorts of really cool things inside of you. Sing it everyday. It's an important song of your soul.