

1 Chronicles 29:1-18 (NIV)

Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. ² With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God – gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble – all of these in large quantities. ³ Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: ⁴ three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, ⁵ for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord today?"

⁶ Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. ⁷ They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸ Anyone who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the Lord in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

¹⁰ David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

"Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.

¹¹ Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹² Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things.

In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

¹⁵ We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. ¹⁷ I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. ¹⁸ Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.

head this week, and I know it's been a great source of stress for all of us.

But, I'm happy to tell you that the mystery was solved late this last week. Yes! One of those pulses was able to be observed by two different antennas – one in a Canadian observatory that cost 20 million dollars, and one that a doctoral student in California made in his garage using cake pans – anyway, both of them were able to pick up the same burst and, with that, scientists have concluded that these bursts are coming from – and I'm sorry about the highly sophisticated language the scientists were using here – quote, "a weird type of star," that is 32,000 light years from earth.¹

So anyway, that is great news – that this unknown that has caused us all this stress – has been resolved, so we can all relax now. And we would, except that, we all know, of course, that Thanksgiving is only two and a half weeks away. Studies show that Thanksgiving causes Americans more anxiety than any of our other observations or special days. The stress and anxiety over preparing the meal, getting together with people you haven't seen – some of those by choice – for a year or longer, and the stress that comes because of the potential of having to discuss what can be awkward topics like religion or family dynamics or the source of cosmic energy pulses – or maybe politics.

So, because of thanksgiving, the stress level is going to continue to be high in our nation for a few weeks.

But you know, it doesn't have to be – and honestly, it shouldn't be – in the **Church**, because followers of Jesus should be far more focused on, and intentional about, giving thanks than the average American. *This is a huge antidote for stress.*

Giving thanks – practicing gratitude – is a great stress reliever and reducer. Even the most secular scientists and mental health professionals recognize the tremendous benefits of simply giving thanks – of intentionally cultivating a grateful heart and then voicing that gratitude.

Especially in the past 20 to 30 years, mental health professionals, responding to the growing sense of dread and depression found in many people of our nation – which is due, primarily, to our ongoing rejection of God and His ways – have done many studies that all point to the same conclusion: cultivating gratitude is a real and powerful medicine that leads to healthy perspectives and healthy lives and healthy relationships and healthy families.

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/astronomers-find-cosmic-radio-source-9aa883306b24272e6fa44c501b5ade11>

I realize this has been a very stressful week for lots of people, and I know why. We haven't talked about it much, but I know the stress we all feel is because no one has been able to determine the source of those energy pulses that have been appearing in our galaxy over the past few decades. You know about that – you've followed that story in the news and how it came to a

And, of course, this is a principle that the Bible has talked about for centuries, because thankfulness checks and corrects our perspective. Thankfulness reminds us that we are not isolated, independent entities who simply live unto ourselves, but instead, we are part of a greater system – we are part of a web of existence that is interconnected and *dependent*.

Human people (I don't know about other kinds of people) are *dependent* creatures.

This is something especially Americans need to be reminded of, because our national identity tends to be one of *independence*.

Yet, we see even today how embracing independence without a proper reverence for God will surely eat us alive. We're watching it happen in our nation because we're losing perspective with regard to our innate connectivity and dependence upon God and each other.

There is really no such thing as human independence in Judeo-Christian theology. On the contrary, we are told, over and over again, that we are dependent on God, and that is true regardless of what we may think of Him or His existence. Humans need God. *We* rely – the *whole cosmos relies* – on His grace and mercy every day, and the farther we move from recognizing that reality, the more dysfunctional and broken we become.

And good leaders of people need to point this out from time to time, because, left to our own devices, we tend to forget. We like to think – our egos like to imagine – that we're independent of others, but we're not. Even the most powerful person – the most gifted and powerful leader – needs to remember, and is charged of God to remind those within her or his sphere of influence, that the world doesn't begin and end with us. We are dependent people, and so there must be room made in our lives for thankfulness.

And we see in our text today an example of a leader doing just this.

King David, the preeminent leader of Israel, the model king, the man after God's own heart, was simply great at reminding himself and his nation *not* of their *independence*, but of their *dependence*.

Though he was well aware of his enormous gifts and abilities, and he used them all his life in influential and powerful ways (the vast majority of them positive), David was also always quick to admit that he owed everything good in his and his nation's life to God.

David was always quick to give God thanks.

When you think about it, King David, above all people, could have easily descended into that same sort of godless, self-centeredness that most of the kings of Israel and Judah did. And honestly, nearly all *earthly* kings, emperors, pooh-bahs and presidents have done that throughout history.

But David did not go that direction. David knew – and seemed to know even more acutely as he aged – that he did not exist unto himself. He knew that his abilities, and even his calling and work as King, were God-given.

David knew that everything good in his life came from outside himself, and so he knew he owed a debt of gratitude to *whomever* or *whatever* that outside force was. And, of course, David knew that it was God.

You see it in his interactions with other leaders.

You see it in the mercy he's able to show to both important and insignificant people. He treated everyone the same.

You hear it in his songs – the psalms he wrote. Very few, if any of them, don't include some expression of thanks.

And, you hear it in his prayers and especially in this one in 1 Chronicles just read for us. This prayer has been called one of the finest expressions of human gratitude ever – a model thanksgiving prayer.¹ Let's look at it just for a minute here.

Now, what's going on is that David is transitioning the kingship of Israel to his son Solomon, who, though he is chosen, is still young, and so David begins with a realistic assessment of the challenge ahead. David is trying to do all he can to set up Solomon for success.

And David couches all that Solomon is to do in theological terms, because, you see, Solomon's kingship is not just over some random people. Solomon is king over the people of God.

And this temple complex that Solomon is to build is not just some office building. What Solomon is to build is nothing less than the very place where the God of all the ages has chosen to put His presence.

So, you see, David links all that Solomon is responsible to do to the enormity and grandeur of God.

It is God Who gives the significance and the weight to the task. It is God's work that Solomon is to do, and that is what makes it important. David admits that right at the beginning, and the people see that it's true and it pleases them that their king is humble enough to recognize that and embrace it. It pleases them that their king is humble enough to put himself and his son, the position they hold, and the responsibility they bear under the authority and the majesty of God.

David realizes that both he and his son are just normal people in the service of an extraordinary God, and all of that builds trust and camaraderie and unity with their nation.

It's an approach that our own leaders could learn from, isn't it?

Israel's king not an arrogant, know-everything king. Israel's is a confident, yet humble, king who knows the difference between the temporary and the eternal.

Israel's is a king who knows the cosmic pecking order; he knows his limitations and the fragility of his own life, and he knows that he is dependent on God.

Blessed is the nation whose leader understands this.

And you see, the people agree and get behind David in sentiment – and in action.

David, himself, gives greatly toward the project, the building of the temple, and asks the people to do the same. And they do – the people agree to serve Solomon wholeheartedly and invest themselves in the project, and wound up giving far more than even David did.

¹ Wilson, Charles. Wesleyan Bible Commentary, 381.

And when they had realized what they'd done together, it all led to great joy in the king and the people—and then to David's thanksgiving prayer.

It's a prayer that admits that everything—everything of any account, everything that is good—is God's. There in verse 11, David admits that greatness, power, glory, victory, majesty, wealth, honor, and strength all have their origin in God, lest anyone think any of these should be attributed to any human.

David's is also a prayer that admits human weakness. He asks rhetorically there in verse 14, "*Who are we, who am I, to give anything to you? We only give what you first gave to us. Compared to you and apart from you, we're nothing; we're shadows; we don't deserve; we don't belong; we're hopeless.*"

It's a tremendous contrast that David declares here. He's confessing to God, and also reminding his people that God's resources encompass all creation, but human resources are only what God wills to give.

God's nature is forever; ours last only moments.

It's a stark reminder of reality—of the way things really are, you see? It's only God who is, and who possesses, all these things. We have only that which He gives us.

And right there is the posture that's necessary for a grateful attitude and a thankful heart. You have to have a realistic picture of how the world actually works. Admitting and embracing that is the only posture that brings unity, blessing, peace and health to a person individually, and to a people.

And our culture has largely forgotten this.

We've become a people who chase after all those good things, but we do it *in our own power*. We think, because we've heard and been taught, that we're self-made, self-sufficient, self-empowered, and that self, self, self is the giver of good things. Self is the means. Self is the goal. Self is always number one.

And all that encourages is an attitude of expectation. It's a toxic combination of "My happiness is the greatest good," and, "I can be and do anything I want," and, "If it's to be, it's up to me."

We've adopted all that, but it's just not real. That's just not how God made the world to work. And so,

when it doesn't work for people, they get mad. They get depressed. They get anxious and worried and stressed and all of that.

And of course, they're not thankful, because they don't think they need to be.

But the truth is, we need to be. We need to be thankful to God, because that puts us in harmony the world He made.

Anxiety and stress are caused, more than anything else, by a distorted, incorrect, self-centered view of how the world works.

Yet, embracing God's authority, His Kingship and simply the way He made the world to operate will drive us to thankfulness and ultimately to peace.

It's ironic and completely against human wisdom that the path to peace is through humility and submission and gratitude, and *not* through self-assertion and personal power. That's the opposite of all that the world says, but then again, that shouldn't surprise us.

The world so needs—our nation so needs—the Church of Jesus Christ to demonstrate gratitude to God. It so needs to see a people at peace—a people not consumed by stress and anxiety and worry for the future.

That could be the most powerful demonstration of Christ that we could offer in this moment: true thanksgiving to the true God that gives witness to the true order of things in our world—and that brings true peace to our souls.

Let's make this season of Thanksgiving the real thing, shall we? Let's start a new practice of cultivating thankfulness—thankful hearts, and then expressing that gratitude to God and to others.

It will only bring good: it helps us, it honors God, and it may just set the world right.

Closing Song: *Give Thanks*

Benediction:

May we find as David found, and live as David lived, the peace that comes with thankful hearts. May the world see that in us, and be drawn to the Christ in us that makes it possible.