

How to Sanctify Everything...and Nothing

1 Timothy 4:1-5

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Video and audio versions available online:

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

Prayer

And so, Lord God, we pray that you would take our hearts, seal them for your courts above, and Lord God, I ask for a miracle. I ask that you would help us to preach, that you would help us bags of dust to talk about you. In fact, maybe you would even be the Word that we speak, Lord God. I think we can ask that in Jesus's name, to the power of your Spirit. Amen.

Message

1 Timothy 4 • **¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons...**

Many folks think that has something to do with Led Zeppelin, Harry Potter books, and Pokemon cards...

⁴ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons ² through the hypocrisy [*hypokrisei*—acting, as if on stage] of liars [*pseudologon*—false words] whose consciences are seared with a hot iron.

So, what do these people do? Throw wild parties with lots of eating and drinking, and probably sex? No.

³ They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving.

What these teachers of demonic doctrines do is cancel Thanksgiving.

Now listen very closely: If you cancelled a large family dinner on Thursday due to concerns over COVID, that's not only fine, it's probably a very commendable, wise, and loving thing to do. But if you outlaw feasting and giving thanks,...that's demonic.

I once counted: There are something like eighty days of commanded feasting in the Old Testament each year. Eighty days of commanded feasting; one day of commanded fasting. That one day of fasting was the Day of Atonement—we now call that Easter.

In Deuteronomy 14, Israel is commanded to gather in the Lord's presence, take 10% of the Gross National Product, and spend it on—quote: “...*whatever your appetite craves... oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink.*” Then, “...*eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice.*” Seems irresponsible to me, but I didn't write the Bible.

³ (They) forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Everything... everything... everything.

If you are a preacher, this is one of those verses that sticks in the back of your brain for decades as you silently wonder: *Is this supposed to be in the Bible? Am I supposed to talk about this? And was Paul maybe drunk at the time of its writing?*

This is one of those “Bible Verses Banned by Bible-Believing Believers” ...and yet, banning this verse appears to be a satanic doctrine.

So, anything received with thanksgiving is sanctified [that means “made Holy”]. Only holy things can enter the Holy of Holies, the Sanctuary, which is the presence of the age to come—the age when everything is good, and it is finished—Heaven is Holy and Happy and entirely Good.

Things received with thanksgiving are made holy by God's Word, writes Paul—that's the Word through which God creates and sustains all things.

“Everything created by God is good,” writes Paul... and...
Ephesians 3:9 • “God... created all things.” *Wow.*

Genesis 2:7: God created Adam.

So, is Adam good? *Yeah, I guess so.*

Genesis 2:18: “*It's not good that the Adam should be alone.*”

So, did God create loneliness? *I guess not.*

Adam—which means “man” or “humanity”—is alone, but he's obviously not *alone*. He's in the presence of God, who is Love, and who is the Good, and is his *ezer*—his Helper. *Eliezer* means “God is my helper.” But Adam doesn't know his Helper, who is the Good and the Life. In other words, he doesn't trust Love, and so, he is alone. Adam doesn't have knowledge of the Good or faith in Love, which is the Life.

So, God created trees, and particularly one tree, in the middle of the garden.



You know this tree. Is that tree good or evil? Adam didn't know. Do you know? How could Adam know?

Well, everything created by God is good, and God made everything. But clearly some things are bad... or went bad; which I think means "evil." But anything is made holy by the Word of God and prayer, whenever that thing is received with thanksgiving—not *taken* but *received* with thanksgiving—*Eucharisto* in Greek; "thank you" in English... just a Word: *eucharisto*. That's Thanksgiving—whether you eat turkey with relatives or not. That's Thanksgiving. And it's not only an option; it's a command.

1 Thessalonians 5 · ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The will of God—that's a good free will—the will of God in Christ Jesus for you: *Eucharisto*. His will is a Word that rises on your tongue.

Eucharisteo is "Give thanks," imperative tense—Speak the *eucharisto*.

So, we don't have to understand it; we're just told to do it. People always want God to tell them what to do in any given circumstance, and here Scripture tells us exactly what to do in every circumstance! Give thanks.

"Give thanks in all circumstances." "*For what?*" we ask.

Ephesians 5 · "¹⁸...do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

*"...Always and for everything."*ⁱ

He definitely sounds drunk, and maybe he is; he's drunk with the Spirit. And yet, this is still a command: "Give thanks."

So, let's do it! I'm going to stop talking for a couple of minutes or so. Then, whether you're here or watching at home, silently or out loud, I want you to just start thanking God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for *everything*. —Go!

[Peter pauses for several minutes of silence.]

OK, now I'm going to start talking, but even as I'm talking, you're supposed to somehow keep thanking, always and for everything, OK?

You don't have to understand, but maybe I can help you believe...that God really does want us to *thank him always and for everything*... And that when we do, "always and everything" is actually "sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer," for we "receive 'always' and 'everything' with thanksgiving."

So, did you thank God for...

✓ Good things... maybe Good things that you have?

If you thank God for your Thanksgiving turkey, aren't you saying that you didn't make the turkey, or the money that bought the turkey, or the energy with which you worked to earn the money that bought the turkey? You're acknowledging that the turkey is a gift—It's Grace (*charis* in Greek).ⁱⁱ

If you thank God for your house, you're confessing that you didn't earn that house. If you thank God for your kids, you're confessing that you didn't make your kids or earn your kids, but your kids are a gift.

Romans 4:4 · "...to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due."

If you thank God for a thing, you perceive that thing to be a gift.

If you think you deserve a thing, you'll discover that you don't actually own that thing; that thing owns you, and you're a slave. That's why rich people are often miserable people. It's because they don't actually have anything, but all their things have them. And so, they haven't really made anything except idols.

In the Old Testament, all sin is depicted as idolatry. A man makes an idol then believes that the idol makes him, which is a sneaky way of believing that he made himself—he is his own idol and a slave to insanity. A man makes a fortune and then believes the fortune makes the man, which is believing that he's a self-made man; but making yourself is a logical impossibility.

If you think you actually have a house because you deserve that house—if you think you actually own a house, and a car, and a bank account...that bank account, that car, and that house own you. But thanksgiving destroys idols and creates worshipers.

When you thank God for a thing, it transforms that thing from an idol into a temple at which you worship our God who has everything and freely shares everything with you. And so, you'll be much more likely to share it with your neighbor and realize that you're not alone.

So, thank God for the good things you “have.”

Now, how many of you thanked God for Good things you don’t have?

[Peter begins to sing] “Oh, the moon belongs to everyone. The best things in life are free... Stars belong to everyone, they shimmer for you and for me...”

Can you imagine if the moon belonged to you; if you had the moon? You’d probably get mad at your neighbor, and crash the moon into your neighbor’s house, and everything good would go bad. There are several great shows on TV now with that very premise: super-heroes with super-powers, but not super hearts. One of them actually crashes the moon into the earth in *The Umbrella Academy* on Netflix.

1 Corinthians 3:21 · “...all *things* are yours...”

So, you actually do have the moon, and yet you do not control the moon; but maybe one day you will when you have a new heart.

We’re each a child that inherits all things—Dad says, “*Everything that’s mine is yours, but no, you can’t have one more chocolate. Go to bed.*”

1 Corinthians 3:21 · “...all *things* are yours,...²³and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Thank God for every good thing... and maybe it will sanctify your heart.

✓ But now, how many of you thanked God for a Bad thing?

How about pornography? Now, I know that not everyone would agree, but I honestly think that the greatest physical beauty in this world is not a beautiful sunset over a tropical beach—it’s a naked woman on that tropical beach. So, is a naked woman bad... or is the way I look at that woman bad?

I’ve discovered that if I look and think, “*Oh, that’s evil—I better not let anyone know I’m looking,*” I’m more likely to keep looking in a way that’s evil. But if I look and say, “*God, she’s beautiful. Thank you for this daughter of yours that you so thoroughly love,*” I’m much more likely to look away.

I’m also much more likely to thank God for my bride, who was stunningly beautiful at eighteen...and yet, upon reflection, is even more beautiful at sixty, for I see a beauty that I couldn’t have seen when I was eighteen. And then I thank God for *that beauty*, and that I still have *the first beauty*, because God will make all things new, and I will inherit the beach.

I do “*have all things,*” but with thanksgiving, I discovered those things no longer have me.ⁱⁱⁱ And I see my wife as more than just a “thing,” and I’m not lonely.

How about drugs... like alcohol? Remember when Jesus said, “*As often as you drink of this cup, do it in remembrance of me...*” and “*he gave thanks.*” I’ve often wondered if he didn’t only mean the communion cup, but every cup that contains alcohol.

When I drink alone in sorrow, shame, and fear, I have a drink, and that drink may soon have me. But if I say, "*Jesus, thanks for this wonderful cabernet!*" we drink it together. I have a drink, but the drink doesn't have me, and I have communion. That means everything is holy, and I'm no longer alone.

See? Maybe, cars become holy, houses become holy, women become holy, and wine becomes holy, with just a Word that rides out on my tongue—*eucharisto*. That's a Good decision... to say "thank you."

✓ So, what about good decisions? Did you thank God for your good decisions?

See, now it gets a little more tricky. Are Good Decisions something you make? Or are Good Decisions something that makes you?

Scripture has a name for Good Decisions, and that name is, "*Righteousness*." So, are you self-righteous, or is righteousness a gift, and so you give thanks?

Other biblical words for Good Decisions might be Faith, Hope, and Love. So, do you make Good Decisions, or do they make you?

Modern Americans love to talk about "free will," and I find it terribly confusing. Scripture talks about freedom, but not in the same way. So, I've learned to ask folks, "Is free will a thing? And if it is a thing, did God create that thing?"

If God created that free will, it's a good thing; and so you must be grateful for that thing and not proud of that thing. Be thankful.

And if God did *not* create that free will, then it is "the Uncreated Creator." Which means Faith, Hope, and Love in you is God making decisions within you. And Righteousness in you is Christ in you. Be Thankful and never proud.

But if you think God did not create that free will, and you deserve credit for that free will—then you must believe that you, yourself, your free will, is the Uncreated Creator.

The moment you think that way is the moment you slip into the darkest illusion and find yourself utterly alone, for you have become your own Creator and therefore the Creator of your own reality—And that's insanity.

Another way to say that is, whenever I'm proud, I'm alone...and insane. But whenever I'm humble, I am exalted to the heavens.

If someone says, "Peter that was an awesome message..." And in my heart, I think, "Yeah, I deserve credit..." I experience a rush, and then immediately terror—I think, "I can't do that again..." My conscience is seared, and I find myself speaking lies (pseudologon) and enslaved to an act (hypocrisei) ...an act that I pretend is me!

But if in my heart and even out loud, I say, "Yeah that *was* awesome; that was a miracle. God used me, God spoke through me! Thank God!" Then I'm free... and I'm deeply happy.

Corrie Ten Boom used to say that when people complimented her, she would picture herself receiving a bouquet of flowers—she'd take a big sniff, then hand them to Jesus and say, "Thank you, Jesus, for letting me smell your flowers."

So, thank God for every good decision.

✓ But how about bad decisions—that's called sin.

I don't think you actually can thank God for bad decisions, for God didn't make them... God *makes everything* [Eph. 3:9] and *everything God makes is Good* [1 Tim. 4:4]. If that's true, it would mean that *bad decisions* haven't actually been made and don't actually exist; we only think they exist.

That sounds crazy, but maybe it's not so crazy. Maybe sin only exists the way shadows exist; a shadow is what it is *not*. A shadow is the absence of light... or *the* Light. Death is the absence of the Life. Lies are the absence of the Truth. To be lost is the absence of the Way.

I mean, maybe we live our lives like this:

[Video clip: scene shows a toddler observing his shadow on the ground. His father's voice says, "That's your shadow." The toddler begins running in terror, trying to get away from his shadow.]

Maybe we're all running from our own shadow. So maybe, we can't thank God for darkness because it doesn't actually exist. But we can thank God for the experience of the absence of light, for it makes us long for the Light... for enlightenment.

Maybe we can't thank God for sin, but we can thank him for having experienced the absence of his will—the light of the World.^{iv}

St. Paul wrote, "Where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more." God is Grace, and sin is the experience of the absence of Grace. The experience of the absence of Grace makes us long for Grace, and I believe that's called Faith—Faith and Hope and Love.

So, through the experience of our bad choice, God reveals his Good Choice and creates his Good Choice in us. Through our bad judgment, God reveals his Good judgment, and creates his Good judgments in us. Like Richard Rohr says, we don't really come to God by getting it right, but by getting it wrong." And we know it has happened, for we say "thanks."

In other words, the one forgiven much loves much. And we love because he first loved us.

Well maybe, technically, you can't thank God for nothing.

1 Timothy 4:4 · **"...nothing is to be rejected."**

So maybe you can't thank God for nothing, but you can thank God for the shape of the nothing, which we call a shadow. But the moment you thank God for the shadow, it becomes something else. If you happen to thank God for nothing, it immediately becomes *something*. That's the power of *eucharisto*.

Maybe Paul couldn't thank God for darkness itself, but he could thank God for his shadow. He could thank God that he was "the chief of sinners," but the moment he said, "*eucharisto*," the Light

revealed that he was in fact “the Apostle of Grace.” It was in the very place that he was not “God’s person” that he was now called “God’s person... a son of the living God.”^v

Maybe Peter couldn’t thank God for denial itself. But he could thank God that he had denied Christ, for it revealed that Christ did not deny himself or Peter, and that Peter was the Rock, not because he chose to be, but because God chose him to be.^{vi}

Maybe sin is not a place where you have chosen evil, so much as a place where you have not yet chosen the Good, for you have not yet seen the Good. But when you see the Good and receive the Word of Grace in that place, your nothing becomes his something, and you become who you truly are: the image of Love—and never ever alone, because you say, “Thanks” to Grace.

Have you ever tried to thank God for your selfishness? The moment I try to thank God for selfishness, I hate my selfishness and reject it, and I genuinely long to love. It’s like the light shines, the shadow flees, and I see who I am. It’s no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

- If you thank God for confusion, I think that’s called faith.
- If you thank God for your sorrow, I think that’s called hope.
- If you thank God for your weakness, don’t be surprised if you witness the “*power of Christ*” resting on you.
- If you thank God for afflictions, you can expect an “*eternal weight of glory beyond all compare*,” to quote Paul.
- If you accidentally thank God for a little bit of nothing, don’t be surprised if it turns into a whole lot of something because you just spoke a word in Jesus’s name. You spoke it into a void, and Jesus is the name through whom all things are created.

Describing her famous vision, Julian of Norwich wrote: “...sin itself I did not see, for I believe that sin does not have it’s own substance or any form of being, nor can it be known except through the pain it causes.” (Your sin caused Jesus real pain.) She then describes how that pain makes us know ourselves and ask for mercy.

Then she heard Jesus say, “Yes, it is true that sin is the root and cause of all pain, but all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”^{vii}

Anyway, Paul says to “Thank God for everything,” and that might even include the shape of nothing, for nothing becomes something with the word of thanks—in other words it becomes holy.

So, thank God for good things, bad things, good decisions, and even bad decisions—thank God for your self. Thank God for yourself, because what is a self, but a crazy mix of good decisions and bad decisions that you yourself can’t sort out?

✓ So, did you thank God for yourself?^{viii}

If you don’t thank God for yourself, maybe you believe that you have made yourself, and so of course you can’t enjoy yourself, for you don’t actually have a self, but your false self has you. You are imprisoned in a lie about yourself and unable to be yourself. An act, speaking false words.

If you don’t thank God for yourself, you must think that you made yourself. You are your own idol; you think you are your own uncaused cause. You’re insane, dreadfully alone, and certainly not free.

So, if you can hear this word say, *"Thank you, God, for me! Thank you for saving me from my old self!"* You see? That's your new self that is doing the talking.

Understand? Each of us has an old self and a new self. You're a mixture of good things and bad things, good decisions, and bad decisions, and you can't sort them out. You're like a field of wheat and weeds that look like wheat, and so you can't root out the weeds without rooting out the wheat. You have to surrender the whole field to the judgment of God.

Whenever you give thanks, you expose yourself to the Judgment of God. For the Judgment of God is Grace. To say, "Thanks," is to acknowledge Grace and to surrender to Grace. That's why people have trouble saying it.

Thanksgiving purifies good decisions, for you see that each decision is Grace. And thanksgiving obliterates every bad decision, for you realize every bad decision is nothing that turns into something, and that something is you.

Just by saying, "Thanks," your false self is destroyed and your true self—your eternal self—is born, the one for which you are eternally grateful.

So, thank God for yourself—your bad decisions and good decisions, your false self and your true self—in other words expose yourself to Grace, and it will give birth to faith and hope and love.

- ✓ Thank God for yourself, and then I think you'll find it easy to thank God for your neighbor—you will love your neighbor as you love yourself and discover that you are so very not alone.

The Grace that's in you is the Grace that's in your neighbor. And yet, you are different than your neighbor; the contours of Grace in your neighbor match the unique contours of sin in your neighbor, just as the contours of grace in you match the unique contours of sin in you. You are two members of one body, containing one river of amazing grace...and neither of you is alone.^{ix}

So, thank God for good things and bad things, good decisions and bad decisions, yourself and your neighbor, and...

- ✓ Thank God for God, for God is the Good.

Jesus said, "God alone is good," yet God is not alone, for he gives himself away. God is good, and through Jesus, he gives himself away and fills all things. He will be "all in all," writes Paul.

- ✓ Thank God for the Good, ...but should you thank God for the evil?

We saw that through our bad decisions, God reveals his Good decision in us. Bad decisions are our decisions, but evil isn't simply our decision.

COVID wasn't simply our decision, was it? You could argue that Adam *chose* death, but how could Adam choose death if it wasn't somehow an option; why would God even present the option?

So, should we thank God for evil, or the experience of evil, which must be the absence of something profoundly Good? Should we thank God for the snake? Should we thank God for hell?

"Always and for everything give thanks... and it is made holy by the Word of God and prayer."

Now, we're walking into some pretty deep water here, and all my comments are insufficient. But we don't have to comprehend everything, just give thanks for everything... and we will be comprehended—we will be sanctified.

Well, remember Jonah from last week? Jonah 2:2 · “Out of the belly of hell I cried, and you heard my voice...”

Verse 9 · “ ‘... But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation—yashua—belongs to the Lord!’

And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.”

Both Jesus and Jonah used a word for “belly” that normally means “womb.” Jonah was saved by the Word of God, and God used the belly of the whale, the womb of Sheol, the womb of hell, to do it.

“The earth will give birth to the raphaim—the ghosts—the dead,” prophesies Isaiah... so should we give thanks for the womb?

And what about death? In the Revelation, the death of death is eternal life.

In 2 Timothy, Paul writes that Christ, *“abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*^x If it weren't for death, would you recognize life, and say, “Thanks for life”? “Thanks for the resurrection and the life. Thanks for Easter... Let's have a feast!”

And what about the consuming eternal fire? Well, our God is a Consuming Fire, and his Word is Fire. Every time you say, “Thanks,” you invite the Fire, and even speak the Fire—that's the Fire that fills the temple and that temple is you. It's how you yourself are Sanctified.

And what about the snake? Well, snakes are made by God, and so I expect them to be made new. But what about the Satan that infected the snake? Well, if Satan was made by God, I expect him to be made new by God. And if Satan wasn't made by God, then he will disappear. And it will be revealed that he never had any substance in himself—he was a shadow—a shadow used by God to reveal the beauty of the Light.

Paul writes about giving people up to Satan for the destruction of the ego—the flesh—so that they might be *“saved on the day of the Lord.”*^{xi} That means that Paul believed that God uses Satan to save people from death and hell.

Satan is not impressed if you burn Harry Potter books and Pokemon cards, but if you thank God in Jesus's name, the Word on your tongue burns Satan like fire, for it is fire. It burns the hell in which you are imprisoned, fills the temple that you are, and sets you free to love, which is life—it is eternal life.

Well, if God uses sin, death, hell, and even Satan to save us from evil,...what *is* evil? Maybe it's the very first thing God said it was. *“It's not Good that Adam—that any Adam—is alone.”* Evil is the absence of Love, and God is Love, and Love is never alone.

God is saving you from loneliness... another way to say that is that God is making you in his own image and he is Love.

And so, God placed a tree in the middle of the garden. And on that tree, he hung his heart.

[Image: Same artwork on screen as previously displayed above, Fall and Redemption.]

And this tree is that tree. [Peter points to the cross.]

Can you thank God for this tree? The first Adam could not.—Why? Well, because he didn't know the Good.... *Duh*.

It is "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." I think it's also called "the tree of life."

Do you know the Good? Hanging on this tree is the will of God, the Judgment of God.

- This is the Word of God, through whom everything that's anything is made.
- This is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Light.
- This is literally reality hanging on this tree.
- This is Love, and Love is Life.

[Peter puts his hand on the cross on stage.]

This tree is also that tree; this tree is the source of everything.

So, how do you take it? Do you take everything as if you deserved it? Or do you *receive* him, and him in *everything*, with thanksgiving?

- Adam didn't know the Good, so he took the life of the Good....
- We all take the life of the Good and act as if it were our own...
- And so, we all die, and we all are alone and trapped by evil...

We all take the life of the Good and come to know evil. But on the cross, God reveals that what we took has always been given, in fact, fore-given from the foundation of the world.

We all take the life of the Good and come to know evil. But the Good came to give his life and raise us from the dead.

When you say, "*Thank you*," that's the word of God rising within you. And when you "*thank God always and for everything*"—you become the perfect image of the invisible God, in a perfect reality where you will never be alone.

You will know evil, but constantly choose the Good in freedom, for you will know that the Good constantly chooses you; that's Love and Love is Life—it's eternal Life.

God creates everything, and everything God creates is Good. So evil is ultimately a temporal nothing, revealing the eternal something, so that we will freely love that something and be that something. And we will see it happen by speaking a word—*eucharisto*—"thank you."^{xii} How do we speak it?

Communion

And so, on the night he was delivered up, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it saying, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he took the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For two thousand years, Christians have called this the "eucharist," from "*eucharisto*." That's the Word that sanctifies all things, making all things new. *Eu*—means "good" and *Charis* means "grace."

Eucharisto means "thank you; that's some good grace." Everything that's anything is Good Grace—*eucharisto*.

It's the Word of God having died for you, having risen within you, and being spoken by you into the void, making all things new.

[Peter turns back to place hand on cross]

When you thank God for this tree, what are you thanking him for? You are thanking him for the most evil thing that ever happened—it's the very definition of evil. But the moment you thank him for this tree, you see that you are also thanking him, for he is the greatest Good that ever happened—it's the very definition of good, that although we took his Life, God fore-gave his Life and all things with him.

This is God's judgment: *Charis*, Grace. When you say, "*eucharisto*," you agree with the Judgment of God. It's the Judgment of God that creates everything that's anything. When you say, *eucharisto* and mean it, you become a new creation and all creation becomes new.

"Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

So come to the table, take the elements back to your seat. Ingest the Word... then Speak the Word—say, "Thank you."

Benediction

Many times, I've told about my Damascus Road experience twenty-five years ago at a conference in Canada. For about a half an hour, I was literally pinned to the floor by the Spirit of God, and it was like a curtain was pulled back on all my space and time. And I literally could not stop thanking God for everything, for I saw that God was absolutely everywhere loving me, and everything was grace. There was like this electric current of love expressed in me as ceaseless thanksgiving that was so strong, I thought I was going to die... And I wanted to die so I could live.

My faith that "Peter Hiett is Salvation" was dying in the reality of "God is Salvation"; I was dying, but it was the sweetest thing I've ever known.

I had become a living sacrifice, and my sacrifice was praise.

God let me taste it for a few moments, and I can't wait for the moment that it becomes every moment... But whenever you say "thanks," you agree with the New Creation. And before you know it, you won't be able to stop saying it, for you will have no desire to stop saying it, and absolutely everything will be Holy.

It will have been made holy with a Word—"eucharisto."
"Thank you."

In Jesus's name, believe the gospel, and say, "Thank you."

Endnotes

ⁱ You must utterly believe that the circumstances of your life, that is, every minute of your life, as well as the whole course of your life—anything, yes, everything that happens—have all come to you by His will and by His permission. You must utterly believe that everything that has happened to you is from God and is exactly what you need. . . .

-Jeanne Guyon, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus, p. 32

ⁱⁱ "There is nothing but God's grace. We walk upon it; we breathe it; we live and die by it; it makes the nails and axles of the universe."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

ⁱⁱⁱ Alistair MacLean quotes a story from Tauler, the German mystic. One day Tauler met a beggar. "God give you a good day, my friend," he said. The beggar answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one." Then Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the beggar, "I am never unhappy." Tauler in amazement said, "What do you mean?" "Well," said the beggar, "When it is fine, I thank God; when it rains, I thank God; when I have plenty, I thank God; when I am hungry, I thank God; and since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases him pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?" Tauler looked at the man in astonishment. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a king," said the beggar. "Where then is your kingdom?" asked Tauler. And the beggar answered quietly: "*In my heart.*"

- William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, Revised Edition*, p. 260-261

^{iv} We can thank God for the experience of the absence of light, for it makes us long for the presence of the way the truth the life and the light.

And maybe the Word of thanks—*eucharisto*—is not an absence of things, but the very presence of everything: the way in the wilderness, the truth where there were lies, life where there was death, and the light shining in the dark.

^v "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" - Romans 9:26

^{vi} The great and merciful surprise is that we come to God not by doing it right but by doing it wrong!

- Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*, p. 21

^{vii} This I saw to be generally true of us all. I thought to myself: "If there had been no sin, we should all have been pure and clean like our Lord, as he created us." In my foolishness, before this time, I had often wondered why God in his great foresight and wisdom did not prevent the beginning of sin in the first place. For then, I thought, all would be well.

This curious wondering would have been better left alone, but instead I mourned and sorrowed over it without reason or discretion. But Jesus, who in this vision instructed me about everything I needed to know, answered me with this word: "Sin is necessary, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

...But sin itself I did not see, because I believe that sin does not have its own substance or any form of being, nor can it be known except through the pain it causes.

..."Yes, it is true that sin is the root and cause of all pain, but all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."
- *Julian of Norwich: Journeys into Joy*, selected spiritual writings introduced and edited by John Nelson, p. 89-90

And after this I saw God in an instant, that is to say, in my understanding, and in seeing this I saw that he is in everything. I looked attentively, seeing and recognizing what I observed with quiet awe, and I thought, "What is sin?" For I saw truly that God does everything, no matter how small. And I saw that truly nothing happens by accident or luck, but everything by God's wise providence. If it seems to be accident or luck from our point of view, our blindness and lack of foreknowledge is the cause; for matters that have been in God's foreseeing wisdom since before time began (and which he righteously and gloriously and continually brings to the best conclusion as they happen) befall us suddenly, all unawares; and so in our blindness and ignorance we say that this is accident or luck, but to our Lord God it is not so. Therefore I was obliged to accept that everything which is done is well done, because our Lord God does everything; for in that instant the actions of human beings were not shown, but only those of God within human beings; for he is in the centre of everything and he does everything, and I was sure he never sins. And here I saw that sin is really not something which is done . . .
- *Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 58

viii "As a child I was faced with a phenomenon requiring explanation. I hung up at the end of my bed an empty stocking, which in the morning became a full stocking. I had done nothing to produce the things that filled it. I had not worked for them, or made them or helped to make them. I had not even been good – far from it.

And the explanation was that a certain being whom people called Santa Claus was benevolently disposed toward me...What we believed was that a certain benevolent agency did give us those toys for nothing. And, as I say, I believe it still. I have merely extended the idea.

Then I only wondered who put the toys in the stocking; now I wonder who put the stocking by the bed, and the bed in the room, and the room in the house, and the house on the planet, and the great planet in the void.

Once I only thanked Santa Claus for a few dolls and crackers. Now, I thank him for stars and street faces, and wine and the great sea. Once I thought it delightful and astonishing to find a present so big that it only went halfway into the stocking. Now I am delighted and astonished every morning to find a present so big that it takes two stockings to hold it, and then leaves a great deal outside; it is the large and preposterous present of myself, as to the origin of which I can offer no suggestion except that Santa Claus gave it to me in a fit of peculiarly fantastic goodwill."" - G. K. Chesterton, *On Santa Claus*, Dec 22, 1912

ix In other words, you'll both sing Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, but together you'll form a symphony that will join with every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, praising the one who sits on the throne and the lamb.

x 2nd Timothy 1:10

xi 1 Corinthians 5:5

xii To say it briefly: That action of man's is good in which man is thankful for God's grace. Nothing else? No, nothing else. For everything else which might be called good, faith, love, hope, every thankful good virtue and duty, is contained in this one: that man be thankful for God's grace. . . . That deed of man's is evil in which man, openly or in secret, because of anxiety or pride, is unthankful. That is what is evil. Nothing else? No, nothing else, for everything which is evil from Adam to our own day, from the great horrors of world history down to the little lies and acts of unfriendliness with which we have mutually poisoned our lives, springs from human hate of God's grace.

- Karl Barth, *God Here and Now*, page 109