



# MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church  
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<https://aulc.us>

Sermon Title: A Heart of Thanksgiving

Scripture Text: Psalm 100, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Colossians 3:15-17

Happy Thanksgiving, Church! As we gather together today, we are reminded of the importance of thanksgiving—not just the holiday but the deep, biblical posture of gratitude. True thanksgiving goes beyond words; it requires the involvement of our hearts. Psalm 100 calls us to "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!" (Psalm 100:4).

Before diving in, let me share a story about a little girl who was forced to eat her broccoli. Her mother insisted that she say "thank you" before leaving the table. With her arms crossed and face scrunched, she declared, "Thank God I didn't get sick eating that broccoli! Now can I leave?" While humorous, this story reflects a truth: Not all thanksgiving is sincere.

Today, I want us to explore three dimensions of thanksgiving: the unchanging nature of God, reflecting on His blessings, and understanding what we have that others might lack. Along the way, I'll share stories to encourage us to develop a genuine heart of gratitude.

In this section, we'll dive deeper into the foundational truths about God that remain unchanged. These truths anchor our faith and form the basis for true thanksgiving.

The psalmist writes, "Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His." This reminds us that God is sovereign and unchanging. No matter how turbulent our lives may feel, He remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). His nature is constant—He is always loving, holy, just, and merciful.

Imagine a lighthouse during a storm. Waves crash against it, the winds howl, but the lighthouse stands firm, guiding sailors to safety. God is like that lighthouse—constant and unshaken, guiding us through

life's storms. Even when we feel lost or overwhelmed, we can trust that He remains our steadfast God.

Reflect on times when you felt life spinning out of control. Wasn't it comforting to know that God's character and promises never wavered?

The Creator of the universe fashioned us with a purpose: to know Him and enjoy fellowship with Him. Unlike animals or angels, humanity bears the image of God. This gives us inherent value and the unique ability to connect with Him personally.

A famous artist was once asked what his most valuable painting was. He didn't point to the most expensive or intricate piece. Instead, he said, "It's the one I painted for my mother because it reflects my love for her." Similarly, we are God's masterpiece, created to reflect His love and to be in a relationship with Him.

When you feel unworthy or insignificant, remember that you were created for a divine purpose. Thanksgiving flows naturally when we understand that we are deeply loved by the One who made us.

In John 10:14, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." God doesn't just know us in a general sense—He knows every detail about us, from the number of hairs on our head (Luke 12:7) to the thoughts in our hearts (Psalm 139:1 to 4). This intimate knowledge is paired with His loving care.

Consider a parent who knows exactly what their child needs without the child saying a word. God knows us even more intimately than that. He sees our struggles, our joys, and our desires, and He cares for us accordingly.

Spend time in prayer this week, thanking God for the personal ways He has shown His care for you—whether through answered prayers, unexpected blessings, or His quiet presence in difficult times.

Sheep are utterly dependent on their shepherd for guidance, provision, and protection. Without a shepherd, they are vulnerable to predators and prone to wander. In the same way, we are dependent on God, our Good Shepherd, who leads us beside still waters, restores our souls, and protects us from harm.

Remember the parable of the shepherd, and how he rescued a lamb that had wandered into a thorn bush. He didn't scold the lamb but gently freed it, carried it on his shoulders, and returned it to the flock. That's what God does for us. Even when we stray, He rescues us and brings us back to safety.

When you face uncertainty or fear, remind yourself of God's promise to be your shepherd. He will never abandon His flock.

Sometimes life's circumstances make us question God's goodness, but Scripture assures us that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him. His plans for us are always for our ultimate good, even when we can't see it in the moment.

A farmer planted a crop that was destroyed by a storm. Initially, he was devastated. But the storm brought nutrients to the soil, and the next season's harvest was more abundant than ever. Often, what looks like loss is God's preparation for greater blessings.

When trials come, choose to trust God's goodness. Write down ways He has brought good out of difficult situations in your life as a reminder of His faithfulness.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning." God's mercy is not a one-time event—it is renewed daily. No matter how often we fail, His mercy is there to lift us up.

A teacher once told a student, "Every morning is a fresh start. Yesterday's mistakes are forgiven." God's mercy is like that—each day is an opportunity to start anew in His grace.

Begin each day with gratitude for God's mercy. Acknowledge His forgiveness in your prayers and strive to extend that mercy to others.

Trends come and go, societies change, and even nations rise and fall. But God's truth remains eternal. His Word is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago, and it will continue to guide future generations.

Think of a family heirloom passed down through generations. It may be an old Bible or a piece of jewelry, but its value increases with time. God's truth is the ultimate heirloom, enduring through all generations and holding eternal value.

Commit to sharing God's truth with the next generation. Whether through teaching children, mentoring younger believers, or simply living out your faith, ensure that His truth continues to shine.

These seven unchanging truths about God form the foundation of our thanksgiving. No matter what we face, we can always return to these constants: God is sovereign, good, merciful, and faithful. Let us give thanks not only for His blessings but for who He is—a God who never changes and whose love for us endures forever.

A man, bedridden his entire life and dependent on medical equipment, was asked how he could remain happy. He replied, "At night, I look at the stars from my bed. Each one has a name, and I name them after my loved ones and blessings." This man's joy came not from what he lacked but from what he could still appreciate—a reminder that gratitude is a choice.

Reflecting on the past year helps us to see how God has been at work in our lives. Thanksgiving becomes more powerful when we pause to acknowledge God's blessings, provision, and protection.

It's easy to rush through life without recognizing the countless ways God has blessed us. From small daily joys like a sunrise to life-changing moments like a healed relationship or a new opportunity, God's blessings are woven into every day. Sometimes we take these blessings for granted because they become part of our routine.

A man once prayed, "God, why don't I see miracles in my life like people did in the Bible?" That evening, he went home to his family, ate a warm meal, and lay down on a comfortable bed. Suddenly, it struck him—these were miracles. The family, the provision, and the safety were all blessings from God.

Take a moment to write down the blessings you've experienced this year. Start with small, everyday things—your health, your family, your work—and move to bigger milestones. Let this list be a visible reminder of God's goodness in your life.

This question asks us to consider how God has expanded our influence, responsibility, and opportunities. Enlargement doesn't always look the same—it can be spiritual growth, a new responsibility, or a deeper sense of purpose.

God opens doors for us to grow, whether in our careers, ministries, or personal lives. These opportunities often align with His plans for us, even when they come in unexpected ways.

A woman prayed for years to have a platform to share her faith. One day, her simple act of kindness at a grocery store—paying for someone's groceries—led to a conversation about Jesus. That moment became a catalyst for a ministry of helping others in practical ways.

Ask yourself: What new opportunities has God placed before me this year? Did I embrace them, or did I hesitate? Pray for the courage to step into the doors God opens.

Serving God often brings growth and fulfillment. Have you found yourself more involved in ministry this past year? Whether you've taught a Sunday school class, joined a worship team, or simply served in small ways, God uses these acts to enlarge your impact.

A pastor once shared how a quiet, elderly woman in his church knitted blankets for new mothers. Though she rarely spoke, her ministry touched countless lives and brought comfort to young families.

Reflect on your service to God. Have you found new ways to use your gifts for His glory? If not, consider how you might get involved in serving Him more actively.

Ministry isn't confined to the walls of a church. It happens wherever God places you—your workplace, community, or home. God may have enlarged your ministry this year through mentoring someone, starting a small group, or simply encouraging others in their faith.

A teacher once noticed a struggling student and began praying for him daily. Over time, she built a relationship with his family and shared the gospel with them. That small step of faith turned into a ministry opportunity that changed lives.

Think about how you've ministered to others this year. How has God used you to touch lives in ways you didn't expect?

Sometimes God enlarges our finances, not for us to accumulate wealth, but to bless others. Financial blessings are an opportunity to practice generosity and stewardship.

A man who received an unexpected bonus decided to tithe more and sponsor a child through a Christian charity. Years later, he received a letter from the child, now an adult, thanking him for changing her life.

How has God blessed you financially this year? Consider how you can use those blessings to bless others, further God's kingdom, or meet the needs of your community.

With blessings often come new responsibilities. Has God entrusted you with a leadership role, a family to care for, or an important decision? Increased responsibility can feel overwhelming, but it's also a sign of God's trust in you.

Joseph in the Bible went from being a slave to managing an entire household, and later, overseeing all of Egypt's resources. With each step, his responsibility grew, but so did God's favor and provision.

Reflect on areas where God has increased your responsibility this year. Have you embraced them with faith and gratitude, or have you struggled to trust Him with the outcome?

Growth often comes with increased accountability. Perhaps you've been held to higher standards in your personal life, workplace, or ministry. Accountability can feel challenging, but it refines us and helps us grow closer to God.

A young leader in the church struggled with accountability until he realized it wasn't about judgment but about growth. His mentors guided him, and he became a stronger, more effective servant of Christ.

Thank God for the people who hold you accountable. Consider how this accountability has helped you grow and mature in your faith.

God's protection is often something we overlook. We think of protection as shielding us from harm, but it also includes spiritual, emotional, and relational safeguarding.

Think of the times God has surrounded you with His presence, giving you peace in chaos or strength in weakness.

A woman driving home on a snowy night slid on ice but stopped just short of hitting another car. Shaken, she realized how close she came to disaster, and she whispered, "Thank you, Lord, for keeping Your hand on me."

The enemy constantly seeks to harm us, but God protects us from spiritual attacks when we seek Him.

A man struggling with addiction shared how prayer and accountability helped him overcome the enemy's grip on his life. He recognized God's hand in protecting him from the enemy's schemes.

Temptation is all around us, yet God provides a way of escape (First Corinthians 10:13). Consider the times He has helped you avoid making decisions that could have led to sin or regret.

A young professional faced pressure to compromise her integrity at work. She prayed for wisdom and courage, and God provided a way out, protecting her from making a poor decision.

Sometimes God allows us to face temptation but strengthens us to resist. Other times, He removes the temptation entirely, sparing us from its pull.

A man once prayed, "Lord, protect me from anything that could lead me away from You." The next day, he was offered a promotion that required unethical practices, but he declined. God protected his integrity and faithfulness.

Looking back over the past year, we see God's fingerprints everywhere—in blessings, opportunities, growth, and protection. Taking time to reflect not only fuels our thanksgiving but also strengthens our faith for the future.

One of the greatest catalysts for thanksgiving is recognizing the blessings we have that others may lack. Often, we don't fully appreciate these blessings until they are taken away or we see others who don't share the same privileges. In this section, we'll reflect on tangible and intangible gifts that call us to gratitude.

Sight is a precious gift that many take for granted. The ability to see the beauty of God's creation, the faces of loved ones, or even the written Word of God is a blessing. Imagine losing your sight—how drastically your life would change.

A missionary once visited a village where many people were blind due to disease. After sharing the gospel, one blind woman said, "I can't see the world, but I can see the love of God through your words and actions." Her gratitude for spiritual sight humbled everyone present.

Take a moment to thank God for your eyesight. Think about the sunsets you've admired, the faces you've loved, and the Bible you've read. Pray for those who live without this gift and ask God how you can help those in need.

Hearing allows us to experience the joy of music, the laughter of children, and, most importantly, the voice of God through His Word. Many around the world live in silence, unable to hear these gifts.

A deaf man who attended a church service using sign language remarked, "Though I cannot hear the music, I can feel the worship." His gratitude for what he did have, rather than what he lacked, was inspiring.

Thank God for your ability to hear. Pay special attention to the sounds around you this week—a bird's song, a loved one's voice, or a hymn in church. Let these moments remind you of God's generosity.

The ability to speak is a gift we often use without a second thought. Through speech, we can share love, encouragement, and the gospel. Yet there are many who cannot speak due to illness, injury, or disability.

A man who lost his voice due to throat cancer began writing notes of encouragement to others. When asked how he coped without speaking, he replied, "I never realized how powerful my words could be until I lost them. Now, I use every word carefully."

Use your voice to glorify God. This week, choose to speak words of life and encouragement. Share your faith, thank someone who has blessed you, or simply tell your family how much you love them.

Mobility is a gift that allows us to explore the world, work, and serve others. Many people around the globe face life without the ability to walk due to illness, injury, or lack of resources.

A man confined to a wheelchair due to an accident was asked if he ever wished to walk again. He smiled and said, "I may not walk on this earth, but I'll run in heaven. Until then, I'm grateful for the hands that push my chair."

If you can walk, consider it a blessing. Use your mobility to serve others—visit a neighbor, volunteer in your community, or simply take a walk and thank God for the ability to move.

Our ability to think, reason, and remember is a unique gift from God. Mental clarity allows us to learn,

create, and make decisions. Many struggle with cognitive challenges due to aging, illness, or injury.

A man diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's began journaling every day, recording prayers and memories. When asked why, he said, "I'm thankful for every moment I can think clearly, and I want to leave a legacy of gratitude for my family."

Thank God for your mind. Use it to study His Word, solve problems, and create things that glorify Him. Pray for those who struggle with mental health or cognitive challenges, and seek ways to support them.

One of the most humbling experiences is witnessing others who lack what we often take for granted. Visiting a nursing home, hospital, or attending a funeral reminds us of the brevity of life and the importance of gratitude.

A young woman volunteered at a nursing home, expecting to lift others' spirits. Instead, she found herself inspired by an elderly woman who, despite being bedridden, constantly expressed gratitude. The woman would say, "I may not be able to walk or leave this room, but I can still pray. And that is enough."

Take time to visit someone in need. Whether it's a nursing home, hospital, or grieving family, your presence can bring hope. These visits not only bless others but also remind you of your own blessings.

We often fail to realize how much we have until it is gone. Sight, hearing, speech, mobility, and mental clarity are not guaranteed—they are daily gifts from God. Reflecting on these blessings fosters a deeper sense of gratitude and compels us to use them for His glory.

Spend time this week thanking God for what you have, and ask Him to help you use these gifts to serve others and bring Him honor. Gratitude transforms our perspective and helps us live with joy, no matter our circumstances.

Psalm 103:2 reminds us, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Sometimes, gratitude comes from recognizing what we have that others do not.

As we conclude this message on thanksgiving, let us reflect on the reasons we have to live in gratitude. The truth is, no matter our circumstances, there are countless reasons to be thankful. By expanding on each point in the conclusion, we'll deepen our understanding of how God's faithfulness inspires a life of thanksgiving.

As a pastor with 15 years of experience, I can say that one of the greatest joys of ministry is the people God places in our lives. Whether in a church family, friendships, or even brief encounters, the relationships we share are gifts from God. You, as individuals and as a congregation, are a blessing to me and to one another.

The Apostle Paul often began his letters by thanking God for the people he served. In Philippians 1:3 to 5, he writes, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Paul's gratitude for others flowed from his understanding of their shared mission in Christ.

Take time to thank God for the people in your life. Write a note or speak words of appreciation to

someone who has impacted you. Never underestimate the power of gratitude to strengthen relationships and build community.

When we pause to think about all the blessings in our lives, we often find more reasons to be thankful than we initially realized. Like the man who named the stars after the people and things he loved, we, too, can “run out of stars” when we truly consider God’s goodness.

Abraham, when promised descendants as numerous as the stars, had to look up at the vastness of the night sky and trust in God’s promise (Genesis 15:5). That same God who filled the heavens with stars fills our lives with countless blessings. Even if we cannot physically see every blessing, they are there, just like the stars during the day.

This week, make a list of your blessings. Start with the basics—life, health, salvation—and expand outward to relationships, opportunities, and answered prayers. Let this list remind you of God’s faithfulness and generosity.

Reflect on the times God has delivered you—whether from physical danger, emotional despair, financial struggles, or spiritual battles. The same God who has been faithful in the past promises to be with you in the present and future.

The Israelites often forgot God’s deliverance from Egypt, grumbling in the wilderness instead of trusting Him. Yet, when they paused to remember His mighty acts, their faith was renewed. Psalm 77:11 says, “I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.”

Think about the times God has brought you through difficulties. Share your testimony with someone this week. Remembering and declaring His deliverance strengthens your faith and encourages others.

The same God who spoke galaxies into existence handcrafted you with purpose. Psalm 139:13 to 14 says, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Your life is not an accident; it is intentional and precious.

A sculptor was once asked how he could create such beautiful works of art. He replied, “I simply chip away everything that doesn’t belong.” God, as our Creator, not only made us but continues to shape us into His masterpiece, removing what doesn’t reflect His glory.

When you feel insignificant or overwhelmed, remember that you were created by a God who knows you intimately and loves you deeply. Thank Him for His care in creating and sustaining you.

When we consider all that God has done, it becomes impossible to exhaust our reasons for thanksgiving. From His character to His blessings, from His provision to His promises, there is always something to be thankful for.

Corrie ten Boom, a Holocaust survivor, shared a story of thanking God for the fleas in her barracks. While it seemed absurd at the time, she later realized the fleas kept the guards away, allowing her and others to worship and study the Bible in peace. Even in the most dire circumstances, God provides reasons to be thankful.



Adopt a mindset of gratitude, even in challenging situations. Ask God to show you the hidden blessings in your difficulties. Trust that He is working all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

As we close, let me challenge you with these final thoughts:

- Look around you and see the blessings that are already present in your life.
- Look back and reflect on how God has brought you through trials and delivered you time and again.
- Look ahead and trust that the same God who has been faithful will continue to guide you.

Our closing scripture today:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever” (Psalm 107:1).

Let’s pray:

Lord, we thank You for the many blessings in our lives—those we see and those we overlook. Help us to cultivate hearts of gratitude that honor You and reflect Your goodness. May our thanksgiving not be confined to one day or season but overflow into every moment of our lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.

-- That’s our Lord’s message for this Lord’s Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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