

PRAYER UNWRAPPED 3

Hello and welcome to our third session unwrapping prayer. We are basing these talks on the word ACTS – a c t s – the first letters of the four components of prayer; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. We have done adoration and confession. Now it is the turn of thanksgiving.

Why is it good to say thank you when someone does something kind for us or gives us a gift? It makes the other person feel appreciated and improves our relationship with that person. It stops us getting greedy or proud.

Everything in our lives that is good comes from God. And of course we should thank him, so he feels appreciated, and so we remember that it all comes from him.

In America they actually have the festival of Thanksgiving when they thank God for the harvest and for lots of other blessings. We have the Harvest Festival.

Sing with me.

Thank you Lord, for this fine day,

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Right where we are.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul says,

“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will to you in Christ Jesus.”

“Give thanks in all circumstances”. I think that means that whatever we are going through, we should try to find something good for which to thank God. In fact if circumstances are particularly bad, an act of kindness, or a connection with someone, can be especially wonderful. It sort of stands out.

In our current very difficult circumstances, there are lots of things we can thank God for. A very big thing just now is all the clever scientists who have been able to develop vaccines. The situation is still tricky, but for most of us there is more hope in the air. Thank you Lord!

And of course, we tend to take a lot of the blessings that God gives us for granted. It is only when they are taken away from us that we remember how lovely they were. We know that now. How wonderful school is, for example. By the way, that is not a joke.....!

Very often, we forget or don't bother to thank God. There is an example of this in the Bible, when Jesus healed ten lepers and only one of them actually bothered to thank him. You can read about this in Luke, chapter 17.

Did Jesus thank God? He thanked God often, for example when he fed the five thousand. After the disciples had collected the five loaves and two fishes and given them to Jesus this is what happened. "Taking the five loaves and the two fishes he gave thanks and broke the loaves". So Jesus had so much faith in what God was going to do, that he actually thanked God before God did it! That is a lesson for us! We could try doing that.

Then again, Jesus thanked God when he brought Lazarus back from the dead, and again, he did it before God actually performed the miracle. Think what it must be like to have that much faith.

The 13th century German theologian Meister Eckhart said, "If the only prayer you say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough". I am not sure about that, because we do have to confess what we have done wrong and repent, but still.....I know what he means.

And now let's think of some things we can thank God for.

One of the main things of course is when he answers our prayer. Have you ever prayed to God about something, and you knew he answered your prayer? I have. Several years ago I broke my elbow very badly when I fell off my bike and I was having a lot of difficulty playing my violin. Some people prayed for me, and God gave me several more years of violin playing. That was good. I am grateful to God for that. Actually I could do with some more prayer now!

But apart from answered prayer, we have too many wonderful things in our lives to be able to remember them all. Take a moment to think of some special thing in your life.

Pray with me.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for all that is good in my life, especially for (*whatever you thought of*).

Thank you for my family and my friends; for all the people I love.

Thank you most for sending your Son, Jesus, to earth so that all people can be forgiven for what they do wrong. Thank you that we know Jesus. Please help us to show him to others in how we live and also to tell people about him.

Amen