

# From Grumbling to Gratitude

*by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle*

## Prayer of Illumination

Lord God,  
you've declared that your kingdom is among us.  
Open our eyes to see it,  
our ears to hear it,  
our hearts to hold it,  
our hands to serve it.  
This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Background

Psalm 100 is known as the Jubilate, because Jubilate is the first Latin word in Psalm 100: "Oh be joyful." And so Psalm 100 is a call to live life with joyful gratitude. There are 7 invitations and 7 exhortations to praise in Psalm 100: make a joyful noise—worship—come—know—enter—give thanks—and bless. In other words, gratitude is the Christian's duty, decision, and delight. We're a people who punctuate our life with praise. Each time we enter our front door, our car door, or the sanctuary doors, we enter with thanksgiving in our hearts.

## Scripture: Psalm 100 (NRSV)

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.  
Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.  
Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.  
For the LORD is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

*The grass withers and the flower fades,  
but the Word of God endures forever.*

## SERMON – From Grumbling to Gratitude

Gratitude is generosity's kissin' cousin. Cicero called gratitude "the queen of all virtues." G.K. Chesterton described it as "the highest form of thought." And in Islam there's a saying, "How can a sensible person be anything other than thankful to God?"

The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. Like generosity, gratitude connects us to others. Gratitude gets us out of ourselves, and helps us commune with something and someone larger than ourselves: whether it be other people, nature, or our Creator.

The looking glass of gratitude sharpens the way we perceive and experience life. We see life in more detail—and it pops. Steven Covey put it this way: "We see things not as they are, but we see things as we are." The glasses of gratitude help us see that our glass is not only half-full, but filled to overflowing.

When we're grateful, we're thankful, and we know deep down we're in God's loving hands. We trust God's promises that he's guiding and providing. We can relax and breathe deep in God's presence.

- Medical studies support what our faith teaches: Gratitude makes us more patient and helps us make better decisions.
- Gratitude increases the likelihood that you'll incorporate good habits in your life: namely exercise, healthy eating, going to the doctor.
- Gratitude replenishes your will power. It makes you savor and steward God's good gifts in your life. You don't worry as much about what you don't have.
- Are you having trouble sleeping? Don't count sheep to get to sleep—count your blessings. Gratitude helps you sleep more soundly.
- People feel better around grateful people. Gratitude improves your relationships.

Gratitude is a no brainer, right? Yes...and no. Here lies the daily opportunity and challenge before us: Gratitude doesn't come naturally to us. It needs to become second nature.

The Cleveland Clinic did a recent study that estimates 80% of our thoughts are negative. 80%! On average human beings have about 60,000 thoughts a day. And on average, roughly 48,000 of those thoughts are negative thoughts. We need some holy help to get out of the rut of negativity. What we need is the mind of Christ.

Through Psalm 100 God Reminds us who we are and whose we are:

- Raise a shout of joy!
- Come before God.
- Sing with joy.
- Worship and serve the Lord with gladness. Worship is an act of service. That's why we call it a worship service.

Appreciation leads to adoration. Lift your downcast eyes to heaven—know that the Lord is God! God made us—we belong to God. We aren't self-made. We are his sheep and the Lord is our Shepherd. Life is a gift. Open it. Enjoy it! Share it!

Enter his gates with thanksgiving in your heart and exit his courts with praise. Gratitude should be our first and last response to God, In our coming and our going, And everywhere in between. Know that the gates of God are open wide by a new and living way— And there's a huge welcome sign above God's door of opportunity.

Ingratitude tries to slam shut, dead bolt, and put furniture in front of God's wide-open gates. Sometimes it's the most natural thing in the world to cross your arms and to sulk with grimaced face. Don't go there! Walk in freedom and wide-open spaces.

Gratitude sets you free from the prison of regret and resentment. Resist feelings of being jilted and jubilate. Why? Because God is good. His merciful love is eternal. He's faithful from age to age.

There are some practices we can incorporate into our lives to help us in the daily discipline, delight, and duty of gratitude.

First—Pray to God a daily prayer of thanksgiving. Practicing Jews pray at least 100 blessings a day ... *Baruch ata Adonai*. They have prayers of blessing to God for a comet they see, new clothes, or a new experience. They bless God for sights, smells, and tastes. All of life marinates in gratitude. The Talmud says, if you haven't blessed God for something you've enjoyed ... you've stolen it.

Regularly pray out loud Psalm 100 and pray it back to God! Retrain your brain in the ways of gratitude and grace. Feelings follow action. Act your way into a new way of being.

Second—Keep a Gratitude Journal. Go on a blessing hunt—search for God's blessings in your life. Don't stop digging until you find that blessing. Count up your blessings and number them—starting today and every day of 2020. Be creative and specific in your written expression of gratitude— look for new things you haven't thought of, avoid generalities.

Third—Flip your blessing. As you count your blessings, don't keep them to yourself— return the favor. Bless it forward. Let someone else experience the joy you received. Double your blessing. Don't flip people off—flip your blessings. The more we flip our blessings, the more they seem to come our way.

Fourth—Engage in the spiritual practice of saying thanks. Let other people hear your gratitude for them in spoken word. Take the time for the written thank you in a card. Compose a gratitude letter to a family member, friend, love one, or mentor. Gratitude is a guard against taking people for granted. It's blessing to let others know how they've been a blessing to us.

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Fifth and finally—Remember the Losada Ratio. Losada discovered that there are two feedback ratios we need in our lives: a Negative Feedback Loop and a Positive Feedback Loop.

- A Negative Feedback Loop is important because it provides helpful information to correct mistakes and improve behavior or outcomes.
- A Positive Feedback Loop affirms the good things we're doing and it celebrates the bright spots. This affirmation encourages the individual to keep going.

What Losada found is that you need a ratio of 2.9 positive feedbacks to every 1 negative feedback. So, if we bump up our Losada Ratio to 3 to 1 or even 5 to 1, we'll find we'll have more gratitude and good will in our relationships and environments.

What's your Losada Ratio as a spouse? Parent? Church member? Friend? In the workplace? With class-mates? Gratitude will boost your Losada Ratio. The miracle of gratitude is that it helps us to take responsibility for our responses. We often can't control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to what happens to us. A life of gratitude decides to respond with thanksgiving, even if we're not feeling it. Choose thankfulness, even when the most natural response is complaint.

"I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart, and enter his courts with praise."

Make the stewardship from grumbling to gratitude.

**Amen.**

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