

East Hartford  
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Psa 138, Lk 11:1-13

## Will You?

### Prayer

I wonder how many of us remember what it was like when our parents were trying to teach us how to write thank you notes? Which notes were the easiest ones to write? Xxxx I remember that as a kid, the easiest ones for me were either to the folks I thought were really cool, or when someone sent me a really cool prezzie. Which ones were most challenging? Well either the folks were hard for me to relate to - or the prezzies didn't seem all that cool to me. I don't remember ever finding doll clothes to be all that appealing. I confess that many of my childhood thank you notes were produced under some duress and were half hearted at best.

Dear Aunt Millie,  
Thanks so much for the nice dress you gave me for my Suzie doll.

Love, Alice

Grab your bulletins, and take a look at the first sentence of the Psalm. Let's read that one together. *"I give You thanks, O Blessed One, with my whole heart."*

As part of my sermon preparation I usually check the passage for the day in a whole variety of Bible translations all in English. I use a wonderful on-line resource called Bible Gateway.com. They have more than 20 different English language versions of scripture available and it's possible to see 6 or 7 versions at once all set up in parallel columns - really neat and it's free. Bible Gateway.com.

Every translation that I checked agreed. They all used language like, "my whole heart" Eugene Peterson who wrote The Message was a

little bit different - but tell me what do you think Peterson means by these words, “1-3 *Thank you! Everything in me says “Thank you!”*”??? xxx  
There was clear and remarkable unanimity among the translators.

There is no half hearted, lukewarm, obligatory, thanksgiving on the part of the Psalmist. There is no whiny, “Mom, do I have to write to Great Aunt Helen before I can go to baseball practice?” Thanks giving in the scriptures is joyful and robust. With the whole heart.

*Lord, I will thank you with all my heart;  
I will sing to you before the gods.* New Century Version

Living and loving with all our heart is important: in the scriptures, to us, and to God. Hear these examples. Some are intention like our psalm this morning, some are expectations or commandments from God, and some are promises of God:

*Ps 9:1 I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.*

*Ps 86:12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.*

*Ps 111:1 I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

*Ps 119:10 With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments.*

*Ps 119:34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.*

*Jer 24:7 God's promise*

*I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.*

*2Ch 19:9 He charged them: "This is how you shall act: in the reverence of the Lord, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart;*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,* found first in Deuteronomy, then quoted by Jesus according to Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Friends, I firmly believe in this progression, - whole hearted thanks giving leads to whole hearted loving, which leads to whole hearted living which is, my friends, a wonderful way of life and is in fact, nothing less than the fulfillment of the commandment: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.*

Why is the psalmist so grateful that he gives thanks with all his heart in the psalm we call 138?

We see the psalm comes in three sections, and I am working with the version which is in your bulletins. In the first stanza we see that the psalmist made a momentous discovery: *I came to see that You dwell in me, / and in the Holy Temple of all souls.* God dwells in each one of us, in every one we call "them." Let me call some names: Joan, Rich, Sharon, Chris. -God dwells - I love that word, dwell. God dwells in you, in everyone in this room. In everyone who is outside this room. God dwells in everyone who would not walk into this room for a million bucks.

What an amazing insight - what else can we do except give thanks? - God dwells in each and every person of all time. Let us give thanks with our whole heart.

Then we hear a statement of fact: *You are the Holy One, the Breath of our breath,* followed by a word of testimony: *On the day that I called you answered me; the strength of my soul you increased.* Or as the New Century translation puts it *On the day that I called to you, you made me strong and brave.* The psalmist discovered that even as he called upon God he became stronger, more courageous. What is not to be grateful about that? As we call upon God, we find ourselves stronger

and more courageous. Let us give thanks with our whole heart.

Then, in the second stanza, the psalmist turns away from his personal experience to look at the kings of the earth. He sees God at work, and here hundreds of years before one Jesus of Nazareth is born, we hear that amazing reversal *you are Friend to the lowly*.

Remember these words from the Song of Hannah, which are echoed in Mary's Magnificat 1 Samuel 2:8 (NRSV) *8 God raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.*

Luke 1:51-53 (NIV)

*51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*

Let us join the psalmist and give thanks with our whole heart, for none of us here are among the princes of this world and time.

Then in the last section of the psalm, David gets personal again.

*Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You preserve my life;  
You are so very present as I face my fears and doubts;  
You guide me as I pray to fulfill my purpose on earth;  
You do not forsake those who call upon You.  
Your steadfast love and truth endures forever.*

Here echoes that most sacred promise of God. God is and always will be persistently present to us in each and every moment of our lives. God never leaves nor forsakes us. Again my friends, I ask, "what else is there to do in the face of this promise of God, but to melt into gratitude, to join David in giving thanks to God with our whole heart?"

What keeps us from whole hearted thanks giving? I'm not going to

accuse anyone else but me. When I ask myself what keeps me from whole hearted thanks giving, I discover a pretty ordinary list. One, I think I'm too busy. Got stuff to do, you know. I'm like Martha of Mary and Martha, distracted by many things. And I know better.

Yes. I have actually done the exercise of taking that cup of coffee, or that slice of perfectly ripe sun warm tomato, or that piece of perfect melon and really savored it - the aroma, the texture, the taste and the aftertaste. I have stayed with it until my heart was full of the beauty of it all, full of gratitude to the creator of strawberry and all the people who help bring that strawberry into my life. And yet - all too often, I'm too busy, or at least that's the excuse I give myself.

Sometimes when I am distracted by many things, I fail to see the important things like the love behind a word or a gesture, or the goodness in a simple kindness. Because I do not see, I do not give thanks.

And for sure, whenever I get in the mode of trying to be the center of the universe, whenever I entertain the illusion that it is "all about me" then heartfelt gratitude, giving thanks with all my heart never even occurs to me.

What keeps you from giving thanks with all your hearts?

More importantly do we want to keep on with a half hearted, distracted practice of thanks giving? Are we content to give half hearted thanks or do we desire to go more deeply into love, into a more honest, trusting, relationship with God? What is God's desire?

Friends, as I said, I believe giving thanks with a whole heart leads directly to loving with my whole heart and I want to love God, God's people, God's creation with my whole heart.

I can, I will set aside that which distracts, detracts, and deflects my self into halfhearted thanks giving. I will practice giving thanks with all my heart. Let me ask, "Will you?"

