

## *Experiencing the Joy of Generosity!*

### **The Joy of Receiving God's Blessings**

#### *Daily Devotions*

#### *Week 1*

**Theme verse:** "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

#### **Weekday Devotions:**

- Day 1:** Appreciating What We Have
- Day 2:** What Belongs to God?
- Day 3:** How the Steward Is Supported
- Day 4:** Receive with Thanksgiving
- Day 5:** And Be Thankful

### **Appreciating What We Have**

**Scripture:** "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Epicurus, a Greek philosopher in the third century BC said, "If you want to make a man happy, add not to his riches but take away from his desires." When we desire less, we are more content with what we do have. Coveting puts us in a state of discontentment with an insatiable appetite for more, making contentment impossible. Those who are content enjoy what they have rather than complain about what they don't have. They are joyful for what they have received from God knowing that all of life is a gift.

The apostle Paul writes, "Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment..." (1 Timothy 6:6). Our happiness is not dependent on what we have or own. Asaph, the Psalmist had an intimate relationship with God who enabled him to be content with what he had provided. We would do well to meditate on his words, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:25-26).

Follow Paul's directive in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will in Christ Jesus for you." As you pray, thanking God for all his blessings, especially the gift of his Son and his Word and Sacraments, you will find your heart and mind being filled with more and more reason to give thanks to our wonderful Lord.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for your generosity to me. Help me to receive with a thankful heart. **Amen.**

## What Belongs to God?

**Scripture:** *“What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7)*

A Sunday school teacher gave a bunch of stickers to each of her students. The stickers read, “This belongs to Jesus.” They were to place the stickers on everything at home that they owned such as radios, bicycles, roller blades, etc. These stickers were to remind them that all of these things actually belonged to Jesus and to encourage them to use them in ways pleasing to Jesus.

As stewards, we acknowledge that who we are and what we have are gifts received from God. God’s Word tells us that nothing actually belongs to us. *“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...” (Psalm 24:1).* The air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we live on are gifts we enjoy out of the overflow of God’s love. The love of God, the gift of God’s Son, Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and life eternal are gifts to us from God. This understanding that all of life is a gift and that God owns everything prompts a shift in our understanding of stewardship. Through faith, we see stewardship as receiving joyfully, managing responsibly, and sharing generously all that God entrusts to us. What a privilege it is to receive, manage, and share what belongs to God.

What if we as adults were given that same sticker exercise as the Sunday school students? How many of us would put stickers on the money in our purses or wallets to show that God is the owner of our money? How many of us would put stickers on our calendars to show that this time belongs to Jesus? Everything ultimately belongs to God. It isn’t the other way around at all. We only think it is.

**Prayer:** Dear Father, you are the source of every good and perfect gift for which I thank you. **Amen.**

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## How the Steward Is Supported

**Scripture:** *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3).*

God, the Father, the Giver of *“every good and perfect gift...” (James 1:17)* has provided for us everything we need to carry out his commission to *“make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19).* This he does by his Word and Sacrament through which we receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal. His Word shows us his love expressed through his Son’s sacrifice on the Cross, his power which has conquered sin and death, and his grace freely given to undeserving sinners.

We are God’s instruments through which he works. *“Therefore, My dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).* Tapping into his strength, we can fulfill his purposes for our lives. As we receive our Lord’s body and blood in Holy Communion, we are assured of our forgiveness and empowered to *“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord...” (Colossians 1:10).*

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, you have indeed provided everything I need to support my body and life. Help me to stand on your Word and partake of your Sacrament with gratitude for all your blessings to me. **Amen.**

## Receive with Thanksgiving

**Scripture:** *“For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father...”* (James 1:17).

The world is full of heartache. Heartaches of all kinds: financial difficulties, health problems, broken relationships, job stresses. You can name more. Look around you, and often you can see hurt in people’s eyes. More often, we learn to mask our hurt and present a “happy face.” The apostle Paul had plenty of heartaches, too. He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, without a home of his own, in danger from the elements, from enemies, and, sadly, in danger from false brothers. He suffered from hunger, the cold, and lack of clothing. He felt the pressure of concern for the new churches he established and served. (See 2 Corinthians 11:16-33.)

In spite of his challenges, Paul knew that God was in control, and he taught the new Christians to depend on God for all their needs: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”* (Philippians 4:6). That two-word phrase in the middle is easy to miss: *“with thanksgiving.”* And why should we not pray with thanksgiving, knowing we have a gracious God who delights to bless us! Why should we not pray with thanksgiving, knowing we have a God who has spared not even his own Son (Romans 8:32)! Should we lose all, we still pray with thanksgiving that nothing can separate us from our Savior (Romans 8:38-39).

**Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your promise to be with me and protect me. Help me to depend upon you. In Jesus’ precious name I pray. **Amen.**

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## And Be Thankful

**Scripture:** *“Give thanks in all circumstances”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

What have you had to give up in order to be a Christian? Have you lost any friends because you’re a believer? What about your job? Are your children barred from getting an education because your family goes to church regularly? Have your parents disowned you because you follow Christ?

A wealthy native of India came to faith in Christ. Almost immediately after becoming a Christian, all that he owned was taken from him, and his wife and children would no longer have anything to do with him. He was asked how he could bear these losses. He replied that many people had asked him that question, but that none had asked how he could bear his joys. Certainly, this man found his joy in Christ and found reason to be thankful. Those who belong to Christ always have a reason for gratitude, for, with Christ, we have everything while, apart from him, we are destitute. The Apostle Paul tells us to let Christ’s peace reign in our hearts *“And be thankful”* (Colossians 3:15).

Too often, when we pray we put an agenda before God. We tell him what we want him to take care of: find that person a job, heal that other person, solve our money problems, and keep our kids safe. We add our thanks as an afterthought. Try spending your whole prayer time offering thanks. The Bible tells us, *“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). As his stewards, we humbly and joyfully give him thanks.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help me to express my gratitude to you by what I say and do. In Jesus name I pray. **Amen.**

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