

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GRATEFUL?

Today we begin a new series “**FOREVER GRATEFUL**” in which we will be addressing several topics under the umbrella of gratitude. We’ll start with a simple question – one that you may think is rather shallow, perhaps even unnecessary for us to ask. Yet, it is foundational to everything else we will consider.

**What does it mean to be grateful?**

Many synonyms come to mind. Being **thankful**, appreciative, filled with feelings of gratitude. But sometimes when we merely define an idea with nearly identical ideas we can still miss the point. For instance, if I ask you what a cup is – you could just show me one. Yet, does that tell us what it really is. What is it made of? How was it fashioned? What is its purpose?

So, what does it mean to be grateful? To be honest, dictionaries almost always use the words we mentioned earlier that are synonyms. The etymology or origin of the word grateful has to do with feelings of pleasure or satisfaction. (*Latin ‘gratus’*) Consider the word “*gratified.*”

Here is how members of my 4<sup>th</sup> grade class at **Kids Club** defined the idea last Tuesday. They seem to think being grateful is more than a feeling – and I’d say that they’re onto something. They all indicated in one way or another that gratitude motivates us to action.

The OT in our Bible was first written in Hebrew and the NT years later in Greek. The words translated as “*grateful*” or “*thankful*” in our English versions are not always the same. For instance,

In the later translations of the **NIV**, **Psalm 147:7** says: “**Sing to the Lord with grateful praise...**” The Hebrew word here means “*a joyful and open profession.*” Grateful people sing praises. It may not always be in tune or even intended to be. Singing God’s praise has less to do with music in the assembly than it does with expressing gratitude wherever we are.

In the **WNT** Paul says this in **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:30**: “**If, so far as I am concerned, I partake with a grateful heart, why am I to be found with fault in regard to a thing for which I give thanks?**” Now I’ve had the good pleasure of dining with most of you - and though I have often heard you “*say grace*” or ask me to do so, not once have I heard you use the word “*partake.*” This is however a reference to being grateful when eating a common meal. The root of the Greek word here (*charito*) is the one from which we get ‘*Eucharist.*’ In fact, because Paul refers to communion as the cup of thanksgiving in verse 16 of the same chapter, many Christians refer to it as the Eucharist. I hope you were “*grateful*” when you partook of the Lord’s supper earlier.

And in the **ESV** the Hebrew writer (**Hebrews 12:28-29**) declares: “**Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.**” The Greek term is similar to the previous one. It is the word (*charis*) from which we get “*charisma.*” There is something attractive, even magnetic, about grateful people. And God’s children ought to be the most grateful people on the planet.

Now, I don’t claim to be a linguist, but may I offer a definition? Biblically speaking, **to be grateful is to be “full of feelings of joyful satisfaction which will overflow into expressions of praise for the One who has blessed us.”**

God the Father has blessed us richly – and if you are a Christ follower, I shouldn't have to tell you how. But I will close with the words of the Apostle Paul to the **Ephesians** as a reminder:

**"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will - to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."** (1:3-10)

*Close with prayer*