

# What Are We Thankful For?

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My wife and I went to our local coffee shop a week or so ago, a well-known coffee shop. I don't need to mention the name. They had a little chalkboard set up. Like most businesses they capitalize on holidays and things like that. A little sign said "What are you thankful for?" Then they had little stickers made up like Maple leaves with all the autumn colors. A little dab of scotch tape and they would stick them on the wall. People would write down what they were thankful for. Just from memory, some people were thankful for their family, sister or brother, their parents, dog or cat or other pets. People have iguanas and snakes and all that. One of them was thankful for their barista and probably their favorite latte. That is all good, light-hearted fun. But again, they will capitalize on that, so I too will capitalize on that statement with my title, with that question they asked. Because that is a great question, and I will modify it just a little bit. My title for today is what are we, as God's people, thankful for?

## What Are We Thankful For?

I know it has been often repeated but as God's people, we should be the most thankful, grateful and appreciative people on earth. You ever notice how many of our songs are thanking God. They praise and thank God. Of course, you can find that all through the Psalms. David's Psalms or any of the Psalm writers, you'll find thankfulness in there. And of course, as we all do in these days, we Google everything and I did do a Google search and found a place that mentioned one hundred things that people are thankful for. These were humorous things. Of course, you know me, I like humorous things. To me, a little bit of laughter or humor kind of keeps us sane in an insane world. Anyhow, this is just a sample of some of the things that people are thankful for:

*Indoor plumbing, Wi-Fi, happy hours, Netflix, fuzzy socks.* (My wife would relate to that one.) *Deodorant, toilet paper, duct tape, good hair days.*

Another thing that people are thankful for is *bacon*, although we might probably substitute something like that - we use turkey bacon.

Another thing is *spellchecker* and *ChapStick*. And my all-time favorite,

*"That I am not the turkey."*

Aside from that little bit of humor, there is everything on that list you can imagine. Like I said, it goes through one hundred things, and they rarely mention anything about God. There are a lot of religious sounding things sometimes on lists like that, but there are things that we probably wouldn't consider in our doctrinal beliefs. There were a couple that I have found that are hard to disagree with. These are quotes. One of them says:

*“Thank you, God, for everything in my life - the good and the bad. Some were blessings and some were lessons.” - True.*

Another one was:

*“God thank you for keeping me together when I’m falling apart”.*

Ok, before I get too far into this, on a little bit more serious side, I am well aware that some folks say we shouldn't even recognize or celebrate this day. Watching a news item last night, I came across people who hate Thanksgiving. They just hate it. They think it is an awful day and we should never keep it. There are some basic reasons why and I have looked into a lot of these in the past. I am not knocking in any way, people's beliefs. People are free to believe whatever they want to believe and that is fine with me. I have no problem with that because we are free to believe what we want to believe. I am just acknowledging the fact that this belief does exist, even in God's Church. One of the main reasons is because Thanksgiving, itself, the holiday has pagan roots. Therefore, we should avoid it all together. This takes several forms and again, I've read most of the reasons in the past. I am aware of those.

The first reason is: *It is not mentioned in scripture, therefore we shouldn't keep it even though it is a national holiday. It is a national tradition therefore we should not do it.*

Another reason is: *It is pagan because most ancient cultures celebrated their harvest feast in the Fall.*

That is true. Especially if it was a bountiful one. I guess they would do all kinds of stuff to their pagan gods and all of that. Then we have the thanksgiving symbols: *The Cornucopia, the Horn of Plenty*. That is often associated with this day. The comes right out of Greek mythology. That is true, it does.

Another reason that you might think is a little far out, is: *In that initial Thanksgiving, there were about, if reflection is correct, eighty indigenous people, Indians, who celebrated with the Pilgrims.*

So, the next reason as the logic goes, is: *Even though the Pilgrims might have had some thoughts about God, the Indians were thinking about their pagan gods, therefore we shouldn't celebrate it.*

When you think of the worst holidays though, with their blatant paganism such as the one which is coming up shortly, and as we all know masquerades as Christian, to me it is a stretch to try to lump a day of thanksgiving in with that. But once again, people are free to believe however they choose to believe. I am not knocking that at all. You know even us, when you think about that, we are being accused a lot of times of having a kind of an elitist's viewpoint due to our teaching on the God of the Old Testament. People think that, but we have never, that I know of, tried to force that on anyone. Enough said.

When you think about that first Thanksgiving, it wasn't a religious feast in that sense at all. It was just people who were thankful for being able to survive in a hostile new world. They barely stayed alive. I kind of worry whenever we get off in different ideas. I kind of worry about the real casualty in that the idea that everything is pegged on and so we shouldn't do it. The whole concept of thankfulness just falls by the wayside. Again, in my opinion, we should be the most thankful of people; we should be in a constant frame of mind of thankfulness. Like I said, enough said, but if any folks watching are of that particular persuasion, that we shouldn't be practicing, shouldn't even discuss it, you are welcome to tune out. You won't hurt my feelings. However, if you want to stick around, I think the whole idea of a day set aside to be thankful is a good thing; it really is. I am going to talk on the theme of thanksgiving.

I could launch into a whole list of things that we could talk about to be thankful for, because there are many. There are just hundreds of things when you think about it. We have a limited time for a message, so I am going to limit mine to three things. You are going to think, "Well these are really obvious and not too imaginative on my part." but that is ok. That is kind of me.

The first one is: *We should be thankful for our nation and for our country.*

It is not wrong to love our country. I can't really speak for the Canadian brethren, but we have had many wonderful Feasts in Canada. One time we kept the Feast in Edmonton. We flew into Calgary. Drove up to Edmonton. Kept the Feast and after the Feast we went west to the Canadian Rockies and came down through the Rockies, coming out at Banff. The whole area of Banff itself is like a national park. When you drive down through the city of Banff, city, town? City I guess, as it looked a fairly good size to us. It was a wonderful trip down through there. Driving downtown they have stop lights and crosswalks and everything is for the Elk because the place is overrun with Elk. There are Elk everywhere. They probably even have street cleaners. Their whole purpose in life is to follow the Elk around with wheelbarrows. It is an awesome place, Canada. We went to Maligne Lake, a beautiful place, glacier fed with a hotel at the end there. It is a beautiful place, just awesome.

You know, during my eighty-two years I have been to many countries. I have mentioned before, I was in the Military at one point, and I have been to some good places and some bad places and I have been to some really awful places. That is not meant to be derisive. People can't help where they are born. We know that. Most of the poor countries of the world, those we would call Third World countries, are poverty stricken. Every time we'd pull into a port, when I was in the Navy, I got a free cruise you might say, As our cruise ship pulled into Port, one of the first things you would see is the gun emplacements on the roof tops. People live in constant fear of invasion. Then when you go into the towns, the cities, the villages, there are just hordes of little kids begging. They send the kids out to beg. Nobody has anything. In some countries, their police force is their army; that is Marshal Law. Those are very, very unsafe places. Again, I was in the Navy for just a little short of five years, but when I came home, I never wanted to leave again. Even if you have been somewhere else – maybe even Tim felt

this way when he came back from Italy. You know when you come back to America, it is just kind of a huge relief. It is almost like a tension leaves you whenever you come back to the USA, when you are back on home soil. Speaking of home soil, almost everybody here is old enough to remember when the POWs were released after the Vietnam war, and they had spent years in prison, and in other places, prison camps. What was the first thing they did when they stepped off the plane? They knelt down, they kissed the tarmac because they were back on American soil again.

You have to understand they had zero freedoms. Zero. It is kind of depressing when you look around the country these days, how many people want to throw those freedoms away. They look at them like they are really an unimportant thing. I don't know, maybe it is just me. We tend to be pretty conservative as a group, as a people, but it seems like the greatest threat to our country and our freedoms right now are at the ballot box. Just seeing the way that we are headed.

So, what does all this have to do with scripture you ask? I can see the look on your faces. Have you ever noticed that one of the great blessings of God, is a good land? Ever noticed that in your study? Thinking about it, I had to go back to the Old Testament to see something here, back to Deuteronomy 8. We'll begin in verse 1 and I am going to be using the New King James Version.

**Deuteronomy 8:1** *“Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and [do what?] possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers. [a blessing for Abraham]*

*2) And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. (NKJV)*

You will notice in the context here that it is all connected with the land.

*3) So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*

*4) Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.*

*5) You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, [Father, son relationship; the Father with his children] so the Lord your God chastens you.]*

*6) “Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. [And notice verse 7]*

*7) For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; (NKJV)*

That is a description of a beautiful place. Years ago, we used to backpack up in the Cascades. One of our favorite spots was the lake. There was a four-mile hike into it,

and then another two miles to the other end of the lake where the river dumped into the lake. It was a beautiful pristine spot. Just the opposite of what you will find in the city, any city. It goes on to say in verse 8...

8) ... a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; [Abundant in crops and food]

9) a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. [Abundant resources for industry]

10) When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God [Why?] for the good land which He has given you. [Not to mention being thankful and appreciative for just the physical blessings of a beautiful place in which to live.]

11) "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12) lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them

13) and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; [You are going to prosper in all of the blessings because of the land. It is a gift from God.]

14) when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; [In other words forget where it all comes from, where it all comes from]

15) who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land [Not a good land] where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; [The exact opposite of a good land; a terrible place, to try them.]

16) who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end (NKJV)

As talked about earlier in the context, that is what that chastening was all about. Like a loving father to his son. Same as the trials and tests for us. God doesn't punish just to punish. He punishes us to improve us. You might see where we kind of come in on this. To me, some of this almost looks like it's prophetic. Continuing in verse 17.

17 continued) ... then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' (NKJV)

It is that unthankful, arrogant attitude typical throughout mankind's history. Nothing new under the sun. You know, you could view that as a prophetic statement about countries that forget God.

18) "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

*19) Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.*

*20) As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

Again, like a news article that I saw, some argue that we are living on stolen land. We had no right to this land because we displaced the indigenous people. But you know, history records the fact that God displaces people. He puts people where He wants them. Of course, God isn't even in the picture in these arguments. There is a kind of, even an ominous, reason here in Verse 20. We will re-read that.

*20 continued) ... As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall [also] perish, [I inserted the word "also" there. God doesn't change] because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

At first, I think we are derelict if we don't consider in our hearts how thankful we should be to God just for the physical blessings our land provides. I have an old favorite poem about loving America. You see so many people who hate America right now and hate the blessings that we enjoy. They say we don't deserve them; we shouldn't have them, and we should throw them all away. I am going to stay a-political; not going to go there but this poem was written by an individual called John Mitchum. That might not sound too familiar. He was a character actor I guess you would say. He played bit parts. He was actually the younger brother of Robert Mitchum who often played the leading man and everybody remembers him. As the story goes, those two brothers, when they were younger, like in the thirties and maybe on into the forties, travelled around as hobos. They rode the rails. They went all over the US, probably catching a meal or a little bit of work here or wherever and whatever they could do, but they saw America from a perspective that nobody ever thinks about. Of course, from those memories and that experience, John Mitchum wrote a poem. And again, you might think this is just some kind of corny patriotism, and again you are welcome to tune out. But here is the poem and the title is:

My Beautiful America Beneath God's Wide, Wide Sky.

*You ask me why I love her? Well give me time, and I'll explain...*

*Have you seen a Kansas sunset or an Arizona rain?*

*Have you drifted on a bayou down Louisiana way?*

*Have you watched the cold fog drifting over San Francisco Bay?*

*Have you heard a Bobwhite calling in the Carolina pines?*

*Or heard the bellow of a diesel in the Appalachia mines?*

*Does the call of Niagara thrill you when you hear her waters roar?*

*Do you look with awe and wonder at a Massachusetts shore...*

*Where men who braved a hard new world, first stepped on Plymouth Rock?*

*And do you think of them when you stroll along a New York City dock?*

*Have you seen a snowflake drifting in the Rockies...way up high?*

*Have you seen the sun come blazing down from a bright Nevada sky?*

*Do you hail to the Columbia as she rushes to the sea...  
Or bow your head at Gettysburg...in our struggle to be free?  
Have you seen the mighty Tetons? ...Have you watched an eagle soar?  
Have you seen the Mississippi roll along Missouri's shore?  
Have you felt a chill at Michigan, when on a winter's day,  
Her waters rage along the shore in a thunderous display?  
Does the word "Aloha"... make you warm? Do you stare in disbelief  
when you see the surf come roaring in at Waimea reef?  
From Alaska's cold to the Everglades...from the Rio Grande to Maine...  
My heart cries out... my pulse runs fast at the might of her domain.  
You ask me why I love her?... I've a million reasons why.  
My beautiful America... beneath Gods' wide, wide sky.  
John Mitchum, Copywrite 1971*

That poem is actually better narrated by the famous actor named Marian Morrison. You can find that on YouTube. And if you don't know, Marian Morrison is the given name of John Wayne. Here is a famous speech about our country. It is basically for History students.

*"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched us and strengthened us and we have mainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom, or virtue of our own. Intoxicated with broken success we have become too self-sufficient to fill the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace; too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power; to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." [Sounds like the author was familiar with Deuteronomy 8.]*

That was a speech given by Abraham Lincoln - a national day of fasting and humiliation and prayer, March 30, 1863 - almost a 160 years ago. Back then, like in the 1860's, the population was thirty-one million. Now it is what, three-hundred and ten million plus. The point being people still feel the same way. Not patriotic, I should say. As a nation, largely, not all, we're an ungrateful, unappreciative people, unthankful for all these national blessings. We still enjoy those things. Even though there are many things wrong; obviously there are many things wrong with it but remember it is mostly what people have done that are wrong. It is people with their self-interest and agendas who divide. God unites. It is just my opinion, but I think of all people, we should be the most thankful.

The second thing: *Be thankful for those who have gone before us*

Back in World War II, there was an official unit called The Pathfinders. They would usually parachute in, or maybe sneak in at night by boat. The idea was to lead the way and to guarantee safety for the troops who would follow them. The point is that we should be thankful for those that have gone before us. Those that have paved the way in a sense. In the things that we believe. And many times, it was through great personal sacrifice. Even gave their lives to preserve the troops. What we have today, many people sacrificed for that. Then we have that whole chapter of Hebrews 11. Won't go there but, I don't how anybody can read that and not be inspired by what those folks went through. It is an inspiring chapter.

My first thought when I think of that, people who have gone before, is to go back to Abraham. He made a tremendous sacrifice. He faced a tremendous trial. The whole account is in Genesis; again, very familiar to us so we won't turn there. God made a promise to Abraham. He repeated it through the years that he and Sara would have a son to which all the nations of the earth would be blessed. They tried to rush things a little bit and they had a son with Hagar, Sarah's handmaid. Ishmael was born but God finally gave them a son, Isaac. After he was grown, then God says to Abraham, "*Take your son and offer him as a sacrifice.*" We tend to think about that; Well, that wasn't so hard. Abraham knew God. He knew he wouldn't have to go through with it. That is not the way it played out. That is not the way the story reads at all. You can only imagine the trauma and the agony. You know, a father wants to hold his son close and protect him. He would do anything for that. You don't think any other way. That is the way a father thinks, but Abraham did as he was told. As gut-wrenching as it was, he did what he was told to do. He trusted God to provide the sacrifice and as we know the story, He did - a ram.

I kind of picture, even when he had the knife poised and God sent an angel to tell him "No, stop". I would have collapsed. He might have even collapsed right there. He just folded up due to the emotions and all the things that he was going through. Let's look at Genesis 22 and just see a few things. After Abraham did all that, after he went through that, which was a terrible trial. God repeated a promise to him and in Genesis 22 I am going to go down and read verses 15 through 18 from the New Living Translation.

**Genesis 22:15** *Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven.*

16) *"This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that*

17) *I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. [Again, God displaces people to put people where He wants them.]*

18) *And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."* (NLT)

And when you think about it, this land that we celebrate Thanksgiving in, is one of those nations blessed because of the obedience of Abraham. In fact, you look at a lot of the



nations around the world, the western nations especially--Australia, New Zealand, Canada--all because of Abraham. Because he was willing, despite the agony of what he had to go through to prove himself in that final, absolutely terrible trial. It has been said once, maybe I read it somewhere or maybe I heard it, of everyone mentioned in the Bible, Abraham was the only one that was a type of God the Father. What do you think about that? When you put a few things together. He was called the father of the faithful. He didn't really start out that way. He was also called the "friend of God". I say that a type of God the Father because it foreshadowed another sacrifice, which we and the world should be thankful for. Let's go to John 3. Everyone can quote John 3:16 from memory, but what does it really say in the context? I would like to take a look at that.

**John 3:13** *No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. (NKJV)*

He was back in heaven and now He came down from heaven. It is very easy to read over that but not think about where He came down from. The very throne of God, the very beginning when they formed the earth, they created man in their image, and they had a plan in mind. Let's go down to verse 14. And that is when Christ came down as part of that great plan.

*14 continued) ... And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [Reference as to how He would die]*

*15) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*16) For God so loved the world [That is a love without bounds] that He gave His only begotten Son, [And remember, He earlier required that of Abraham to give his only begotten son, only this is God the Father] that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

*17) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (NKJV)*

The partial fulfillment of that plan. The rest of it is being played out now. You have got to think of that; you think it was easy for God to design a plan that would require Him to sacrifice His own son? We have to ask ourselves, are we thankful for that sacrifice? He was willing to do that; to let His son become a mortal man and go through the embarrassment, the shame, the humiliation, and the agony and suffering that He did. And then die as a sacrifice that there could be a promise of eternal life for all mankind. For all of us. Are we thankful to God for that sacrifice? You know, we need to be thankful to Christ because He said.

*"Yes, I will go. I will do this. It is your will, not mine."*

He gave Himself for that sacrifice. He willingly gave Himself and we should be eternally thankful for that. In fact, hopefully we will be. When you look at the patriarchs, the apostles, all the people down through history thinking about their sacrifice and what they went through. Again, my point being, they kind of lead the way. You have to think about the level of commitment that everyone had. We have these accounts in the record of

scripture. Abraham, at seventy, he left everything to do what God told him to do. Willing to sacrifice his son. That is a tremendous amount of commitment. Then God's commitment to do the same thing. To offer His son for all mankind. Have you ever thought about this? About commitments? Commitment means the most, one that is hardest to keep. The same thing as marriage vows. For better or worse, sickness or health. Hard to keep. Something to think about.

The third thing I put down is the Sabbath Day. Remember when that Pharisee lawyer asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment? Jesus condensed it into two. You know, Love God, and love your neighbour. We are familiar with the Ten Commandments. The first four are relation with God and the last six with fellow man. Starting with the fifth, honor your father and mother. That is where we learned respect and all that in the home. But the fourth when it says, remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy. The Sabbath day. And when you think about that, to me, that is a kind of hinge that pulls everything together in the commandments. It is vital to our spiritual wellbeing. The sabbath is vital to us. We all believe in that day and God's plan for mankind is described in the Holy Days in Leviticus 23. What is the first one to mention? The very first one, the very first thing, is the Sabbath. Let's look at Exodus 20. Again, to me, that is the hinge that binds everything together. I am talking about the hinge that ties everything together, our relationship with God and our relationship with fellow man. When you think about it. You know God's plan is the exact opposite of Satan's plan. It is the exact opposite. God's plan is freedom and Satan's plan is slavery. I know this is mostly review.

**Exodus 20:1** *And God spoke all these words, saying:*

2) *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (NKJV)*

Modern translations say "slavery". We hear this in the Spring when it gets close to the Days of Unleavened Bread. We go through Exodus places where Satan is described, and we picture Pharaoh as a type of Satan and that God brought us out of Satan's world which we were enslaved in. That is true, even today. Then He gives us a code. How to apply and live by so as to leave that enslavement and prevent that re-enslavement. That code is in the Commandments.

We have the first three: *don't worship other gods; don't worship idols; don't use God's name in vain.* And then, the fourth one: *remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.*

To break that down, when it says to remember something, that is something you keep in the forefront of you mind. That is the working part of your brain. That is the part of your brain you act on. We even say that in golf when we play a shot. In the left side of our brain, we think about and analyze the shot and then we switch to the right side and we play the shot. That makes absolutely no sense to anyone but John and me.

Breaking this down, the word *sabbath* is derived from a root word that just means "intermission". It is an intermission. You remember the old movies when they would

have an intermission; especially if it was a long movie. I remember “The Ten Commandments” movie and some other long ones. They were so long; they’d have an intermission. You had to have a break. You had to have pause. That is kind of like the Sabbath is for us when you think about that. It is a pause from the influence of Satan’s world. It is a day; it is a space of time. There again, pharisaical people will argue how precisely to calculate the exact moment of sundown. But any way you slice it, it is from sundown to sundown. From one sundown to the next. To keep it holy, it is a day concentrated, dedicated, undefiled day on which to worship. Intended to worship formally by assembling. Sometimes some people can’t do that; sometimes people are homebound. That is fine, but the idea is to keep it unpolluted, undefiled. What does polluting mean? I just remember, back years ago, I knew a man in the church, unnamed obviously, who would go home after services and watch football games during the rest of the day. That is how you pollute the Sabbath. Your mind is totally on something else. Totally and completely. Yes, sometimes there is “an ox in a ditch” situation. We just had “an ox” on our roof. We had some pretty severe wind damage, and my son came over and I had to help him. We had to cover that up. Your insurance company requires you in your contract with them, to do what you can to prevent further damage. We lost about probably two or three squares of shingle. A square is a ten by ten. That is the way the roofers describe it anyway.

But again, some will take a pharisaical approach and try to make the Sabbath command say something it doesn’t mean. Years ago, and this is just a small example, I could use other more complicated examples, but I won’t do that, not publicly anyway. Years ago, we attended with a small group. People here have enough history to remember when our parent church broke up and fell apart and whatever it did. We attended a small group and they leaned towards the “Hebrew roots” thing. The host was very much into that and he always had cold coffee there. He had an electric coffee pot that he would not plug in on the Sabbath. We always had cold coffee. What does that command say to not to do? What does it really say? Doesn’t say things like that. If you look frankly at what the Jews believe, the Pharisees believe, they have a number of categories but anything that even looks like it is work, you don’t do on the Sabbath. What does that scripture really say?

**Exodus 20:9** *Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (NKJV)*

If you want to look the meaning of *work* up, it is Hebrew 4399. I can’t pronounce the Hebrew but anyway, it is from the BDB; Brown, Driver, Briggs Dictionary definition which is a simple one. It gives a numbered list that is in sub-bullets: 1. Occupation, work, business, property. That is in that list of what *work* means. It is referring to a farm, a factory, or like me, I worked in a nuke plant. I didn’t go there on the Sabbath. Work, which is something done or made, it is something you buy or sell and make a living from. Workmanship, same thing. You have to produce something to do that. Service, as the people that work in the service industries; that is work. Public business that could be either political or religious. That is what that word means. Let’s go down to verse 10...

10) *but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: [Same Hebrew word. Same meaning. Same list of what you don't do.] you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. [You don't have them do those things.]*

11) *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (NKJV)*

In Deuteronomy 5 there a couple of differences in the commandments. Repeats, restates them, and to me it just emphasizes what is said there in Exodus 20.

**Deuteronomy 5:12** *Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. (NKJV)*

Instead of *remember*, here it says *observe* meaning “to preserve or protect it”. In other words, don't let it slip away and some have. In our experience anyway, people that leave the church, one of the first things that goes is they stop keeping the Sabbath. They stop keeping the Holy Days. They just stop. This word here means “to observe, to keep it, to preserve it, to guard it even” and to “protect it”. Down in verse 13, and this is from the Young's Literal translation,

13) *... six days thou dost labour, and hast done all thy work, [Same word again]*  
14) *and the seventh day [is] a sabbath to Jehovah thy God; thou dost not do any work, [it repeats all the things they did in Exodus 20] thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy handmaid, and thine ox, and thine ass, and all thy cattle, and thy sojourner who [is] within thy gates; so that thy man-servant, and thy handmaid doth rest like thyself; [Everyone needs a break is what it is saying] (YLT)*

Instead of pointing to creation week though as it did in Exodus 20, *And God rested*, it said, in Exodus 20:11.

**Exodus 20:11** *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (YLT)*

But here in verse 15 it is a little bit different. It points to something else.

**Deuteronomy 5:15** *And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (YLT)*

In other words, in a nutshell God called us out; you and me, out of a world ruled by Pharaoh/Satan. Isn't that anti-God influence getting stronger and stronger? You see it

every day. Is the world getting more or less evil? Mentioned that in the announcements. Doesn't take an Einstein to see it is increasing in evil all the time. But God, when you think about this, God in His love gives us a respite, a reprieve, an intermission on a weekly basis from that influence. A twenty-four-hour break from the one hundred and sixty-eight hours in which we have to produce and do the things that we need to do, make a living; whatever it might be. Why would we not want to keep that foremost in our mind? Why not? Why would we not want to assemble with brethren and friends of like mind? Remember another thing, Christ said that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Unlike some who will get pharisaical about it. Let's pick that up over in Mark 2. I am going to go down to verse 23 again from the New King James. Have a look at the context here.

**Mark 2:23:** *Now it happened that He [Christ] went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain.  
24) And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" (NKJV)*

Wrong to do that; you can't do that. Typical Pharisaical approach. You know, we're the authorities. Our interpretation of the law is what is important here. You are permitting your followers to work on the Sabbath. To work. That is pretty clear to us. Work.

*25) But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did [It is always interesting; He throws scripture right back at him. These were the lawyers, the scribes, all those. They were using it and He just countered with it] Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him:*

*26) how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" (NKJV)*

Again, he countered. He countered with scriptures. He knew they knew. Remember they repeatedly accused Him of breaking the Sabbath and other things. By their interpretation of everything. All the physical "dos and don't"; that's what was important to them. Let's go to Mark 7, several chapters over for another example of that.

**Mark 7:1** *Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.*

*2) Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. [Always did]*

*3) For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.*

*4) When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.*

*5) Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"*

[How could they? And He counters them again. Quoting directly out of scripture]  
6) *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: [He is quoting Isaiah 29:13 for the most part here] 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*

7) *And in vain they worship Me,*

*Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*

8) *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."*

9) *He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. (NKJV)*

In other words, what they thought was wrong and in regard to the Sabbath, what they considered work. There is a section here in Mark where they even corrupted the command to honor your father and your mother. But continuing in verse 13)

*13) making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." (NKJV)*

I know I'm jumping around, but go back to Mark 2. This is kind of where we were heading in the first place. Back to Mark 2 verse 27 and 28.

**Mark 2:27** *And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. [The exact opposite of what their approach was]*

*28) Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (NKJV)*

He is emphatically stating that He and the Father were the authorities in giving the Sabbath to man. It is a day of rest. If you look at it that way, it is a "gift" to all mankind. God instituted that at the very beginning. The very beginning of the creation. And what a gift to be thankful for. We should be thankful every time we come here. Or even if we can't come.

There is another Sabbath scripture over in Isaiah 58, and just look at something briefly here in verses 13 and 14 where it says,

**Isaiah 58:13** *"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight... (NKJV)*

That word *delight* is Strongs #6027. It just means "delight" or "luxury". It is used to describe a place of luxury. In other words, the Sabbath was supposed to be a time of delight, a time of enjoyment for Israel and for us too. Suppose to be a time of delight and enjoyment. Not an attitude, "*Oh no, I got to drag myself to services and listen to another boring sermon*" I kind of chuckle at that you know, but again, sometimes we have good memories; sometimes we don't have such good memories. I heard about a man in a group one time, and again unnamed group and unnamed man. When it came to services, they had to put him in another room so he could bible study or whatever he wanted to do. He just couldn't stand listening to sermons anymore. He was just sick of

it. You know I think about that. I am sorry, but I think if I were that far gone, I would just stay home. Let's continue, verse 13 of Isaiah 58.

*13 continued) ... The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, (NKJV)*

And the way we keep it, does honor God. It is respect for the commandment that is given. It is a *gift* He has given us. Not doing what you normally do, which for us, is work, mostly work.

*13 continued) ... Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words ... (NKJV)*

And that means a desire for earthly things; material, pleasure, the business, the making a living. That is for most of the time. We are retired now but when we do work, it is a lot on your mind. We used to call it an electronic leash. They must use i-Phones these days. I am not sure. Anyhow, we had a pager on our belts, and I worked at a nuclear power plant; the security going in and out. Go in through a turn-stool; leave by a turn-stool. The minute I walked through that turn-stool, I would turn that pager off because a lot of times I'd get paged before I got out of the parking lot. "Jack, we need this, we need that". A lot of times I'd have to go back. I even got a call in the middle of the night one time. I volunteered to go back out to the Plant. That wasn't on a Sabbath. How did I get off onto that subject? Verse 14, and here is that word again.

*14) Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken." (NKJV)*

Kind of think a little bit about the opposite of thankfulness. I am talking about our attitudes. We can choose our attitudes in a lot of things. There are a lot of synonyms for thankfulness and just a few are *cheerfulness, appreciation, gratitude, even joyfulness and a forgiving spirit*. And I am not talking about this kind of ultra pious pseudo-Christian front. People do that. But do we want to reflect the opposite of those good qualities with our lives to be constantly in an unthankful attitude. It is truly hard these days not to be in an opposite attitude of *unthankfulness, gloominess and resentment* and even *bitterness or sadness*. All of an unforgiving spirit. We don't want to live our lives that way. I don't think any of us do. We just don't want to do that. Someone said one time, hanging onto resentment and all those negative things which we are surrounded by, is like allowing something or someone to live rent free in your head. And that is true. Physiologically that is true. It can just consume you if you want that. People do that. They get all anxious, they get all kinds of issues going on because they can't let go of things.

Another saying I remember is:

*"Hatred is like acid. It does more harm to the container it is in*

*than to what you pour it on."*

That is true too. I heard someone mention a sign with these words that they saw in front of a church one time, and I quote:

*"If you can't be thankful for all the things you do receive, then be thankful for all the things you don't receive that you deserve to receive".*

You might remember that. There is a lot that we deserve that we haven't gotten yet. We should be thankful for that.

Again, we should be the most thankful people on earth. We really should be for all the blessings that God provides for us. He even set a day aside nationally, "Thanksgiving", to honor that. To celebrate the freedom we enjoy in a good land. Granted, there is a whole lot wrong with our land; a lot wrong with our leaders; we can complain, we can criticize, even hold in contempt, but we have so much that we should be thankful for. We can choose that. We can choose to dwell on that. It should be a constant attitude. Paul mentioned that attitude in 1 Thessalonians 5. Paul is ending the letter here that he wrote in 1 Thessalonians to those in Thessalonica. Chapter 4 is all about Christ's return but then in chapter 5 beginning in verse 1 and I will use the New Living Translation as it brings it out a little clearer for us these days. Paul says,

**1 Thessalonians 5:1** *Now concerning how and when all this will happen, [all the things he had just covered about Christ's return and we know there is a lot of things going to happen between now and then] dear brothers and sisters, we don't really need to write you.*

*2) For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.*

*3) When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape. [The point there is, it is going to happen. Nothing we can do to stop it]*

*4) But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.*

*5) For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.*

*6) So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. [that's speaking spiritually] Stay alert and be clearheaded.*

*7) Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk.*

*8) But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation. [Ephesians 6 thrown in there.]*

*9) For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. [Again, God doesn't punish just to punish.]*

*10) Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. [That is all part of that plan; all part of that sacrifice.]*



11) *So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.* [But notice even though there are dark times ahead, what Paul goes on to say]

15) *See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.* (NLT)

Again, those two commandments Christ said, “*Love God and love your neighbor.*” Then he mentioned three approaches we should have, and it is just the opposite of letting all the bad stuff eat away at us. Do you think Paul had reason to be a little resentful? To be in kind of a bad attitude? You know we know all the things that happened to him. At least what we can see. He lived it. We just read about him, but he lived it. In Verse 16 he gives three things...

16) *Always be joyful.*

17) *Never stop praying.*

18) *Be thankful in all circumstances,* [I think King James says in “*everything*”.] *for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* (NLTV)

I have several commentaries in my software and one of them I like the insight of the individual. This is from [The Preachers Commentary](#) on this verse where it says *be thankful in all circumstances*, and I am quoting:

*“In everything give thanks. This is the third command that Paul gives here and it certainly grows out of the first two. Joy and unceasing prayer flow forth in a constant stream of gratitude [a state of mind]. I am not in agreement with the interpretation of this phrase that calls us to praise and thank God for literally everything that happens. I can’t imagine God being thankful for everything that happens. Things that happen because of the selfishness or sinfulness of ourselves or others, need to be changed, not accepted. I prefer to thank God for being God and to focus on Him rather than on the things that happen. [That is petty good advice]. The great drama in the Bible centers in the belief that God is at work for good in the lives of His people no matter what. There was nothing good [He gives an example] in Joseph’s brother selling him to the Ishmaelite traders. There was nothing good about the injustices he experienced from Potiphar’s wife. But in retrospect, Joseph could say through it all that [he is quoting Genesis 50:20]. “You meant evil against me but God meant it for good.” This belief is articulated powerfully by Paul where he said [in another familiar scripture, Romans 8:28] “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” [And going on, continuing the quote], *Our translation tends to make all things the subject rather than God.* [And we kind of could lean that way.] *A better translation, [he goes on to say,] is that in everything, God is at work for good. We must never forget that God is at work in and through and often in spite of the things. Well, I may not be able to give thanks for all the things that happen, I can give thanks in everything from the confidence that God is always present and is always at work for good.*” [Hard to disagree with that]*

Again, we have a national holiday. At Thanksgiving, we celebrate, we enjoy with friends, with brethren but keep in mind as God’s people, that we have so much more to be

thankful for. And again, I mention those seemingly obvious, maybe even to you, small things; our country, a blessing from God; the sacrifice of those that have gone before, when you think about the patriarchs. When you think about God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ Who left us an example to follow and the gift of the Sabbath. It is a gift. But there is a bigger question, really, that we can answer that we should be thankful to God for anything. Summed up in one word. We should be thankful to God for *everything*. *Everything* - past, present, future - for *everything*.