**September 8, 2024 -THANK YOU**

**I’m thankful for. . .**

ANDY – He’s the dog Denalyn rescued from the shelter. Rangy as a coyote when we got him. He’s chubby now. He jumps into bed with us every morning and scampers through the yard like a deer in the pasture when we come home.

BALD spots – I was standing in line at a convenience store when I spotted one on the security screen. *That guy is losing his hair*. Then I realized that guy was me. My bald spot is spreading like a rain puddle. Might as well be grateful. Besides, *bald* starts with a *b*.

CHOCOLATE starts with a *c*. So today I’m thankful for chocolate. Chocolate cookies, candy, cakes, and shakes. Chocolate would’ve kept Adam and Eve away from the tree.

DICTIONARIES – Someone has to define words. If d-o-g meant “cat” to you and “rat” to me, we wouldn’t know which to catch and which to pet. I’m thankful for dictionaries. And I’m thankful for . . .

EXERCISIES like this one. It was Denalyn’s idea. Alphabetize your blessings. Rather than catalog burdens, itemize benefits. The sure cure for the grumpy spirit. A= Andy. B= Bald spot. C=Chocolate. D= Dictionary. It dawns on me that Denalyn begins with a *d.* The next time I make the list, my wife trumps *dictionary*. Which, by the way, is a lesson of the exercise. A person never runs out of reasons to say “thanks”.

THANKS. Just the word lifts the spirit. To say thanks is to celebrate a gift. Something. Anything. Animals. Bald spots. Chocolate. Dictionaries and Denalyn. To say thanks is to cross the tracks from have-not to have-much, from the excluded to the recruited. Thanks, proclaims, “I’m not disadvantaged, disabled, victimized, scandalized, forgotten, or ignored. I am blessed.” Gratitude is a dialysis of sorts. It flushes the self-pity out of our systems.

In scripture the idea of giving thanks is not a suggestion or recommendation: it is a command. It carries the same weight as “love your neighbor” and “give to the poor.” More than a hundred times, either by imperative or example, the Bible commands us to be thankful. If quantity implies gravity, God takes thanksgiving seriously.

Here's why. Ingratitude is the original sin. Adam and Eve had a million reasons to give thanks. The waterfalls and fowl, shorelines and sunsets. God found Eden so delightful, he strolled through it in the cool of the day (Gen.3:8). Adam and Eve found the garden so safe; they wore no clothing (Gen. 2:25). They had nothing to hide and no one to hide from. They lived in a perfect world. One with creations, one with God, one with each other. Eden was a “one-derful” world.

But then came the snake. Satan slithered into the garden. He raised a question about the forbidden tree. Adam and Eve could eat from all the others: But Satan focused on the single fruit they could not touch. “Eat it, he hissed, ‘and you will be like God’” (Gen. 3:5) Just like that, Eden was not enough. It **was** enough, mind you. Ecological harmony. Relational purity. Spiritual peace. Adam and Eve had all they would ever need. God had told them, “I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.” (Gen. 1:29).

**PART I- of GIVING THANKS by Max Lucado**

**PART II -next week**

**Prayers for September 8 and Sept 11, 2024**

As scattered grains of wheat are gathered into one bread, so let us gather our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of God’s creation.

Lord of Understanding help us to not allow fear to rule our decisions but to trust in Your guidance. Help us to lean on our faith when tough times overwhelm us.

**Leader -God of Grace**

**Congregation– Receive our Prayer.**

**Gracious God, we give You thanks for bringing Kole to the waters of life and to the bread and cup of blessing. As You have made him Your own in baptism, feed and nourish him always with Your forgiveness, grace, and love.**

 **Leader** -**God of Grace**

**Congregation -Receive our Prayer.**

Lord of Peace, help us to reach out to those in need. Peace among nations starts with each of us. May we remember **all of us** are your children and **all of us** need your love and protection.

 Today we especially pray for: Brayden, Brianna, Darla, Denise, Jackie, James O., Jerry S.,

Jerry Z., Kristy, Larry, Lee, Lori, Nancy, Nathan, Oliver, Pat, Rachel, Tracy, Scott, Will and all those we hold in our hearts.

 **Leader -God of Grace**

**Congregation- Receive our Prayer.**

Lord of Truth, when the world wants us to believe in feel good remedies, and material goods as the path to happiness help us to remember the soundtrack of our life is Your Word.

**Leader -God of Grace**

**Congregation– Receive our Prayer.**

 **Lord help us not to worry BUT worship, not to panic BUT pray and not to focus on the problems BUT on the promises, You have made to us.**

 **Leader -God of Grace**

**Congregation- Receive our Prayer.**

**Lord help us to work through the puzzle of important versus necessary. We can allow our lives to be consumed with career, community, jobs and YET neglect our relationship with YOU. Help us to LISTEN to You, to pay ATTENTION to You, and to build our relationship with You.**

**Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation – Receive our Prayer.**

**With everlasting thanks and joy for Your love and forgiveness we ask You to be with us till we meet again. This week help us to take every opportunity to be thankful for the blessings of each day. Help us to pay attention to how best we can be a gift to others. May we approach each day with SOUL – serving others, uplifting lives! We ask all in the name of Your Dear Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN**