

## Day 1, September 25<sup>th</sup>: Sing, Sing, Sing

Read Colossians 3:15-17

*“Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” -Colossians 3:16b*

For Christians, singing has always been important. Multiple New Testament verses testify to this early church practice for communicating with God. Music touches us deeply in ways that nothing else can.

Our roots as Methodists also reveal a love for music as a means of expressing our faith. Charles Wesley composed hundreds of hymns, a number of which we still sing today—“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” for example. And John Wesley thought it was so important that he wrote instructions for congregational singing, including the exhortation to “sing lustily!”

When it comes to expressing thanks, then, it’s no surprise that we are encouraged to sing to God. Consider the great hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” In the chorus, when we sing “all I have needed thy hand hath provided,” how could our hearts not swell with a deep sense of gratitude.

Gratitude is the first stop for us on this journey of imagining the future. When we remember with gratitude the many blessings God pours into our lives, our hearts begin cultivating the desire to be a blessing for others.

So sing out today...and don’t worry if the neighbors hear you. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

What are some of God’s provisions for which you are grateful?

## Day 2, September 26<sup>th</sup>: Forever Faithful

Read 1 Chronicles 16:23-34

*"Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good, because his faithful love endures forever."  
-1 Chronicles 16:34*

*Love You, Forever* is the title of one of the best-loved children's books of all-time. It is the tale of a mother's persistent love that knows no bounds and is ever-present for her son.

The story has a familiar ring to it for people of Christian faith. The God we encounter in the pages of the Bible is one whose faithful love endures forever. This is the true measure of God's goodness—that God would love us no matter what; that there is nowhere we can go and nothing we can do that would cause God not to love us. Thanks be to God!

There is an interesting twist at the end of that little children's book. When the mother grows old, the once-cradled boy who has been loved unconditionally responds in gratitude. In her final days, he is the one doing the cradling--first holding his mother, then opening his heart to offer that same kind of love to his newborn daughter.

So it is in the life of faith. God's faithful love elicits our gratitude, which overflows in loving actions toward others. As the church, we are called to extend that love especially toward those who have never known it.

How is gratitude for God's faithful love to you leading you to offer yourself and your resources in sharing that love with others?

## Day 3, September 27<sup>th</sup>: Putting Things in Perspective

Read Psalm 138

*"I give thanks to you with all my heart, LORD. I sing your praise before all other gods." -Psalm 138:1*

What a blessing it is that, embedded in our Holy Scriptures, we have inherited the Psalms, the songbook of the people of Israel. Like a family heirloom handed down, this gift is to be cherished by those of us who have received it. One of its treasures is the expression of the full range of human emotions. In its pages, we find permission to come before God when we are sad or happy, angry or at peace, confused or resolved, disappointed or content.

A primary perspective that we find in the Psalms is one of gratitude. In fact, you might say that the repetition of gratitude throughout this songbook is how we remember to keep the main thing the main thing. To give credit where credit is due. In the beginning of Psalm 138, we hear a congregational response to the first commandments given to God's chosen people: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt" and "You shall have no other gods before me."

Perhaps we smirk and say that the days of other gods are long gone. No reasonable person today would consider assigning responsibility for our well-being to some other god before the One who has delivered us...or would we? While we may not bow before the totem pole or the golden calf, more contemporary imposters have captivated us...the stadium, the stock market, the salary, to name a few.

Reading through the Psalms frees us from the deception. God and God alone deserves our praise. Let us indeed offer our gratitude for all the LORD has done.

Take a look at your calendar and your checkbook. What gods do they suggest may be distracting you from the One who deserves your thanks and praise?

## Day 4, September 28<sup>th</sup>: The Joy of Friendship

Read Philippians 1:3-6

*"I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy." -Philippians 1:4*

The journey of the Christian faith is one that is meant to be shared. Having a few good friends along the way can make all the difference. The Apostle Paul was especially grateful for the friendships he had formed in the city of Philippi. The people there had been a tremendous source of support and encouragement to him in his ministry.

Imagine what a challenging life Paul had. His commitment to spread the gospel took him across thousands of miles under difficult circumstances and with many hardships. His life included imprisonments, beatings, illness, and shipwreck. Yet, whenever he thinks of the Philippians, he smiles and he gives thanks.

Part of the vision of Memorial is to be a "grace-filled family" where a diverse group of strangers become friends through their shared love of Jesus Christ. So many great friendships have been fostered over the years among the people in this church, and these friendships have become a source of mutual support and encouragement. They strengthen us, especially in times of struggle.

Give thanks today for the blessing of friends, especially those who have helped nurture your faith along the way. Imagine all the friendships still yet to be made through this church and the opportunity we have to help bring those to fruition.

What friend might benefit from receiving a note of encouragement from you today?

## Day 5, September 29<sup>th</sup> : Don't Worry, Be...Thankful

Read Philippians 4:4-7

*"Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks." -Philippians 4:6*

Recent statistics suggest that eighteen percent of adults and one in every eight children suffer from one or more anxiety disorders. Many more would confess to feelings of anxiety about work, parenting, finances, health, and more. In such a climate, Paul's exhortation "don't be anxious" might sound at best unrealistic for today, at worst insensitive and even callous.

Perhaps the key for us is not to separate these words from the rest of the verse. Paul continues—"rather, bring up all of your requests to God..." In other words, don't try to hold onto them on your own. We all know what can happen when we keep things bottled up inside. God desires for you to share your concerns in your prayers.

Then, however, Paul goes on to offer a crucial reminder. Don't just give God your laundry list. Remember to give thanks also. Gratitude is the perfect antidote to the whiney life.

\$1.8 million dollars is a lot of debt. It's enough to cause anyone a certain amount of stress. Memorial's "Forward, Faithfully" campaign is an effort to eliminate that debt. It is a task that may seem overwhelming for some. "How can we possibly do it?" you might ask. Rather than holding onto that anxiety this week, share it with God. And while you do, take time to give thanks for the things about Memorial that have blessed your life and the lives of others.

As we move forward in this campaign, pray that your decision about participating will be shaped by gratitude rather than anxiety.