



In Everything

1 Thessalonians 5:18

This past Thursday, we celebrated Thanksgiving. It is a wonderful holiday, remembering the day that the pilgrims, who came over on the Mayflower to settle in the new land, gathered around their table, giving thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness to them. What is wonderful about this holiday is that it matches so well with the thrust of the Bible. "Thanks" or "Thanksgiving" is mentioned in more than 150 times in the Bible.

Sacrifices were offered with thanks to the LORD. ^[1]At times of blessing, the people of Israel would gather to offer thanks to the LORD. ^[2]More than 50 times, one of the Psalmists mentions how thanks is (or should be) given in the worship of the LORD ^[3]; frequently this comes in the form of a testimony. Psalm 18:49 says, "I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD." Psalm 86:12 says, "I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart." And in Psalm 138:1, "I will give You thanks with all my heart."

Jesus gave thanks on multiple occasions, most often at the provision of God before eating: At the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:11), and the 4,000 (Mark 8:6), and at the last Passover (Luke 22:17, 19). Paul expressed His thanks to God at the beginning of most of his epistles. ^[4] The Bible even commands us to give thanks to the Lord. Let's look together at Psalm 100.

Psalm 100
Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.
Serve the Lord with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.
Know that the Lord Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving
And His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
For the Lord is good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting
And His faithfulness to all generations.

The call of the Psalmist is to come into the courts of God with praise and thanksgiving on our hearts. Verse 4, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise." I want to continue on that theme this morning. I want to direct your attention this morning to one verse. I want to direct your attention to one phrase of one verse. This verse is 1 Thessalonians 5:18, which says this, "in everything give thanks." This is so short, that I think that you can easily memorize this phrase simply by repeating it out loud several times: "In everything give thanks." Once you have this phrase memorized, the issue isn't knowing what the Bible says, it is applying it.

My message this morning is entitled, "In Everything." It's a prolonged meditation upon this phrase, "In everything give thanks." Notice the simple command in this verse. It is "to give thanks." That is what did last week in our service.

We "gave thanks" to the Lord. Thankfulness is a characteristic of all who believe in Christ. James says, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17). And giving thanks is merely recognizing the giver of the gifts with a word of thanks and praise to Him. Last week, I was incredibly blessed by the things that you all have said, as you have acknowledged the hand of God upon your life in blessing you in so many ways. Nothing will stir my heart as a pastor more than a thankful congregation. We are a blessed people.

The only natural response is to be a thankful people. So know that as you give thanks, you are obeying this command to give thanks.

But, notice here that this verb has a modifier. It says, "In everything." "In everything give thanks." This tells us when to give thanks. And the answer is simple: all the time. We have just finished the Thanksgiving season, and we are now headed into Christmas. What we began to do, let us continue. What took place here last week during our service ought to take place throughout our lives. Whether we are at church, at home, in the workplace, in the community, traveling someplace in your car. Never is there a time when thankfulness is to be absent from your life. Wherever we are, we should be giving thanks, "in everything." A thankful spirit ought to pervade our lives at all times, in everything.

This command is but one of three commands that all have the same idea.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks...

They are three activities that ought to saturate our lives. Three activities that we should always be doing. We should always be rejoicing. We should always be praying. We should always be giving thanks.

The emphasis in the Greek text is upon the enduring call of each of these activities. Literally, you might read these verses like this: Always rejoice (5:16); Unceasingly pray (5:17); In everything give thanks (5:18).

You say, "Is this important?" Well, look at the next phrase in verse 18, "For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." People are often searching for God's will for their lives. For every follower of Christ, this is God's will for your life. Are you a follower of Jesus? Then rejoice always. In any and every circumstance, find ways to have joy in God. Are you a follower of Jesus? Then pray without ceasing. Throughout every moment of the day, live in constant dependence upon the Lord, offering up short breath-prayers to God. "Jesus, help me." "Jesus, show me the way." "Jesus, I love you." Are you a follower of Jesus? Then give thanks in everything. Whatever comes into your day, give thanks the Lord for those things that come.

Each of these things easily flows from the gospel. Jesus, our Savior, has come to rescue us from our sins! He lived the perfect life that none of us could ever live! He died as a sacrifice for our sins. When we believe in Him, all of our sins are forgiven. Fellowship between us and the Lord is restored. He changes us, granting us new hearts and new desires.

How easy is it for us to rejoice. We have been reconciled to the Lord of the universe. God has become our friend, not our enemy. We have no condemnation to face. How easy is it for us to pray. "He has rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). We are now children of God, with an advocate, Jesus Christ, on our side. How easy is it for us to give thanks. The blessings of the gospel abound to us. We are in the care of our heavenly father. We have an eternity of joy that awaits us.

Each of these three commands describes a way that Christians ought to live. They give us a flavor to our lives. A football player is to be aggressive on the field. An emergency room doctor is to be attentive in his work. A truck driver is to be alert as he drives his rig. And we, as Christians, are to live in constant dependence upon the Lord -- rejoicing that He is guiding us, praying because He is with us, giving thanks because He is gracious.

These ought to permeate our lives. When we wake up in the morning, our heart should be filled with joy and prayer and thanks. As we walk through our day, our heart should be filled with joy and prayer and thanks. As we lie down at night, our heart should be filled with joy and prayer and thanks.

And this day, I want to focus our attention upon the last command of the three: "In everything give thanks."

In Romans, chapter 1, we are told that one of the chief attributes of those who don't know God is that they are not thankful.

Romans 1:20-21

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

God has revealed Himself to everyone who has ever walked upon the planet. And yet, for those who don't believe, they don't honor the Lord. Rather, they live for their own pleasures. For those who don't believe, they neglect to offer thanks to the Lord. Rather, they operate as if they are the ones who made their lives possible.

Thanksgiving is universally accepted -- even by unbelievers. We know that it is right to give thanks. Likewise, we know that something is wrong when a gift is received without the proper expression of thanks.

Giving thanks to the Lord is an opportunity for us to acknowledge our Creator. It is an opportunity for us to give glory to the creator. And it ought not to be a one-time deal. It ought not to be frequent. It ought to go on all the time. What does Paul write? "In everything give thanks."

All last week, I meditated upon this thought. "In everything give thanks." Two weekends ago, seven of us from Rock Valley Bible Church went paint-balling. Several of us invited our unsaved friends to come along, in an effort to give these men an opportunity to be around other Christians. In total, we had eleven of us. We had a good time. As we handed in our guns and our protective gear, I felt compelled to express thanks to God for the enjoyable time that we had. And so I said, "Hey, guys; how about we thank the Lord." And in the presence of all, I simply offered up a prayer of thanks to the Lord for the resources to be able to have an enjoyable day. Not only were we all driven to the throne of grace in gratefulness. But also, there were a few unbelievers among us who were able to witness the normal Christian life.

Now, I'm not professing to be the model example of this. This past Thanksgiving morning, we had several men join together for a friendly game of touch football. We had some unsaved friends come and play as well. I let the game slip away without any sort of prayer being offered. I missed the opportunity to publically give thanks to God for the wonderful time that we had. Such prayers ought to be a part of our everyday life. "In everything give thanks." Even something as mundane as paintball or touch football.

There are other times when giving thanks is appropriate. Meal times, before driving, arriving at work or going to the store--all of these are appropriate times to give thanks to the Lord. Perhaps you might think about having some thankfulness triggers in your life--things that remind you to give thanks to the Lord. Most of us say a prayer of thanks before meal time. Food on the table is a trigger for us to give thanks. Perhaps you might want to use your key in the ignition of your car as a trigger to give thanks. Perhaps there is a certain place on the way to work (a certain door that you walk in or a tree near the door or a sign at work) that could trigger your expression of thanks. Perhaps the automatic doors at Walmart is a good trigger for you. Every time the doors open automatically, you could thank the Lord for the resources to purchase what you need. These things are merely examples of the ways that you can work toward being thankful "in everything."

This isn't the only time that such an exhaustive, all-extensive command was given to believers. Colossians 3:17 tells us, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." In other words, all of the activities of our lives should be permeated with thanksgiving.

On the flip side of this, we have the negative command as well. Philippians 2:14 says, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing;" The opposite of giving thanks is complaining. Thankfulness acknowledges the goodness of the Lord. Complaining calls into question the goodness of the Lord. And as much as the Lord loves to receive our praise and thanks, so also does the Lord despise our grumbling.

Last week, the Lord was greatly pleased with the many testimonies of thanks that were uttered. Likewise, the Lord would have been displeased if we had stood up and complained. May the spirit of giving thanks continue throughout our celebrations this season.

There is much to complain about. We live in a fallen world with imperfect people. And as sinful people, complaining is our default mode. We can always find things that are wrong. I know I do my fair share of complaining. We need God to keep a thankful heart.

Now, I love the testimonies that were given last week. They ranged all across the gamut--God, family, provisions, particular circumstances in your life. Now, it's only right and appropriate that we thank the Lord for the blessings that He has poured upon us. But, my favorite testimonies were on the other side. They were testimonies of thanks through the trials. Paul says, "in everything give thanks." That's not just when things go well for us that we ought to be thankful. It's also when things take a turn for the worse. We are to be thankful in these circumstances as well.

Now, notice that it doesn't say, "for everything give thanks." We ought never to be thankful for sin. We ought never to be thankful for evil. We ought never to be thankful for harm done to us. But, in those circumstances, there are things that we can be thankful for. One of the best illustrations of this came about in the life of Matthew Henry.

One time, he was on his way to speak at a Christian gathering. Along the way, he was robbed of all his money. When he arrived at the gathering, he preached his message and returned home. Soon afterwards, he wrote in his diary, "Let me be thankful that I was robbed tonight. Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before. Second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life. Third, because, although they took my all, it was not much. And, fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed another."

Do you see how Matthew Henry was able to be thankful "in everything." He looked to the evil done to him and saw the blessings in his circumstances, showing how to apply 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Matthew Henry did what the hymn by Johnson Oatman, Jr. says, ...

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

In other words, when life is difficult and you are discouraged and hardships have come your way, think deeply about your circumstances, and you will be able to find ways to be thankful. I know that you can find ways to be thankful. I guarantee that you can find ways to be thankful.

You may say, "Steve, how can you say that? How can you guarantee that there are blessings in all circumstances?" It comes from a trust in the sovereignty of God. Consider Romans 8:28, "and we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Consider the truth of this verse.

God is so orchestrating circumstances, that for those who love Him and that for those who are called according to His purpose, ... He is causing all events to work together for good. Not only does God use the good things to work together for the good, God also causes the bad things to work together for the good. God also causes your horrible circumstances to work together for the good. God even causes sin to work together for the good.

Think about Paul and Silas, when they came to Philippi for the first time. They came to the city and gathered by the riverside, where they supposed there was a place of prayer (Acts 16:13). They met some women there, one of whom came to Christ, Lydia was her name (Acts 16:13, 14). Her family followed in faith (Acts 16:15). All was going well in Philippi. However, soon they cast a spirit of divination out of a young girl, which angered her masters, because they could no longer use her to divine the future and their opportunity for profit was gone (Acts 16:16-21). Soon, a crowd arose and began to beat Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22-23). Before it was all over, they found themselves in prison (Acts 16:23-24).

And yet, in those circumstances, Paul and Silas were joyful. They "were praying and singing hymns of praise to God!" (Acts 16:26). How in the world can you do this? Beaten with rods (Acts 16:22). Thrown into a stinky prison (Acts 16:24). Their feet fastened into stocks (Acts 16:26). How in the world can you give praise to God in such terrible circumstances? Only when you trust that a sovereign God has a plan behind your difficult circumstances. You may not see it. You may not know it. But God has a plan. And if you are one of His, His plan for you is a good one for which you can be thankful.

As it turned out, God used their circumstances in the life of the jailor, to show Him the reality of the Savior. When there was an earthquake and "the foundations of the prison house were shaken ... and everyone's chains were unfastened," the jailer was about to kill himself, as the prisoners were free to leave his prison (Acts 16:26-27). But, Paul cried out to him, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" (Acts 16:28). Soon after that, the jailor asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). And of course, the answer came back, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

This is when the world looks! Not when we are thankful in blessings, but when we are thankful in difficulties. This happened in the life of the

Philippian jailor. He saw Paul and Silas rejoicing in their trials. He saw something different in them.

Soon a church was established. And the glory of God sprang forth from that place. Paul would later write a letter to those in Philippi, saying, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:3-5). Paul was looking back to the first day that the gospel came to Philippi. And he was thankful for everything that he remembered of those days, including his brief stay in the prison.

We can be thankful, even for the bad things that take place in our lives, because we know that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

When Fanny Crosby, the great hymn writer, was six weeks old, a doctor made a mistake in the medicine he was to give her. As a result, she became blind in both eyes. One could think that such things would have caused her to be bitter. On the contrary, Fanny Crosby came to embrace her blindness, enough to write, ...

Oh what a happy soul I am, Although I cannot see;
I am resolved that in this world Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy, That other people don't;
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot, and I won't.

She would later say, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me." Then, she put it all in perspective when she said, "When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!"

It's no wonder that she wrote 8,000 hymns, many of which are still sung today. She wrote "Redeemed How I Love To Proclaim It", as we sung this morning. She understood the providential care of her sovereign Lord. She was thankful, even for her blindness. Indeed, she was thankful, "in everything." We understand being thankful when the blessings come. But, we need to remember to be thankful even when difficulties come.

There is a wonderful way that we can look back upon the difficult times of our lives with thanksgiving for what they have taught us. Even this week, I spent some time with my sister, whose husband is in the real estate business. Our recession has hit those in real estate about as hard as anyone. And she said something to the effect of this, "I'm thankful for the challenges that we have faced as a family. I'm thankful for the way that these challenges have changed my husband. He is a different man today than he was several years ago. He is much more humble and dependent upon the Lord. These things would never have come about apart from the difficulties of the recession. Praise the Lord."

Perhaps you have some circumstances in your life that were particularly challenging for you. But, looking back, you realize what a great work the Lord was doing in your soul at those times. And, looking back, you can thank the Lord for what He has carried you through. That's well and good. And that's often how it takes place. I'm encouraged by those testimonies. But, there are other testimonies that encourage my heart in a greater degree -- those of thankfulness in trials.

The call in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is to be thankful in your circumstances. Isn't this what James wrote? James 1:2-3 says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." It is in the trials that you are called to rejoice. James says that it is "when you encounter various trials." Not, "after you encounter various trials." It is during the trials that you are called to rejoice. Not because the trials are so lovely or pleasant, but because of what you know that the trials are producing in you.

And the same might well be said of thankfulness. "Be thankful, my brethren when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:2-3). However, the reality of the situation is that we usually don't see what's going on in our struggles. But, many times, God is getting our attention in our struggles. C. S. Lewis once wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

There is reason to give thanks "in everything," even the difficult times, because, God is doing something! We may not understand until we look back. But, looking back, God may grant us the ability to see the wisdom of His ways.

I was at my neighbor's house last week. He has been through some hard times. In his basement, he showed me a framed piece of artwork entitled, "Footprints in the Sand," which he is going to hang up in his home someplace. He said, "That's been true of my life." If you have never heard the poem, it goes like this:

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed
that during the low periods of my life,
when I was suffering from
anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord,
"You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.
But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life
there have only been one set of footprints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most, you have not been there for me?"

The Lord replied,
"The times when you have seen only one set of footprints in the sand,
is when I carried you." [\[5\]](#)

The poem puts forth a perspective of life that God is doing something in us, even through the most difficult of circumstances. And for that reason, we can give thanks, "in everything."

In her excellent book, "The God I Love," Joni Eareckson Tada tells of the time when she travelled to Israel with her husband, Ken. If you don't know, Joni Eareckson Tada suffered a spinal cord injury in a diving accident in 1967, when she was 17 or 18. For the past 45 years, she has been confined to a wheel chair.

In her journey to Israel, She came to the pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed a man who couldn't walk for 38 years. This pool was where all of the sick people gathered, hoping to be the first in the water after the angel of the Lord stirred up the water, ... so that they might be healed (John 5:3-4). Here's what she wrote about her visit to the pool, ...

A flurry of dust swirled at my feet as a warm, dry breeze rose and tossed my hair. I was speechless here. Large tears welled in my eyes, and I sniffed hard, as I imagined blind people clustered against the wall, and the lame leaning against the pillars. I could see paralyzed people lying on stretchers and mats, their eyes searching and their hands pleading. And I saw myself among them--just as I had pictured so many years ago--dressed in a burlap cloak, lying on a mat, squeezed somewhere between a shady, cool wall and the paralyzed man who had been there for thirty-eight years.

Another dry breeze touched my wet face. Oh Lord, you waited more than thirty years--almost as many as the paralyzed man you healed that day--to bring me to this place.

I gulped hard, remembering the times I'd lain numb and depressed in my hospital bed, hoping and praying that Jesus would heal me, that he would come to my bedside as he did with the man on the straw mat, that he would see me and not pass me by. I remembered the times Diana would read to me about this place. I thought of the marble statue at Johns Hopkins. And Jacques lying next to me in the dark, singing "Man of Sorrows."

Ken waved at me from way down in the ruins.

"You won't believe how many times I used to picture myself here," I called, my voice echoing across the crumpled stones and columns.
Ken nodded.

He continued to explore below, and I leaned on my arm against the guardrail. I whispered, "And now ... after thirty years ... I'm here. ... I made it. Jesus didn't pass me by. He didn't overlook me. He came my way and answered my prayer--he said no."

I turned my thoughts, my words, heavenward.

"Lord, your no answer to physical healing meant yes to a deeper healing--a better one. Your answer has bound me to other believers and taught me so much about myself. It's purged sin from my life, it's strengthened my commitment to you, forced me to depend on your grace. Your wiser, deeper answer has stretched my hope, refined my faith, and helped me to know you better. And you are good. You are so good."

I let the tears fall.

"I know I wouldn't know you ... I wouldn't love and trust you ... were it not for --"

I looked down at my paralyzed legs.

-- for this wheelchair."

...

It wasn't often that I could presuppose God's motives, but I could with this one. He had brought me to the Pool of Bethesda that I might make an altar of remembrance out of the ruins. That I might see--and thank him for--for the wiser choice, the better answer, the harder yet richer path.

Ah, this is the God I love. The Center, the Peacemaker, the Passport to adventure, the Joyride, the Answer to all our deepest longings. The answer to all our fears, Man of Sorrows and Lord of Joy, always permitting what he hates, to accomplish something he loves. And he had brought me here, all the way from home--halfway around the earth--so I could declare to anyone within earshot of the whole universe, to anyone who might care, that yes-- There are more important things in life than walking. [\[6\]](#)

In our pains and trials and difficulties, God is working in ways that we often cannot understand. But, when we believe that He is working, then we will be able to give thanks, "in everything."

We can give thanks, "in everything" because we know that the Lord is good. His ways toward us are kind and gracious. He deserves our honor. He deserves our praise. We will readily give thanks to Him at all times.

Isn't this why the Psalm writers so often tell us to give thanks to the Lord? Psalm 106:1, "Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good." Psalm 107:1, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good." Psalm 118:1, "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;" Psalm 136:1, "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good." Isn't this why David could testify when Saul was pursuing him, "I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good."

One of my most favorite passages in all of literature comes from Robinson Crusoe, written by Daniel Defoe, first published in 1719. The book tells of how a man was the only one to survive a shipwreck on an island. He was able to scrounge a few things from the ship before it finally submerged in the bay to help him in survival. He was on the island for 28 years, until finally being rescued. It's a great story, and thoroughly Christian.

Shortly after Crusoe settled on the island, he reflected upon his circumstances. He wrote, ...

I now began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstance I was reduced to; and I drew up the state of my affairs in writing; not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few heirs, as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring upon them; and afflicting my mind. And as my reason began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse; and I stated it very impartially, like a debtor and creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered, thus:

EVIL

I am cast upon a horrible, desolate island, void of all hope of recovery. I am singled out and separated, as it were, from all the world, to be miserable

GOOD

But I am alive; and not drowned, as all my ship's crew, to be spared from death and He that miraculously saved me from death, can deliver me from this condition.

EVIL

I am divided from mankind, a solitaire; one banished from human society. I have no clothes to cover me.

GOOD

But I am not starved, and perishing in a barren place, affording no sustenance. But I am in a hot climate, where if I had clothes, I could hardly wear them.

EVIL

I am without any defense, or means to resist any violence of man or beast.

GOOD

But I am cast on an island where I see no wild beasts to hurt me, as I saw on the coast of Africa: and what if I had been shipwrecked there?

EVIL

I have no soul to speak to, or relieve me.

GOOD

But God wonderfully sent the ship in near enough to the shore, that I have got out so many necessary things, as will either supply my wants, or enable me to supply myself, even as long as I live.

Upon the whole, here was an undoubted testimony, that there was scarce any condition in the world so miserable but there was something negative or something positive to be thankful for in it; and let this stand as a direction from the experience of the most miserable of all conditions in this world, that we may always find in it something to comfort ourselves from, and to set in the description of good and evil on the credit side of the account.

I trust that you see what Robinson Crusoe has to teach us. "There was scarce any condition in the world so miserable but there was something negative or something positive to be thankful for in it;"

The most extreme case of this is the crucifixion of our Lord, Jesus Christ. What was done to Him was the most cruel act that could ever be done. God came into the flesh. His name was Jesus. All He did was love. He loved the Lord. He loved His fellow man. All He said was truth. Not a single lie came from his mouth.

But, instead of being received well, He was despised and rejected. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). Instead, they rejected Him and placed Him upon a cross to die. "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men" (John 1:4). "The light came into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil" (John 3:20). Jesus said, "Everyone

who does evil hates the light" (John 3:21).

Indeed, that's the testimony of what took place upon the cross. Light was in the world, but men loved the darkness. So, they sought to put out the light by crucifying Jesus.

Jesus is the only one who has ever walked the planet who didn't deserve to die. We all are sinners. The wages of sin is death. We all deserve to die. But, not Jesus. Living perfectly before the Lord, Jesus deserved to live. He earned that right. Nevertheless, we nailed Him to a cross.

You might say it this way: God came into the world and we killed Him. This was the greatest injustice that has ever taken place. But, as Robinson Crusoe said, "There was scarce any condition in the world so miserable but there was something negative or something positive to be thankful for in it;"

Here's the thanks that we can give. Because of the injustice done to Jesus, God can righteously justify us in our sins. In other words, through the death of Jesus, God is able to be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Our response, "in everything give thanks."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 25, 2012 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Leviticus 7:12, 13, 15

[2] 1 Chronicles 16:7; Ezra 3:11; Nehemiah 12:27

[3] such as Psalm 33:2; 44:8; 79:13

[4] Romans 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3

[5] "Footprints in the Sand" by Mary Stevenson

[6] Joni Eareckson Tada, The God I Love, pp. 355-357