November is the month of Thanksgiving. A number of my friends have taken on this challenge on FB during this month that they would post daily reflections of something or someone that they are thankful for. They will do this for all 30 days of November. It doesn’t have to be big. Simple things in life or someone who made a lasting impact or difference that we need to be thankful for….things that we often take for granted that are all part of God’s blessings.

Each day, month, year, or what season of life we might be in, we ought to give thanks and praise to God. As the Apostle Paul encouraged the earlier church who were experiencing various persecutions, trials and challenges, he wrote ***“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*** Obviously this is much easier said than done.

In the Psalm that we read earlier, Psalm 145, the psalmist offered his word of praise and adoration to the almighty God. Psalm 145 is an acrostic psalm meaning each line of the psalm begins with the successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This literary form often conveys a message of inclusiveness of the nature of the subject…in this case - God. Furthermore, out of this entire Psalm, the psalmist used the word “ALL” 17x in order to express the sovereignty of God who is not only in charge of but is responsible for all living creatures and all aspects of life. The psalmist described, through human words, not only who God is but what God has and will do through God’s attributes.

For example, in verse 3, the Psalmist described how God’s greatness is unfathomable beyond our human comprehension, how God’s faithfulness and steadfastness spans from generation to generation (v.4), how God’s work is full of splendor and majesty (v.5-6) and how God is righteous, gracious, compassionate, patient, and loving God (v. 7,8,9). Not only is God’s sovereignty rules over all kingdom (v.13) but he is the source of our daily needs (v.15-16). God is near to all those who calls onto Him (v. 18) and stands ready to save those who cry out for help (v. 19-20). Basically, the psalmist was trying to convey the message that *“God is an active God. God is not someone sitting remotely on some mountaintop passing down judgement [pressing various buttons and setting things in motions], but God is deeply engaged in the lives of people [day in and day out].”[[2]](#footnote-2)* God is not only relatable but is personal and deserves all of our praises and thanksgivings.

Keep in mind that what the descriptions that the psalmist used to describe God are something that you and I can relate to and understand with our limited human intelligence and language. But our God is much bigger than that and deeper than what our human minds conceives. Our Presbyterian Reformer, John Calvin once wrote about how we must caution ourselves from a humanized God with our human attributes and characteristics. Even though we may be created in God’s image, **our human understanding of who God is severely challenged by what our minds can conceive. Ultimately God is still God and we are not.**

As part of God’s creation, we acknowledge that we are created to worship and to praise God with all of our days. In one of our confessional statements – the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* of 1640, the very first question challenged us by asking “*What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”* That pretty much sums up our human purpose here on earth and our relationship with God.

As the Psalmist declared that *everything that has breath shall praise the Lord* [[3]](#footnote-3)and *our tongues shall speak of God’s righteousness and sing God’s praises all day long*.[[4]](#footnote-4) *Our mouths shall speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.*[[5]](#footnote-5)

 Last Sunday afternoon, I went to visit MaryAnn at the nursing home out by Coney Island. As you know, over the years MaryAnn’s eyesight and hearing have gradually deteriorated. She may not be as articulate as she once was. She may not be able to do what she used to but one thing that she hasn’t lost is her faith in God. Whenever I get a chance, I bring a copy of our church Order of Worship to her, her eyes lit up like a little child at the candy store. She would hang on to it so tightly that she refuses to let go of the bulletin because she know what that meant for her. She even made a promise that she would read it in her own spare time, even though she could hardly see any of the words that are printed in it. However, she does recognize the powerful symbol of the cross on the cover and she was able to recall and pronounce the name of the church as best she could “*Homecrest Presbyterian Church*”. At times, she would even let her fellow residents know how God loves her and that she loves God as well no matter what happens in life.

This was quite a powerful witness of her deep-rooted faith, even at her advance age. Although her memory may be fading, there is something powerful about that cross symbol has instilled upon MaryAnn’s heart that would never go away. God is still actively speaking in her heart and nothing, no one, or any illness, is going to take that away from her. MaryAnn remembers to thank God every single moment, for better or for worse and under any circumstances. She may not be physically sound or as mobile as she used to be, but nothing is going to separate her from her love for God through Jesus Christ. Nothing!

MaryAnn knows that she will always be a child of God and that she’s precious in God’s sight. Wherever and whatever condition that she may be in, she would still sing God praises and offer her sincere prayers and songs of Thanksgiving to God.

 Now we must confess that there will be days when we are simply not up to the task of thanking or praising God. Even for MaryAnn, there were days when she would feel grumpy, frustrated, or even angry at whoever comes in her way. Perhaps some of us may have a bad day in the office, get into some dispute or argument with fellow co-workers, family, or friends. Praising God may be the very last thing on your mind when you’re struggling to meet end’s need, pay your bills, or while care for someone who is sick in the hospital or terminally ill in hospice care facilities. We could easily get overwhelmed by what life brings to us and have forgotten to thank and give God praise.

 When we are down in the bottomless pit or feel the weight of the whole world has fallen upon our shoulders, just remember that God does offer us peace by listening and consoling us through the work of the Holy Spirit as our comforter. Jesus said, **“*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*** *(John 14:27)*

 **How often do we take our relationship with God for granted?** How often have wefocused too much on ourselves and our own accomplishments rather than centering our thoughts on God or on others. We get consumed by the negativities of life and fail to count God’s blessings to us each day. We take in what we think we rightfully deserve while we forget to give back and share God’s blessings with others.

 In the 2nd passage that we read earlier, from his letter to the church in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul reminded the early church that was under persecutions that the Day of the Lord is coming….that they have something to look forward to down the road. This message gave them much hope and encouragement that better days are still to come. There wasn’t time for them to sit around and wait for the coming of Christ, whereas in fact they must look beyond their present hardship and circumstances. They must thank God for whatever state that they’re in and fix their eyes and their minds upon the future.

As a matter of fact, this should be a time that we let our faith speak because God has already chosen us as God’s “**First Fruits for Salvation**”. We are the beneficiaries of God’s kingdom and God’s plan of salvation for humankind. Therefore, we shall have no fear and worry about our future. **We shall live in God’s moment of eternal time and not in our present life time.**

Like the first fruits, as Christ’s disciples we ought to offer our very best without fear and reservation. We ought to offer ourselves as the living sacrifice in bearing witness and testimony of what God has done in our lives.

 As we approach the season of Thanksgiving in the coming days, let us remember that it is not just one day or even one month that we shall give God thanks…but every day, every moment, and with our every single breath. **Every day we shall give God thanks and count God’s blessings in our lives as we strive to be a blessing to others.**

Later on, we will once again come before this table of grace and thanksgiving, as we declare our faith and commitment by celebrating the communion of the body of Christ. We remember those who are fractured and broken not only physically but spiritually within our society, those who are shunned by others because of their outward appearance, how they may live their lives. We must hold all of God’s children in God’s embrace as sign of our faith and acceptance towards one another, just as God has accepted us with all of our baggage and shortcomings. This is our calling as ambassadors for Christ…through our actions and our words every day.

Like the Israelites who were wandering out in the desert for 40 years, we graciously accept whatever God provides will always be enough. Never too much and never too little, but just right. God’s grace is surely sufficient for us each day. Whatever trials and challenges that our life may bring upon, God assures us that God will always be by our side no matter what. *Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

1. *I Thessalonians 5:16-18* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Olson Susan K, *Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4,* P.275 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Psalm 150:6* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Psalm 35:28* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Psalm 145:21* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)