

Mini Sermon Series: Thank You J-E-S-U-S!

November 15, 2025

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC APP, everyone! This is the Sermon and Commentary portion of the APP, and as you scroll down, you'll find Spiritual insights & Commentary tied to this week's sermon. Enjoy and dive in to be better equipped in God's Word.

This Sunday, we're kicking off a two-week series centered on Thanksgiving, titled: "Thank You J-E-S-U-S!" Here in America, we've set aside one day for Thanksgiving... but if that's all the thanks we offer, we're in trouble.

In modern-day America, we're surrounded by negativity, vulgarity, hatred, and anger; it fills the very air we breathe—sadly! We must: "guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7b). We can't let Satan rent space in our minds... We can't let Satan rent space in our minds. No, that's not a typo—it's written twice, so take note of that truth.

The reality is, some people will suck Thanksgiving right out of us. (I share a true work story in the sermon—check it out!) I had two individuals who, per se, drove me crazy. One day, I'd had enough, and in the midst of a chaotic moment, I shouted in a very loud voice—JESUS! It silenced the noise, and one of my friends was stunned by the power of that one name. It's no ordinary name; J-E-S-U-S is the Savior of the world.

When was the last time you thanked Jesus for all He's done for you? This week, I'm getting the whole congregation involved as we say Thank You to Jesus for: (short version) "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." ~ Romans 5:8~ Thank You Jesus!

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption,

the forgiveness of sins.” ~ Colossians 1:13-14 ~Thank You Jesus!

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” ~ Ephesians 2:4-5~ Thank You Jesus!

This Sunday, we'll dive deeper into giving thanks to our Lord. Come be encouraged and equipped by God's Holy Word.

In Christ,
Rev. Brad Standfest

To Listen to this week's Sermon: “Thank You JESUS!” Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Texts

Romans 5:8 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%205%3A8%20&version=NIV>

Colossians 1:13-14
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%201%3A13-14&version=NIV>

Colossians 3:15-17
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%203%3A15-17&version=NIV>

Ephesians 2:4-5
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%202%3A4-5%20&version=NIV>

2 Corinthians 5:21
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205%3A21&version=NIV>

Galatians 1:3-4
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%201%3A3-4%20&version=NIV>

1 Peter 2:9

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%202%3A9&version=NIV>

John 3:16 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203%3A16%20&version=NIV>

Titus 3:4-5: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Titus%203%3A4-5&version=NIV>

Spiritual Reflections and Insights on Thanksgiving

Thank You Jesus Thoughts

In a broken, fallen world saturated with discouragement, anger, and bitterness, we as Christians are called to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7). This is no small task. The negativity that fills the atmosphere around us—sometimes seeping into the very air we breathe—tries to take root in our minds, seeking to rent space where it doesn't belong. Yet, as followers of Christ, we are called to rise above this toxic tide, anchoring ourselves in the truth of God's Word and the hope of His promises.

When we pause to peel back the layers of life's challenges, we uncover an abundance of reasons to be grateful—so much to be thankful for! The Scriptures paint a vivid picture of God's love and grace, compelling us to say, "Thank You, Jesus!" Consider these passages, each a beacon of hope and a testament to His redeeming work:

- **Romans 5:8:** "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- **Colossians 1:13-14:** "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."
- **Ephesians 2:4-5:** "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."
- **** 2 Corinthians 5:21:**** "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
- **Galatians 1:3-4:** "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us

from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.”

- **1 Peter 2:9:** “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

- **John 3:16:** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

- **Titus 3:4-5:** “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

How can we not say, “Thank You, Jesus,” when we reflect on these truths? These verses remind us that, despite our sinfulness, Christ died for us, rescued us from darkness, made us righteous, and granted us eternal life through His mercy and grace. Because of Jesus, we have been called out of the dominion of darkness and brought into His marvelous light, destined to live eternally with Him in the glory of heaven. This is the heart of our salvation, the cornerstone of our gratitude, and the hope that sustains us in a world that often feels heavy with despair.

Beyond the spiritual blessings, we are surrounded by tangible gifts in this life that deserve our thanksgiving. During this Thanksgiving season, let’s not overlook the provision of clean drinking water, food on our tables and in our refrigerators, and the opportunities we have through jobs and livelihoods. These are not small things—they are daily reminders of God’s faithfulness and care for us. In a world where many lack these necessities, our gratitude should overflow for both the eternal and temporal blessings we’ve received.

As we navigate the negativity that surrounds us, let’s intentionally shift our focus to the goodness of God. The enemy may try to distract us with bitterness or discouragement, but we can choose to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). By immersing ourselves in Scripture, prayer, and worship, we guard our hearts and minds, allowing the Holy Spirit to renew our perspective. Let’s cultivate a habit of gratitude, not just for one day, but as a way of

life, declaring “Thank You, Jesus” for His sacrifice, His love, and His unending provision.

This Thanksgiving, may our hearts be filled with praise for the One who has done infinitely more than we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Let’s encourage one another to speak His name—JESUS—with boldness and gratitude, knowing that it carries the power to silence the chaos and transform our hearts. Thank You, Jesus, for all You have done, are doing, and will do. May our lives be a living testimony of Your grace and a constant song of thanksgiving.

(1, Rev. Brad Standfest)

A Short Glance of Thanksgiving in the Bible

The theme of thanksgiving is deeply woven throughout the narrative of the Bible, from the sacrifices and songs of the Old Testament to the teachings and epistles of the New Testament. This reflection on thanksgiving reveals God’s desire for His people to cultivate a heart of gratitude.

In the Old Testament, thanksgiving is often expressed through offerings and worship. For example, the Israelites celebrated the Feast of Weeks, later known as Pentecost, which was a time to give thanks for the harvest and recognize God’s provision (Leviticus 23:15-22). Worship, in the form of thanksgiving, is demonstrated by King David, who frequently expressed gratitude in the Psalms: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalm 136:1). These practices underscore the importance of acknowledging God’s blessings and faithfulness.

Thanksgiving in the Old Testament is also seen in narratives where individuals express gratitude for personal deliverance and blessings. Consider Hannah, who prayed fervently for a child and, upon receiving Samuel, gave thanks and dedicated him to the Lord’s service (1 Samuel 1-2). This gratitude extends beyond personal gain to an acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty and goodness.

Transitioning to the New Testament, the practice of thanksgiving becomes a lifestyle for believers, rooted in the transformative work of

Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul frequently encourages the early church to give thanks. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, he writes, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” This call to gratitude is not contingent on circumstances but is a response to the salvation and new life offered through Christ.

The New Testament also highlights Jesus Himself as an exemplar of thanksgiving; at the Last Supper, He gave thanks before breaking the bread (Luke 22:19). This act of gratitude on the eve of His crucifixion highlights the profound nature of thanksgiving as an expression of trust and submission to God’s greater plan.

Furthermore, the concept of thanksgiving in the Bible is intricately tied to peace and contentment. Philippians 4:6-7 advises believers: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This passage illustrates how a thankful heart can lead to divine peace, enriching a believer’s life beyond material blessings.

Ultimately, the biblical call to thanksgiving invites believers to recognize the breadth of God’s love and grace. In Christ, we have the ultimate reason for gratitude: redemption and the promise of eternal life. Our thankfulness is a response to His unending mercy and abundant provision.

By cultivating a habit of gratitude, we align ourselves with the biblical perspective that nothing is too small or too large to bring before God in thanksgiving. We are encouraged to remember the manifold blessings we have received, including the intangible gifts of faith, hope, and love. Thus, in both the Old and New Testaments, thanksgiving is presented not merely as an act, but as a reflection of a heart transformed by God’s goodness. (1)

A short reflection on The Meaning of Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving, at its core, is far more than a single day marked on a calendar—it is a vibrant, active, and joyful response to God’s unending

grace. Rooted in Scripture, the concept of Thanksgiving is beautifully captured in the Hebrew words *yadah* and *todah*, and the Greek *eucharistia*, all of which convey praise, gratitude, and worship. These terms evoke an image of extended hands lifted in adoration, voices raised in verbal confession, and hearts pouring out songs of praise to the Lord. As Psalm 26:7 declares, “that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of your wondrous works,” Thanksgiving is an outward expression of inward gratitude, a celebration of God’s goodness and His promises for the future, grounded in dependence on His unmerited favor.

In its spiritual essence, Thanksgiving is a multifaceted act of worship. It involves visible and heartfelt gratitude expressed through communal celebration, sacrificial offerings, and a deep acknowledgment of God’s provision and mercy. It is a call to reflect on His “wondrous works” and to respond with joy, not only for what He has done but for who He is. This sacred act of giving thanks transcends time and culture, connecting us to the eternal truth of God’s faithfulness.

In the United States, Thanksgiving also carries a rich historical and cultural significance, observed annually as a civil holiday on the fourth Thursday in November. The tradition traces its origins to 1621, when Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony appointed a day for public praise and prayer following the first harvest. This act of gratitude, shared with the Wampanoag people, marked the beginning of a practice that spread throughout the New England colonies. The first national observance came in 1789, when President George Washington, at the request of Congress, proclaimed Thursday, November 26, as a day of “public thanksgiving and prayer.” His proclamation urged the people to acknowledge “with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God” and to seek His forgiveness, the spread of true religion and virtue, and His provision for all mankind.

By 1817, New York State officially recognized Thanksgiving, and by 1859, the holiday had spread to 28 states and two territories. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln established the last Thursday in November as a day of national observance, a tradition continued by Presidents Andrew Johnson in 1867 and Ulysses S. Grant in 1870, and upheld ever since. Each year, the president issues a proclamation calling on

citizens, federal officials, and others to observe the day with thanksgiving and prayer, while state governors echo this call, suspending public business to honor the occasion. (1)

Historians note that the roots of Thanksgiving may extend beyond the American context, drawing parallels to ancient traditions such as the Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles, the Greek Harvest Feast (Thesmophoria), the Roman Cerealia, and the English Harvest Home. These celebrations, like Thanksgiving, centered on gratitude for God's provision and dependence on His bounty. In Canada, a similar holiday is observed on the last Monday in October, designated by the governor-general as a legal holiday to acknowledge God's providence.

For Christians, Thanksgiving is an opportunity to weave together the spiritual and historical dimensions of the holiday. While the world around us may be filled with negativity and division, we are called to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7) and to rise above the noise with gratitude. The Scriptures remind us of God's immeasurable gifts—His love demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice (Romans 5:8), His rescue from darkness (Colossians 1:13-14), and His mercy that makes us alive in Him (Ephesians 2:4-5). These truths compel us to lift our hands, open our mouths, and proclaim, "Thank You, Jesus!"

As we gather this Thanksgiving, whether around tables laden with food or in quiet moments of reflection, let us embrace the full meaning of the day. Let us celebrate not only the provision of clean water, abundant food, and opportunities to thrive but also the eternal hope we have in Christ. May our thanksgiving be an active, joyful response to God's grace—a casting upward of praise, a communal celebration of His goodness, and a bold declaration of His wondrous works. In a world that often forgets to give thanks, let us lead the way, proclaiming with grateful hearts the name of Jesus, the source of all our blessings. (1)

Thanksgiving in the Psalms: A Personal Journey of Gratitude

The Psalms pulse with the raw, heartfelt gratitude of the psalmists, offering a timeless guide for weaving thanksgiving into the fabric of our daily lives. These ancient songs—bursting with praise, reflection, and remembrance of God’s goodness—aren’t just poetic words; they’re an invitation to experience God’s presence personally, to let His love and faithfulness transform our hearts. For me, and for each of us, the Psalms of thanksgiving provide a roadmap to cultivate a life of gratitude, grounding us in God’s grace and filling us with hope, even when life feels heavy. Let’s explore how these Psalms—Psalm 100, Psalm 103, Psalm 136, Psalm 107, and Psalm 92—can inspire us to make thanksgiving a personal, daily practice that reshapes our perspective and draws us closer to God.

The Heart of Thanksgiving in the Psalms

The Psalms paint vivid pictures of gratitude in action:

- **Psalm 100 calls me to “shout for joy to the Lord” and “worship with gladness”** (Psalm 100:1-2). It’s a reminder that gratitude isn’t quiet—it’s loud, joyful, and communal, inviting me to approach God with a heart full of praise for His enduring love.
- **Psalm 103 urges me to “bless the Lord” and “forget not all his benefits”** (Psalm 103:2). It’s a personal challenge to recall God’s forgiveness, healing, and mercy in my own life, stirring me to praise Him for His love that never fails.
- **Psalm 136, with its refrain “His love endures forever,”** recounts God’s faithfulness through history, encouraging me to see His steadfast love in my own story—through every trial and triumph.
- **Psalm 107 shares stories of God’s deliverance, repeating,** “Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love” (Psalm 107:8). It prompts me to reflect on moments when God answered my cries, rescuing me from my own distress.
- **Psalm 92 declares it’s “good to praise the Lord”** morning and night (Psalm 92:1-2). It invites me to make gratitude a rhythm, framing my days with thanksgiving for God’s love and faithfulness.

These Psalms aren't just ancient words—they're a call to action, showing me how to live with a grateful heart in a world that often pulls me toward negativity or distraction. They teach me that thanksgiving is personal, active, and transformative, rooting me in God's truth and filling me with joy.

Personal Insights for Cultivating Gratitude

The Psalms offer practical, personal ways to make gratitude a daily reality. Here's how they speak to me and can guide us all:

1. Pause to Remember God's Goodness: Psalm 103's call to "forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2) hits home. Life moves fast, and I can easily overlook God's blessings—big and small. I'm learning to slow down, maybe over morning coffee, and think about specific ways God has shown up: the answered prayer for a struggling friend, the strength to get through a tough day, or even the simple gift of a warm meal. Reflection turns my heart toward gratitude, helping me see God's hand in my life.

2. Express Gratitude with Joy: Psalm 100's "shout for joy" and "joyful songs" (Psalm 100:1-2) inspire me to let my gratitude spill out. I'm not a great singer, but humming a worship song in the car or praying aloud with enthusiasm lifts my spirit. Recently, I started saying "Thank You, Jesus" out loud when I notice His blessings—like a beautiful sunset or a kind word from a coworker. It's a small act, but it makes gratitude feel alive and real.

3. Anchor in God's Unchanging Love: Psalm 136's "His love endures forever" is a lifeline when life feels shaky. When I'm stressed or discouraged, I remind myself of God's character—His kindness, mercy, and faithfulness never waver. I've started writing down one attribute of God each day (like "God is my provider") and reflecting on how it's true in my life. This practice keeps me grounded, turning my focus from worry to worship.

4. Celebrate Personal Rescues: Psalm 107's stories of deliverance resonate deeply. I can think of times God pulled me through—lonely seasons, financial stress, or moments of doubt. One night, overwhelmed by anxiety, I prayed, and God gave me peace I

couldn't explain. Recalling these moments fuels my gratitude. I've started sharing these stories with my small group, and it's amazing how it sparks thankfulness in others, too.

5. Make Gratitude a Daily Habit: Psalm 92's rhythm of praising God "in the morning" and "at night" (Psalm 92:2) challenges me to bookend my days with thanksgiving. I've begun starting my mornings by naming three things I'm thankful for and ending my nights by reflecting on how I saw God's faithfulness. This habit is like a reset button, helping me face each day with hope and close it with peace. (1)

Practical Steps to Live Out Thanksgiving

1. Morning Prayer of Thanks: Start your day with a quick prayer, thanking God for His presence and naming specific blessings—like my family, health, or the chance to serve Him. Psalm 92:2 inspires me to proclaim His love first thing. Try it: before you check your phone, whisper a prayer of gratitude.

2. Read a Psalm Daily: Read a Psalm each morning—Psalm 100 or 103 are favorites. Read slowly, letting the words sink in, and pray them back to God. You can pick one Psalm a day or revisit a favorite, asking God to speak through it.

3. Worship Through Music: Make a playlist of worship songs that echo the Psalms' themes, like "Great Are You Lord" or "10,000 Reasons." Find songs that lift your heart and let them be your soundtrack of praise.

4. Keep a Gratitude Journal: Each morning, jot down three things you're thankful for in a notebook. It could be a kind gesture, a verse that encouraged you, or even coffee! This mirrors the psalmists' habit of recounting God's deeds. Start small—write one thing you're grateful for each day.

5. Meditate on God's Word: Pick a verse about God's character, like Psalm 136's "His love endures forever," and think about it during the day. It's like carrying a piece of God's truth with you. Try memorizing a short verse and repeating it when you need a gratitude

boost.

6. Notice Creation: Start stepping outside for a moment each morning, even just to feel the breeze or see the sky. Psalm 19:1 says “the heavens declare the glory of God,” and it’s true—nature points me to praise. Take a second to look up and thank God for His creation.

7. Speak Encouragement: Start each day by saying something kind—to yourself or someone else. Maybe it’s a text to a friend or a word of affirmation. Proverbs 16:24 says kind words are “sweet to the soul,” and they create a ripple effect of positivity. Try it: share one encouraging word each morning.

(1)

A Personal Transformation Through Gratitude

The Psalms are teaching me that gratitude isn’t just a feeling—it’s a choice, a discipline, and a gift. When I’m tempted to grumble about a long day or a tough situation, Psalm 100 reminds me to shout for joy instead. When I feel overwhelmed, Psalm 107 points me to God’s past faithfulness, giving me hope for today. And when I’m distracted, Psalm 92 calls me to pause and praise, morning and night.

This journey of thanksgiving is personal for each of us. For me, it’s meant noticing God’s hand in small moments—like a conversation that lifted my spirits or a quiet evening with my Bible. It’s meant choosing to say “Thank You, Jesus” even when life feels messy, trusting that His love endures forever. The Psalms show me that gratitude doesn’t ignore pain; it shines through it, pointing to the God who is with me in every season.

As you lean into the Psalms’ call to thanksgiving, let them shape your heart. Maybe you’re like me, needing a reminder to slow down and reflect. Or maybe you’re in a season where gratitude feels hard. Wherever you are, the Psalms invite you to start small—name one blessing, sing one song, pray one prayer. Let gratitude become your rhythm, from sunrise to sundown, transforming your days with the joy of God’s presence.

Let’s live like the psalmists, proclaiming with the voice of thanksgiving

(Psalm 26:7) and telling of God's wondrous works. May our lives be a personal testimony of His love, radiating gratitude that draws us—and others—closer to Him. (LOGOS Bible, Rev. Brad Standfest)

Commentary on Main Scriptures

A Biblical Reflection on God's Love and Salvation: Commentary on Key Scriptures

The Scriptures you've provided—Romans 5:8, Colossians 1:13-14, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 1:3-4, 1 Peter 2:9, John 3:16, and Titus 3:4-5—form a rich tapestry of God's love, mercy, and redemptive plan for humanity. Together, they paint a vivid picture of a God who pursues us with relentless grace, transforms us through Christ's sacrifice, and calls us to live as His chosen people. Drawing from insights inspired by the Life Application Bible commentary and weaving these verses into a coherent reflection, let's explore the profound truths of these passages, their implications for our lives, and how they inspire a heart of thanksgiving.

The Foundation of God's Love and Sacrifice

At the heart of these Scriptures is the transformative truth of God's love, demonstrated through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 declares, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The Life Application Bible notes that this verse reveals the depth of God's love: it is not contingent on our worthiness. While we were still rebels, entrenched in sin and far from God, Christ chose to die for us. This act of love is not merely a historical event but a present reality, showing us that God's love is proactive, initiating reconciliation before we could earn it. For me, this truth is humbling—it means that even in my worst moments, God saw me as worth saving. It calls me to live with gratitude, knowing that my salvation rests on His grace, not my performance.

Similarly, **John 3:16**—perhaps the most well-known verse in Scripture—proclaims, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The Life Application Bible emphasizes that God's love extends to the entire world, transcending barriers of race, culture, or

status. The word “gave” underscores the cost of this love: God sacrificed His only Son to offer us eternal life. This verse invites personal reflection: God’s love is universal, but it’s also deeply personal. He gave His Son for me. This truth compels me to respond with faith and to share this hope with others, living as a witness to the love that changes everything.

Galatians 1:3-4 echoes this theme: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” The Life Application Bible highlights that Christ’s death was purposeful—to rescue us from the grip of a sinful world and its destructive patterns. This rescue is not just for eternity but for the here and now, freeing us from the “present evil age” of selfishness, corruption, and despair. Personally, this reminds me that Christ’s sacrifice empowers me to live differently—to reject the world’s values and embrace God’s will. It’s a call to gratitude for the freedom I have in Christ and a challenge to align my life with His purposes.

The Mechanism of Salvation: Grace and Mercy

The Scriptures also emphasize that our salvation is a gift of God’s grace and mercy, not a reward for our efforts. **Ephesians 2:4-5 states**, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” The Life Application Bible explains that we were spiritually dead, incapable of saving ourselves, yet God, in His rich mercy, intervened. The phrase “made us alive with Christ” points to the resurrection power that transforms us from death to life. For me, this is a powerful reminder that my salvation is entirely God’s work. I can’t earn it, but I can receive it with a grateful heart. This truth frees me from striving and invites me to rest in God’s grace, trusting that He is at work in me.

Titus 3:4-5 reinforces this: “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” The Life Application Bible notes that God’s kindness and love “appeared” in the person of Jesus Christ, and our salvation comes through the Holy Spirit’s work of

regeneration. The “washing of rebirth” signifies a new beginning, cleansing us from sin, while “renewal” points to the ongoing transformation by the Spirit. This verse resonates deeply: I wasn’t saved because I was good enough but because God is merciful. It challenges me to live humbly, relying on the Spirit’s power to grow in faith and to extend mercy to others.

The Great Exchange: Christ’s Righteousness for Our Sin

The mechanics of how God accomplished our salvation are beautifully captured in **2 Corinthians 5:21**: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The Life Application Bible describes this as the “great exchange”: Jesus, who was sinless, took on our sin, bearing its penalty on the cross, so that we could receive His righteousness. This is not just forgiveness but a complete transformation of our status before God—we are declared righteous in His sight. For me, this truth is staggering. I think of my failures and shortcomings, yet through Christ, God sees me as righteous. It’s a gift that fuels gratitude and motivates me to live in a way that reflects this new identity, honoring the One who paid such a price.

Transferred from Darkness to Light

Colossians 1:13-14 declares, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” The Life Application Bible explains that the “dominion of darkness” represents Satan’s rule, characterized by sin and spiritual blindness. Through Christ, God has transferred us into His kingdom, where we experience redemption and forgiveness. This rescue is both a one-time event and an ongoing reality, as we live under Christ’s lordship. Personally, this verse reminds me of times when I felt trapped by fear or sin, yet God’s light broke through. It’s a call to live as a citizen of His kingdom, shining His light in a dark world and giving thanks for the forgiveness that sets me free.

A New Identity and Purpose

1 Peter 2:9 offers a stunning vision of our identity in Christ: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” The Life Application Bible notes that these titles—chosen, royal, holy—were once reserved for Israel but are now applied to all believers. As God’s special possession, we are called to “declare his praises,” living lives that reflect His glory. For me, this is both an honor and a responsibility. I’m not just saved; I’m chosen to represent God’s love and light. This identity inspires me to live purposefully, sharing the hope of Christ with others and praising Him for calling me out of darkness.

(LABC, Rev. B. Standfest)

A Coherent Reflection: Gratitude for God’s Redemptive Love

Together, these Scriptures tell the story of a God who loves us extravagantly, saves us by grace, and transforms us into His people for His glory. Romans 5:8 and John 3:16 reveal the heart of God’s love—He gave His Son for us, even when we were unworthy. Ephesians 2:4-5 and Titus 3:4-5 underscore that this salvation is a gift of mercy, not earned but freely given through the Spirit’s work. 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 1:3-4 detail the cost—Christ’s sinless life exchanged for our sin, rescuing us from evil. Colossians 1:13-14 and 1 Peter 2:9 describe the result: we are transferred from darkness to light, made righteous, and called as God’s chosen people to declare His praises.

This biblical narrative is profoundly personal. I think of my own life—moments of failure, doubt, or despair—and marvel that God loved me enough to send His Son. The truth of Romans 5:8 hits me: Christ died for me when I was at my worst. Ephesians 2:4-5 reminds me that I was dead in sin, yet God made me alive. 1 Peter 2:9 gives me purpose—I’m not just saved; I’m chosen to share God’s light. These truths spark gratitude that overflows into worship. How can I not say, “Thank You, Jesus,” when I consider what He’s done?

The Life Application Bible encourages practical responses to these truths, and I’m challenged to live them out. First, I want to cultivate daily gratitude by reflecting on these verses, perhaps journaling one

each morning to remind me of God's love. Second, I'm called to live as God's ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:9), sharing His love through kindness, forgiveness, and bold faith. Third, I need to rely on the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) for ongoing renewal, trusting Him to shape me into Christ's image. Finally, these Scriptures urge me to worship—whether through prayer, song, or sharing my story—declaring God's praises as Psalm 26:7 inspires.

In a world filled with negativity, these verses anchor me in hope. They remind me that my salvation, identity, and purpose are secure in Christ. As I navigate daily challenges, I can return to John 3:16's promise of eternal life or Colossians 1:13's assurance of rescue. This Thanksgiving, I'm compelled to make gratitude a lifestyle, not just a day. By living out the truths of these Scriptures, I can reflect God's love, shine His light, and inspire others to discover the grace that has transformed me. (LABC, Rev. B. Standfest)

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body. Putting on all the virtues, with love binding them together (3:14), would lead to peace between individuals and among the members of the body of believers. The Colossian Christians should let the peace of God rule their hearts. To live in peace would not mean that suddenly all differences of opinion would be eliminated, but it would require that they work together despite their differences. This kind of tranquility and cooperation can't come from mere human effort. It requires God's help to arbitrate and enable people to get along. God calms our troubled hearts; then we can better relate to others.

The word rule comes from the language of athletics: Paul wanted the believers to let Christ's peace be umpire or referee in their hearts. Peace would arbitrate, decide any argument, and thereby restrain any of the passions of the old nature that might threaten. Peace would settle any friction and strife so the believers could remain strong and unified. Peace must rule hearts. As in 3:1, the heart is the center of a person's being, the center of spiritual and moral life. If peace rules there, it rules every believer's entire life and, by extension, the life of the church.

To which refers back to “the peace of God.” The believers had been called to peace. In one body refers to being a single organism. The unity of the body of Christ is a strong reason for peace among the members, and the peace of God enables the members to be unified.

PEACE RULES

When we exercise the traits of compassion, kindness, humility, patience, and, above all, love, we are going to face conflict. Not everyone will be playing by these rules. Not all Christians show the self-restraint needed in conflict. How can we deal with these conflicts and live as God wants? When we are hurt by others or our gracious efforts are rebuked, we must have an umpire inside that says, “Peace.” We need to call a time-out on our passions and reactions; then we can think about the peace that God has won for us in Christ’s death. Paul does not teach “peace at any price.” Instead, he encourages believers to embrace God’s peace and be under his control as they make courageous moral decisions for the truth and the right.

And be thankful. When believers have an overriding attitude of thankfulness and when they have constant gratitude in their hearts for all that God has done for them in giving salvation and making them part of Christ’s body, then other virtues to which Paul called them would be much easier to live out. Such thankfulness would also make other relationships easier, as Paul explained in following verses (3:18–4:6).

3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. The word of Christ referred to the message proclaimed by Christ (the gospel). For us, this means the Bible. This teaching should dwell (reside permanently) in each believer by his or her study and knowledge of God’s Word. The gospel must also dwell in the church, which should be the center for wise teaching of the gospel message and wise advice, encouragement, or reprimand. In our attempts to reach people with felt needs, we must keep the Bible at the core of our church ministries. (See 2 Timothy 3:16–4:2 for more on the correct use of Scripture.) Teach and admonish refers to the whole congregation and their responsibility to teach the Word—including the

life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus Christ—as a means to warn and correct one another.

The psalms, hymns and spiritual songs were a vital part of this teaching and admonition. Although the early Christians had access to the Old Testament and freely used it (thus, Paul’s reference to “psalms”), they did not yet have the New Testament or any other Christian books to study. Their stories and teachings about Christ were sometimes set to music to make them easier to memorize and pass on from person to person. Grounded in God’s Word and correct doctrine, music can be an important part of Christian worship and education.

TANK UP ON THANKS

Thankfulness puts all we have in the right perspective; God has given us what we need for service, comfort, expression, and recreation. Greediness or discontent signals an attitude that says to God, “I’m not getting much of a bargain here.”

Thankful people can worship wholeheartedly. Gratitude opens our hearts to God’s peace and enables us to put on love. Discontented people constantly calculate what’s wrong with their lot in life.

To increase your thankfulness, take an inventory of all you have (include your relationships, memories, abilities, and family, as well as material possessions). Use the inventory for prayers of gratitude. On Sunday, before worship, quit rushing around and take time to reflect on reasons for thanks. Early on Sunday morning, declare this your “thanks, faith, and hope” day. Celebrate God’s goodness to you, and ask in prayer for all your needs for the week ahead.

While music can teach, its primary function may be to praise God. As believers sing, they ought to do so with gratitude in their hearts (see 4:2). Again, the word “heart” refers to a person’s entire being. Gratitude to God overflows in praise.

3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Earlier Paul listed a few vices and virtues to give the Colossian believers an idea of what was expected of them in their attitudes toward one another, but he did not want to regulate every area of life with a list of rules. That would be like reverting to

Pharisaism. So Paul gave this general command to cover every area of life.

Everything the believers said and everything they did should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, realizing his constant presence and bringing honor and glory to him in every aspect and activity of daily living. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV). To act in someone’s name is to act on his authority; believers act as Christ’s representatives.

Paul echoed the need for a thankful spirit, as he had in 3:15 and 3:16. All we do for Christ should be done with the spirit of thankfulness for all he has done for us. Believers are not enslaved to rules about every word they speak or deed they do; instead, they freely put themselves under the Lord’s guidance because they love him, have accepted his salvation, and live to glorify him. Their thanks can go to God through Christ because Christ is the only mediator between God and people.

HONOR AND GLORY

As a Christian, you represent Christ at all times—wherever you go and with whatever you say. Believers can go about their lives—working, playing, studying, planning—and do everything to the glory of God with thanks in their hearts. What impression do people have of Christ when they see or talk with you? What changes would you make in your life in order to honor Christ?

Resources: Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Program, Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, Guzik, David, Life Application Bible Commentary, Factbook Logos bible, Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. 1995. Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. 1995. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Sermon Notes:

Thank You J-E-S-U-S

Good morning, AVC Family, and good morning to those joining us online! If you’re tuning in from a hunting blind this

morning, please drop a comment and let me know!

Blessings to all you hunters out there—may the Lord grant the desires of your hearts. For those joining us from other states, yesterday was the opening day of gun season here in Michigan. It's like Christmas for hunters!

Let me quickly share the AVC connections: YouTube, App, Facebook/Website

[Let's pray.]

I've titled this short, two-week Thanksgiving series: Thank You J-E-S-U-S. Here in America, we've set aside one day for Thanksgiving. But if that's all the thanks we've got, we're in trouble.

The truth is, we're surrounded by negativity, vulgarity, hatred, and anger filling the American atmosphere. We must—I repeat, we must—as God's Word instructs: "Guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

If the world's chaos takes up space in your brain, it's going to affect your life.

Don't let Satan rent space in your mind! What we allow to be stored up here [point to head] will affect our attitudes and our gratitude.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but there are some people who will try to suck the Thanksgiving right out of you.

When I worked at Ford Motor Company, I had the privilege of working with two guys who belonged to the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club. These guys would try to suck the Thanksgiving out of the whole department I worked in. Let me tell you, they both knew I was a Christian.

[Story of Both Guys]

The first guy was a bother. It was, "Hey Brad! Hey Brad! Come here!"—off-the-wall stuff. This guy didn't like our boss. One day, he said, "Hey Brad, come here, I figured it out!"
"Figured what out?"

"I'm gonna strap cocaine to his bumper and call the Border Patrol." No joke, he was totally serious! I walked away, saying, "Jesus, are You kidding me right now?" Later, he called me back: "Hey Brad, that was a bad idea. Will you pray?" Talk about sucking the Thanksgiving out of you—wow!

The other Hells Angel guy was on a vulgar rampage the whole day, degrading everyone every time he opened his mouth. When it was time to check out, I was walking into the area, and he was yelling stuff I couldn't repeat.

I'd had enough. I walked into that room filled with cursing and chaos and said one name that stopped it all: JESUS!! (loud). No one talked or said a word as we all walked out.

I have a question for you this morning: When was the last time you thanked Jesus for all that He has done for you?

So, here's what we're going to do today. We're going to give thanks to Jesus. I'm going to read a passage, and you're going to respond, "Thank You, Jesus!" We're going to get some Thanksgiving out into the atmosphere!

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8 - Thank You, Jesus!

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:13-14 - Thank You, Jesus!

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:4-5 - Thank You, Jesus!

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2

Corinthians 5:21 - Thank You, Jesus!

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” Galatians 1:3-4 - Thank You, Jesus!

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9 - Thank You, Jesus!

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 - Thank You, Jesus!

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” Titus 3:4-5 - Thank You, Jesus!

The word “Thanksgiving” in Scripture literally means:

- Hebrew: Yadah, Todah
- Greek: Eucharistia

It signifies:

- To praise and give thanks.
- An extension of hands in worship, as if to throw or cast upwards.
- Singing praises, worshipping the Lord.

Multiple scholars put it like this: “Thanksgiving is an active, joyful response to God’s grace, expressed through the extension of hands in worship, verbal confession and praise, communal celebration, and sacrificial offerings. It involves visible and heartfelt gratitude, acknowledging God’s goodness now and His promises for the future, rooted in dependence on His unmerited favor.” [Multiple Scholars Unknown]

As the Psalmist echoes: “That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of all your wondrous works.” Psalm

26:7

I'll close with this passage as I invite the worship team back up for a closing song this morning:

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” ~ Colossians 3:15-17

Here are some Thanksgiving spiritual applications from Colossians 3:15-17:

1. Let the peace that Christ gives rule your hearts—be thankful.
2. Let Christ's words dwell in you. These give you wisdom and help change your atmosphere—singing praises.
3. Have gratitude in your hearts—giving thanks to Jesus.

(Closing Song: Gratitude: <https://youtu.be/dQdfs5S6jyA>)

Devotional Questions & Reflections: Overflowing with Gratitude for God's Redemptive Love

Biblical Reflection: Gratitude for God's Rescue and Redemption

Colossians 3:15-17 sets the tone for a life of thanksgiving: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” The Life Application Bible notes that gratitude here is not optional but a natural outflow of Christ's peace and presence in our lives. It calls us to let every action—our words,

deeds, and worship—be infused with thankfulness, reflecting our identity in Christ. This passage frames our response to the other Scriptures, urging us to live with a constant posture of praise for God’s redemptive work.

These passages unpack the reasons for our gratitude:

- **Romans 5:8** (“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”) reveals the depth of God’s love. He didn’t wait for us to clean up our act; He died for us in our brokenness. This selfless act is the foundation of our salvation and a reason to give thanks daily.
- **Colossians 1:13-14** (“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”) celebrates our transfer from darkness to light. God’s rescue mission through Christ gives us forgiveness and a new home in His kingdom, fueling our gratitude.
- **Ephesians 2:4-5** (“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved”) underscores that our salvation is a gift of God’s mercy. We were spiritually dead, yet He made us alive, a truth that demands our thankful worship.
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** (“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”) describes the great exchange: Christ took our sin so we could receive His righteousness. This transformative gift inspires awe and gratitude.
- **Galatians 1:3-4** (“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father”) highlights Christ’s sacrifice as our rescue from a sinful world, aligning with God’s will and filling us with peace and thankfulness.
- **1 Peter 2:9** (“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”) gives us a new identity. We’re chosen to proclaim God’s praises, a

privilege that calls for gratitude in word and deed.

- **John 3:16** (“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”) encapsulates God’s global and personal love, offering eternal life through faith in Christ—a gift that prompts unending thanks.

- **Titus 3:4-5** (“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy...”) reminds us that salvation is by God’s mercy, through the Spirit’s renewing work, grounding our gratitude in His grace.

Devotional Questions for Reflection and Application

1. Reflecting on God’s Love (Romans 5:8, John 3:16): Romans 5:8 says God loved us “while we were still sinners,” and John 3:16 shows He gave His Son for the world. How does knowing God loved you at your worst impact your gratitude? Take a moment to thank Him for a specific way His love has touched your life.

2. Rescued from Darkness (Colossians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 2:9): Colossians 1:13-14 describes our rescue from darkness, and 1 Peter 2:9 calls us to declare God’s praises for bringing us into His light. What’s one moment in your life when you felt God rescued you from a dark place (e.g., fear, sin, despair)? How can you express gratitude for that today?

3. Grace and Mercy (Ephesians 2:4-5, Titus 3:4-5): Ephesians 2:4-5 and Titus 3:4-5 emphasize that we’re saved by God’s mercy, not our works. How does it feel to know your salvation is a gift you didn’t earn? Write a short prayer thanking God for His mercy and asking for help to extend mercy to others.

4. The Great Exchange (2 Corinthians 5:21): 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains that Christ took your sin so you could become righteous. How does this “great exchange” deepen your appreciation for Jesus’

sacrifice? Consider one way you can live out your new righteous identity this week as an act of thanks.

5. Rescue from Evil (Galatians 1:3-4): Galatians 1:3-4 says Christ gave Himself to rescue us from this “present evil age.” What aspects of the world’s values (e.g., selfishness, materialism) has God helped you overcome? How can you thank Him by aligning your life more with His will today?

6. A Life of Praise (Colossians 3:15-17, 1 Peter 2:9): Colossians 3:15-17 calls us to do everything with gratitude, and 1 Peter 2:9 says we’re chosen to declare God’s praises. What’s one practical way you can infuse gratitude into your daily routine (e.g., a gratitude journal, worship music)? Try it for a day and reflect on how it shapes your heart.

7. Eternal Perspective (John 3:16): John 3:16 promises eternal life through faith in Christ. How does the hope of eternity with God encourage you in tough moments? Spend a few minutes thanking God for this promise and asking for boldness to share it with someone who needs hope.

8. Renewed by the Spirit (Titus 3:4-5): Titus 3:4-5 highlights the Holy Spirit’s work in renewing us. Where do you see the Spirit renewing your heart or life right now (e.g., new attitudes, habits)? Thank God for this work and pray for continued transformation.

9. Gratitude in Community (Colossians 3:15-17): Colossians 3:16 encourages teaching and singing with gratitude in community. How can you express gratitude to God by encouraging others in your church or small group this week? Plan one specific action, like sharing a testimony or praying for someone.

10. Living for God’s Glory (1 Peter 2:9, Colossians 3:17): 1 Peter 2:9 says we’re God’s special possession to declare His praises, and Colossians 3:17 calls us to do everything in Jesus’ name. How can you make one choice today—big or small—that reflects your gratitude a