

Start Over: Gratitude

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[0 : 00] Okay, well, welcome again, Watermark. My name is Chris, if you don't know me. I help oversee the community groups here at Watermark. And if you're just visiting or here for the first time, you're just really welcome.

Come and grab us afterwards. Come get to know us. We'd love to talk with you and just find out a bit more about you after the service. We're starting a three-part series, which we're calling Start Over.

And basically, we're looking in this series at the truths we need to remember for this new year, things we need to have a refresh of because sometimes we forget.

And today, we're going to actually start with what is quite a shocking story when you actually understand it. And we're going to dive straight into the story, and then we're going to think about gratitude and grumbling.

Okay, so that's where we're going. We're going to look at the story. We're going to look at gratitude and then grumbling. So this story in Matthew, it's actually a very familiar scene if you've been in the Middle East.

[1 : 10] Even today, the story about workers being hired. Because in that time, workers who didn't have steady employment would be found in one corner of the village, and they would just wait around, waiting for a farmer to come by and offer them extra work if he had some.

So they don't have steady labor. And what that means is, in those days, you got paid day by day. And a day's wages was a denarius.

Yes. The problem is, if you don't get work for the day, your family goes hungry. Because you live day by day.

And it's not just that. If you're the main breadwinner, and you come back at the end of the day, and you have nothing for your family, you are humiliated and ashamed in front of your family.

You're meant to be the one who provides, and you can't even provide. That's the context of this story. And this story is a parable that Jesus told, which is quite surprising for any of the original readers if they heard it.

[2 : 22] There's a number of surprises, and we can miss these. The first surprise is that the employer, the master, goes out into the marketplace throughout the day.

Now, you may say that doesn't sound strange. Well, a day's work started at 6 a.m., and would go to 6 p.m. Okay? That's a day's work. And the problem is, if you go out throughout the day, that's not very efficient.

What you would normally do is, if you're a good farmer, you would know how much labor you would need for your vineyard for the day. And so, logically, you'd go out at the beginning of the day, hire everybody you need, and then you didn't have to do any extra effort for hiring people.

That makes sense. But this master keeps going out again and again. He goes out in the heat of the noonday sun, and he even goes out one hour before the end of work to hire people.

That is not very efficient. In Hong Kong, he would not do very well. But the next thing that is a surprise is the owner himself goes out.

[3 : 38] Now, if you look in the story, you see in the story, there is actually he has a foreman. He has people working for him. And normally, you know, you outsource things to HR. Okay? This owner does not outsource it to HR.

He personally goes out and personally hires each of the laborers. Now, think about it.

We don't know how far the vineyard is from the marketplace. So he has to keep going out and then coming back and then going out and then coming back himself. He's using his own time, his own effort, which he could have spent on other things.

Surprising. The next thing which is surprising is when it comes to paying the workers. You see, he says, pay them the wage. Okay? And he pays them all the same amount. Now, that's shocking in itself. But did you notice what the order that he pays them in? Who does he pay first? He pays the last one first. Normally, you pay the one who's been working longest first, right?

[4 : 46] Why? Why? Now, imagine for a second you're working. You've been unemployed. And then you're hired for a one-month project.

And this is a tough project. And you're working until 9, 10, 11 at night every single day. And you have the bulk of this work of the project. And then two weeks in, your boss decides to hire somebody else to help you out.

But they have got the easy part of the project. And so they can leave at 5.30 every day. You're there staying until 10, 11 at night. And they're off 5.30.

They're going home. They're having dinner out with their friends. And then two days before the end of the project, your boss decides to hire somebody else.

Okay? The project's pretty well done. Okay? Two days left. Your boss hires somebody else. And then it comes to payday. And he gets the person who was there for two days.

[5 : 46] And he says, hey, here's your check. You get \$25,000 for two days' work. Not bad, eh?

And then he comes to the next people. And he says, you get \$25,000 for a couple of weeks' work. And they're thinking, wow, that's pretty good. If you're the first person, you're thinking, hmm, okay, I wonder what I'm going to get.

And then he comes to you and says, here's \$25,000 for you. How do you feel? A bit outrageous, isn't it?

Look at all the work you put in. That last one worked two days. You worked a whole month. Is that fair? And Jesus tells this story to begin to get to us.

Because the story is all about the compassion and grace of the master who is God. And how we respond to his grace.

[6 : 59] You see, the workers are standing waiting to be hired. They're not sitting down doing nothing. Okay? They're standing. They're wanting to be hired. And the master hires some, first hoping that the rest will be hired by somebody else.

Okay? So he hires some. But then he goes back just to check to see whether the workers have been hired or not. He still sees some out there. So he goes back. He hires them again. And then he keeps going back.

And he keeps seeing that there are people out there. And he keeps bringing them into his vineyard. Even though he knows it will eat into his profits.

He actually doesn't need all that labor. But he's eating into his profit. And he's willing. He would rather that those workers at the end do not go home humiliated, ashamed.

But have enough to provide for their families. And he will take the hit with his profits. And he doesn't outsource the hiring process.

[7 : 59] Because he comes directly at the cost of his own time, of his own effort. Because he personally wants to invite these workers into his vineyard.

And he reverses the order. Because he wants to show the first workers the extravagance of his grace to the others.

He wants the others to see what kind of master he is. Now, if you were thinking about it logically, you'd think, wow, that's a pretty amazing boss.

He would even pay somebody. He would do all of those things of his own expense. But look at the response of the workers. Notice, out of all the workers, there's only one who's on a hired contract, which is the first.

The one's from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. He says, I will pay you what is just, what is fair. I'll give you a fair wage. He doesn't tell them how much he's going to pay them. He just says it's fair.

[9 : 06] And they trust him. They trust him because they know that this master is an honorable man in the village. The laborers at 5 p.m., he doesn't even offer them anything. Did you see that?

Look in verse 7. He doesn't say how much he's going to give them at all. But, you know, they're grateful to have anything at that hour. You know, you've been waiting there all day. You know you can't pay anything for your family.

And just imagine they will take anything, no matter how small it is, and imagine their delight when the master says, you've got a whole day's wages.

You can go home to your family with your head held high, and you can be proud that you've provided. And I think the other workers would also feel, this master, this owner, wow, he's generous.

He's given us all that we need so that we can provide for our families. But the first ones, you know, it wasn't about the money, because I think if they'd started with \$25,000 first, they'd have been happy.

[10:12] It wasn't about the money, it was about the comparison. Because they've taken the bulk of the work, so they expect more. And when the owner gives them only the same amount, they look at the others who've only done one hour's work, and they say, how dare you make us equal to these unemployed scum?

Because nobody else would hire them. But look what we did for you. Is it fair that we get the same as them? Is it fair?

You see, complaining, grumbling, anger, criticism, they don't care about other people.

They don't care that the others actually are able to provide for their family. They're only interested in themselves. And it's really interesting the way the employer replies.

He says, yeah, I'm being totally fair to you. I'm being totally fair. We agreed, yeah? It's the deal. We agreed on this. And you can go home with pride to your family, but I want these others to also experience my generosity and my grace, and to go home to their families, and to have that same excitement and gratitude.

[11:36] But it's fascinating. This parable, Jesus tells it in the context he's got religious leaders who think they have worked very hard for God. And then around him, Jesus is coming to tax collectors and sinners, and he's hanging out with them, and the religious people are angry.

How can you hang out with scum? Was what they were thinking. But the thing is, in this parable, the parable actually doesn't finish. We don't know how the first laborers respond to the way the master answers them.

And you know, Jesus does this quite often in parables. You know why? Because he wants to make you uncomfortable. He wants you to put yourself in the story and to say, okay, who am I in the story?

Who am I in that story? How do I respond to the grace and graciousness of my master God?

Do I respond with gratitude or with grumbling? Gratitude or grumbling? Because here's the point.

[12:48] There are two ways you can respond to the way God shows grace in your life. You can respond by taking it for granted, by feeling, I'm entitled to it.

I deserve it. And then if you don't get what you think you deserve, then you grumble, you complain, you're bitter, you're angry. You're, oh, God is not good.

Or you can realize just how generous and merciful and compassionate God is to you personally. Not just in general, but to you personally.

And you can rejoice in God's grace to others as well as to yourself. Okay? So I want to just unpack a little bit this idea of gratitude, and then we'll have a look at grumbling.

So first think about gratitude. Gratitude, actually, the word comes from a Latin word, which means given gift. Okay? Given gift. And the world's leading researcher on gratitude, which is a great title.

[13:50] I'd love to be called that. Okay? Says, gratitude affirms the goodness in your life, the gifts, the blessings that you have received, and recognizes that none of it comes from you.

It is unearned. Because think about it. I don't wake up in the morning, look in the mirror at myself and say, Chris, I'm so grateful for you.

That's what we call arrogance, isn't it? It doesn't come from me. It's always got to be someone from outside of me. Okay? And gratitude is not just a feeling either.

It's a choice to focus more on what you have than what you don't have. Because ungrateful people always focus more on what they don't have than what they have. Now, I've been looking at a few studies recently.

And do you know, gratitude is one of those big areas of research at the moment. Berkeley and lots of other institutions are doing massive amounts of research. There's hundreds and thousands of studies on gratitude at the moment.

[14:56] And do you know what they find? These are secular studies. They find that gratitude is essential for the enjoyment of life. Gratitude is essential for the enjoyment of life.

Here's just a few of the results. I could go on and on. It leads to closer relationships. It leads to greater happiness. Grateful people are less lonely, less depressed, more generous, more forgiving. They achieve more. They sleep better. Their health is overall improved.

They have lower blood pressure. They have healthier kidneys. They smoke and drink less. And we could go on and on and on and on. Go and look on Google afterwards. Research gratitude studies. You will see across every culture the results are unanimous.

Gratitude is good for you. Gratitude is essential to knowing how to live well. That's what all the studies show. And it's clear if you think about Hong Kong that actually there is a gratitude problem. Because I don't know if you realize, but in Hong Kong they're actually researching in hospitals, schools, and businesses. And they're doing what they're calling gratitude interventions.

[16:00] Which sounds like we need help. Okay? Because they recognize that whether it's nurses, doctors, teachers, business people, that people are stressed out.

That people actually, there's a figure, 80% of people feel under great pressure of work. And there is huge job dissatisfaction and discontent in Hong Kong. So they're trying to take the research and bring it in and think, if we can make people say thank you a bit more, then maybe they'll be happier. Maybe they'll work better. Maybe the economy will just be far greater. Interesting. But you know, research is simply saying what the Bible's been saying for 3,000 years.

They could have saved a lot of money, actually, if they just read the Bible. But we won't hold that against them. But the problem that I find with the secular approach to gratitude is while I think there are many people we can thank who do many good things in our lives, actually so many of the things in our lives don't come from people.

Think of your health. Think of just the beautiful sunsets. There are so many things that if you are not a Christian and you don't believe in a personal God, then who have you got to thank?

[17:14] Who have you got to thank when you look out at the trees and you look out at the scars? You know, there's a guy who's a very strong opponent of Christianity, who claimed to be a strong Christian and then turned away from his faith.

He's called Bart Ehrman, if you ever heard of him. And it's fascinating. One of the things he said was when he rejected his faith, the thing that he misses most is that when he looks out at the beauty and goodness in the world, he's got nobody to thank for.

Isn't that interesting? Because if you've got nobody to thank, then if the research is correct, then your life and your enjoyment of life is going to be depreciated.

The Bible says we were made to give thanks and praise to God. In fact, to be a Christian is to be someone who is thankful.

That is one of the definitions of what it means to be a Christian. All your service is motivated not by, okay, God, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

[18:21] But it's motivated by, God, you have graciously gifted us with so many things and my life is now a thanksgiving offering back to you. Thankfulness.

If I was going to put it even more strongly, I can tell you what God's will for you is. You can give me \$1,000 afterwards. But I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt that I know what God's will for each one of you is.

1 Thessalonians 5:18. It says this. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you. Did you see that? There was a little word in there which was all, okay? Remember that word, okay? That is God's will for you. The Colossians passage that we read, it says, Whatever you do, whether you're cleaning up your child's vomit, whether you're responding to emails, whether you're trying to reply to your annoying boss, whatever you do, do it all in the name of Jesus giving thanks to God. So what is he saying? Everything you say, everything you do, in every circumstance, no matter whether it's good or bad, God's will for you is that you begin to see every situation as a gift of grace from God.

[19:51] Anyone feeling uncomfortable yet? You see, we're meant to live life out of an attitude of gratitude, okay? When your boss takes the credit for the work that you've done, attitude of gratitude.

God, thank you that I am growing in my security in you. I don't need approval from anybody else because my value's in you. When your kid is so hyperactive and you just want them to just sit down

for a minute, you say, attitude of gratitude, thank you, God, you are teaching me patience. And I love it. No. You see, it's not just a feeling, it's a choice, okay? When your friends post up on Facebook those amazing Christmas vacation pictures and you've been stuck in the office all over Christmas, attitude of gratitude.

Thank you, God, that you gave them an amazing time. But how free is that?

If you can live like that, how free are you? Because you're free from the bitterness, you're free from the envy, you're free from the jealousy and the frustration that grip us and actually make us so depressed in life.

[21 : 06] Yeah? So you can go on Facebook and not feel depressed but give praise, okay? Because God commands you to give thanks in all circumstances.

Why? Because God knows that when you give thanks, it's actually the way that you will flourish in life. God wants you to flourish in life. That's why he tells you, give thanks.

Gratitude. Does that mean that you don't ever struggle, that you kind of float through life with a glorious hallelujah? No. Sometimes we might scream in frustration.

Sometimes there are times we just, ah! But if you read Psalm 13, I encourage you, read it afterwards. It starts with, how long, oh God, is this going on for?

And it finishes with, I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me. That's always the trajectory that God is always taking you on in your life.

[22 : 10] From how long to God has been good for me. That is God's will for your life. But you know, if I'm honest, when I look at my life, yeah, sometimes I do give thanks.

You know, I give thanks, you know, before a meal I pray and give thanks to God. But you know, sometimes that can just be a ritual. You know, something I do.

It's a platitude. Something I just say for the sake of it. And when gratitude is a platitude, you know you've lost the attitude.

Okay? Remember that. Okay? Because when it's just become something I say and it's not come from my heart, I've lost the fact that actually it's a personal gift from God.

That food is a personal gift of grace to you. So why does things, if I think in my life that often I end up just grumbling, just being discontent, why do we get to grumble so much?

[23 : 24] So here we're just going to think about grumbling for a little while. Why do we grumble? Why do the workers in the story grumble? They grumble because they feel entitled to God's gifts.

They feel entitled to God's gifts. The first laborers, they forgot that their employment was actually a gift. Did you notice? They were unemployed as well.

Yeah? They could have been waiting out there like the people at the fifth hour, like the five o'clock at the end. But no, it was the master graciously gifted them with employment.

And he graciously chose how much he was going to pay them. And he was going to pay them as much as they needed for that day. And he comes to them and they've forgotten this.

Do you notice? By the end, because they've been working hard, they've forgotten it. And the master in verse 15, he has to say to them, am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?

[24 : 28] Literally, it says, am I not free to do what I choose with my things? Are you telling me that you think you know how to deal with my things better than I do?

Who's the master here? And because they thought they'd worked hard, they thought they deserved it. They thought they were entitled to it. They thought the master owed them something.

It's interesting. I was having a shower the other day. I do. And I turned on the hot water. And do you know what came out? Freezing cold water.

You know, it's quite cold at the moment. It's not a great combination. A cold bathroom with cold water. At that point, while I was shivering there, cursing the water heater, complaining about how the management was so bad, and then a moment of revelation came to me.

I don't know if it does to you in a shower. It does occasionally to me. It said, why did I think I had right to any hot water? I mean, because I remember a long time ago, I worked in a garden center for a while, and I used to have to wash the cups of about 20, 30 workers outside in the middle of the British winter with cold water.

[25 : 57] Now, if you've ever done that, it was a painful experience, but I got used to it. But here, I've been having hot showers, and never once have I ever expressed any sense of gratitude for having a hot shower.

I've taken it for granted. I'm entitled to it. So when I don't get it, what do I feel? Frustrated. Angry. Because it's my right.

But, you know, actually, as I did without it for a while, we've got hot water now. It's okay. You don't have to invite us around. But as I did without it, suddenly I grew in my appreciation of the fact of the gift that I'd been given all that time, which I'd taken for granted.

And, you know, when you do without something, you often notice how important it is. For example, knees. Did any of you think about your knees as you walked in? Anyone?

I imagine the only people who thought about their knees were the people who were in any pain, right? Or eyes. This morning, when you woke up, did you say, Hallelujah, I can see.

[27 : 12] Anyone? Anyone? Why not? Because, I mean, did you do anything to get your eyes? Did you kind of put in, like, help 15 old ladies across the road, and God said, oh, I'll give you an eye?

No. Okay? It's pure gift. It's grace. And we could go through thousands and thousands and thousands of things every moment of every single day, which we take for granted, which are pure gift, which actually, we've done nothing to earn them.

And the lavishness of the gifts that God graces us with makes Santa look like a cheapskate for giving only once a year. Because when, I think probably the time when this really came across to me most strongly was a few years ago, my brother died.

And he had brain cancer, and two weeks later he died, and we were there in the bedroom when he died. And when he took his final breath, and this is going to sound very weird, but actually it was one of the most awesome experiences that I've ever had.

Because at that moment when he died, I suddenly realized that it was like someone had just said, time's up, and pulled the plug.

[28 : 46] And I realized, you know, every breath I breathe is a gift. Somebody could just pull the plug.

God could just pull the plug any moment, any time. And yet, he has graced me with another day, another hour, another minute. And it's a gift.

It's a gift. And that extra day might be a difficult day. But it's a gift from God to help you grow, to be more like him.

So you don't get fixated on his gifts, but you get fixated on the giver. When he takes things away, that's what God's wanting you to do. He doesn't want you to make idols out of his gifts.

And if he gives you a good day where you get the things that you want, he's wanting you to get, respond with gratitude to realize his generosity towards us. And so, our intelligence, our health, our education, the opportunities, many of these things have been decided largely without us, outside of us.

[29 : 58] and yet, we often think, I'm entitled to what I have because of the hard work I've put in. You know, it's a bit like the kid who's given a Christmas present.

And you know, it's wrapped very well. And they spend like 10 minutes opening the wrapping. And then, at the end of it, they say, wow, didn't I open the wrapping well? I deserve the present.

All of life is a gift from the beginning to end. Our work is the response to grace. It doesn't earn grace.

So, that's one of the reasons why we grumble because we feel entitled to what we have and we forget that it's a gift. Another reason is we make self-righteous comparisons.

If you look in the story, do you notice that the workers, and we've said this already, the workers were not lazy, right? The workers were not lazy. They worked hard. But they worked harder than the other people.

[31 : 05] And so, they thought they deserved better treatment. Okay? You see, verse 12, it says, these last work only one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.

You see, they've got so wrapped up in what they have done that they've lost sight of anybody else. They've lost sight of grace to anybody else. They're comparing themselves to everyone and they think they're superior and the other is less than them.

Now, here's the danger for us. Some of us serve very faithfully. We lead community groups. We help people in the kids' ministry.

We serve people meals when they're having babies. And the danger is with all the good things that people do that we begin to say, I'm doing okay. I'm not that bad compared to everybody else.

And now, maybe we don't say that out loud, but subconsciously we may admit we actually think that. And do you know, how can we tell? How can you tell if you actually begin to get that full sense of comparison with others?

[32 : 18] Think how you react to people who don't live up to your standards. Okay? If you are good at disciplining your children, how do you react when somebody comes in and their kids are wild and their parents don't seem to be disciplining them?

Do you ever get critical? Do you ever kind of look down on them thinking, well, what kind of parents are they? You know, someone needs to have a word with them. Are you a hard worker?

Then you'll probably look down on people who are lazy. Are you caring? Then you'll probably despise people you think don't care enough about other people.

Do you know who I look down on? People who jump queues. Because I'm British and queuing is a national sport. You see, I can be waiting patiently in line at the MTR in a good, British, dignified manner and the doors open and then just as I'm about to walk in this little old lady pushes right in front of me, kind of knocks me out of the way and charges into the carriage.

My response is a dignified one. It's one of the great British exports. It's the kind of contemptuous Can we all do that for a moment?

[33 : 51] Beautiful. You see, and then I do the look afterwards. Okay? And you know, it gets even worse when somebody actually offers to stand up and let the lady sit down.

At that point, I'm thinking in my mind, what are you doing? Why are you letting that lady sit down? She doesn't deserve it. Don't let her sit down.

Kick her in the shins. Is that bad? Sorry, I'm just kind of confessing. We're being honest here, okay?

You can come and give me counseling afterwards. You know, for abuse for old people or something. I don't know. But, you know, whatever we think is the acceptable standard and it's our standard, then you'll look down on people who don't seem to make that standard.

You'll be critical of them. And maybe that will help you to feel justified about yourself because you'll feel you're okay because you met your standard and they didn't.

[35 : 01] And you know, the worst thing is in that kind of situation, sometimes I can be on the way to leading a Bible study about God's grace and how God is so gracious to us and he, hallelujah, he's shown his grace and there I have uttered curses and contempt on somebody.

Do you know what that is? That's hypocrisy. That's disgusting. That's me.

And you know, I don't think I'm the only one because each one of us has areas of lives where we are hypocrites and you know what we try and do?

We try and justify ourselves. We try and shift the blame. We try and defend ourselves and we look down on the people who haven't met our standard and say, well, they didn't do that but I did so therefore I'm okay.

And you know what? We're all like that woman on the MTR trying to push our way and push God out of the picture saying, I'm entitled to be here.

[36 : 17] I deserve to be here. I can dictate the terms of my life. I don't want to do what God tells me to give thanks in all circumstances.

That's what we're all like. And God calls us to own that and to say, to stop blame shifting, to stop justifying, to say, that is me.

That is me. And when you start naming it, it sounds even worse. But do you know what? Just as we're like that woman going on to the MTR, God does not respond to us the way I respond.

Because God doesn't pour his anger onto us. Do you know what? He poured his anger onto his son. And do you know what?

He stood up to let us sit down. He was hung and strung up on a cross so that we could be seated at his table and enjoy his blessings even though we are hypocrites.

[37 : 31] We try and justify ourselves. And you know, in this story, many of us are actually more like the person at the last hour who gets hired.

because the last hour, when you begin to own your sinner, say, that's me. And you begin to realize those last workers thought they would get nothing.

But he gives them everything. That's what God does. And the thing is this, those last workers knew what gratitude was. Because they saw the depth of their sin and they saw the amazingness of God's grace.

And until you admit it, who you are, you will never have that overflowing sense of gratitude. Think about it. When did you last burst with excitement over God's grace?

If you've been in church a while, think about that question. When did you last burst with excitement over it? Because we know it here if you've heard it before.

[38 : 39] But I wonder if it captures our hearts yet again. Because we can become like those first workers who think we've worked hard and we earn his grace. But you know, if you know you're the worst of sinners, in the middle of a city which is full of dissatisfaction and discontent, where people are never paid enough, never respected enough, never secure enough, God wants us to be a beacon of light of gratitude.

so that when the lady jumps the queue, when someone fails your standard, I can respond with gratitude because I say, if it wasn't for the grace of God, if it wasn't for God gracing me with parents, wasn't for God changing my heart, if it wasn't for God teaching me different things, that would be me.

And I can respond with thankfulness even when I have situations which I struggle. people, that's where God's grace is amazing. So the exciting thing about this is, it's not about you being entitled or not, it's about the graciousness of God.

If you want to know, if you want to have gratitude in your heart, you've got to realize everything in life is a gift. gift. You've got to realize we don't deserve that gift, but God lavishes it on us.

So when I, I can't compare myself to everyone else except in my bankruptcy. And that will release you to give gratitude, to have a heart filled with gratitude.

[40 : 24] We're going to forget that, I assure you. That's why you need community around us. That's why you need people in your life who are going to say, how are you remembering God's grace in this situation?

Are you doing God's will? Here's just a couple of suggestions and then we'll pray. Two prayers, one action.

You know, God's grace causes us to respond. But I often need to pray this. God, help me to see my need of grace.

Because I forget so quickly. Help me to see the depth of my sin so I appreciate what you did on that cross so much more. That's first prayer. Second prayer.

God, help me to see your grace in all the circumstances of life. Help me to see it in all, not just a few, not just the happy moments, but in all the circumstances of life.

[41 : 29] God wants this community to be one which is filled with thankfulness.

Thankfulness to God for the people that he's placed around us. Thankfulness for everything that he has done in salvation. salvation. So here's my challenge for you.

Why don't you go to your spouse, to your community group leader, to your elders, maybe to your colleague.

Choose two or three people and think of three specific things that you can give thanks for for them. specific.

Don't say I thank you for being you. That's rubbish. Specific things. And then, so thank God for those people.

[42 : 33] Now some of you will be thinking, but I can't see anything to thank God for. Do you know what? That shows you that you're like the first laborer. that shows you that you haven't got grace.

But go to them. After you've prayed and given thanks, then go to them and actually tell them the three things you're thankful for. That is so unnatural for many of us.

Do you see why God is saying, this is my command. If you're my people, you will show thanks and gratitude.

But it's all because God is gracious. It's all because he is good that we can begin to show this to one another. And the world is longing for a community which will flourish like this.

Let me pray. Father, just God, I'm aware, so it's easy to say this, Lord, but I so quickly forget the amazing grace that you have shown.

[43 : 53] Amazing grace can often become boring grace, if I'm really honest. But I pray for each one of us that you'd help us to stop hiding, defending our sin, but seeing that in spite of who we are, your grace is so generous.

Help us to be people who can give thanks when other people do well. And praise you when there is difficulties and when there is good times.

Lord, I want to thank you for this church. I want to thank you for the people here who serve in such amazing ways. I want to thank you for those who serve in the kids ministry so faithfully every Sunday.

I want to thank you for our leaders, whether they're community group leaders, whether they are elders, Lord, in every area. Lord, I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for those people who reach out and just encourage and love people here in just an amazing way.

Thank you. That is a testimony to your amazing grace. Lord, everything we have that is good comes from you. Please help us to remember that and to respond with praise because you're worth it because we were made for it because we will flourish like that and because you are the center of everything.

[45 : 17] Thank you, Father. Amen.