

We all know what's going to happen tomorrow all across America. Millions of people will travel long distances to be with their families. Americans gather together around the table to feast on turkey, stuffing, and cranberry sauce. It is a common tradition for individual family members to share at least one thing that they are thankful for: their jobs, their families, their pets, their friends, or perhaps a memory of someone who was at the Thanksgiving table last year, but who now leaves an empty chair. Christians remember to give God thanks for all of these things. We have a lot to be thankful for. Ironically we all know that the next day, Black Friday, has a very different feel to it. Instead of being thankful for all we have, many Americans rush off to the stores to scoop up as many new possessions as they can. One day isn't enough for adding to our wealth, Cyber Monday only continues the shopping frenzy online. Many have commented on how placing a day of thanks and a day of greed side by side is humorous, or perhaps a little bit too revealing about human nature. We have many possessions and are often more eager to get more than to be content with what we have or to share our wealth and possessions with others. We don't need a shopping weekend to get everything we need, God makes sure we have everything we need. His grace fills us up with good things. That makes it easy to share all his wonderful gifts, including the indescribable gift of Jesus.

God really does give us all that we need! We really don't have to worry. Jesus told us that if God even makes sure that small birds are fed and that flowers are clothed in beauty, we can surely be confident that God cares for us. This care isn't conditional either. God takes care of saints and sinners alike. Even as he expelled Adam and Eve from paradise on earth, he made sure they had clothes. God always takes care of us.

In a sinful world there will always be hardship, but lack of earthly blessings doesn't mean a lack of God's love. Perhaps you or people you know have gone through hard times. Food and clothing had to come from donations and money might get tight. Recognize God's protecting hand even in times of want. He still makes sure we have what we need. If we don't get everything we want like a new jacket every year, or going out to eat once a week, we might tend to complain that we don't have it as good as the other guy. Is it fair to say that God is unfair? Is it fair for sinful people to receive blessings from God? No it isn't. That's grace. Grace is *undeserved* love. What isn't fair is that God loves us and gives us blessings!

In his grace God certainly does give us a lot. He gives us an astonishing variety of gifts and skills. Think about all the people you know in this room. How many different skills are present in this room? Maybe God gives you the means to provide his blessings of shelter and food for others, perhaps God uses you to bring a smile to someone's face, or to enrich someone's life in a meaningful way. God uses all of us to build up and encourage each other.

How can God use everyone of us to encourage each other? Wouldn't that mean that everyone has the same special gift? Yes, yes it does. We all have the indescribable gift of his son Jesus. Our savior who lived, died, and rose for us. This is a gift that we all need, we all need this free forgiveness. God fills that need through Jesus! That's something to be thankful for! Grace takes on a whole new level of meaning when we see our gift of Jesus. You might be able to convince yourself that you are responsible for your own food and clothes, but there's no way you can say you made Jesus happen! He's a gift entirely from God!

When God takes care of our needs of our bodies and our souls we have everything we need! Remembering our blessings is an opportunity to give thanks! By taking care of us, God makes it possible for us to take care of others. Money-earners take care of their families, their children, their parents and all those who are dependent on them. We help others who are in need, strangers we don't even know, whenever we donate food and clothing, or money to charities. Even children can donate clothes that don't fit anymore. All of us can use our time in the service to others. Yes, you can work in food pantries and soup kitchens, but that isn't the only donation of service. You can find opportunities to give your time to the many ways we serve each other here at Resurrection: teaching Sunday School, accompanying the service with music, working with Jesus Cares, volunteering for the many events we have like Christmas for Kids. Giving

time doesn't have to be in structured or organized way either. We can all listen to each other, and show one another love and kindness wherever there is a need..

Why do we do all this? To make ourselves feel and look good? To avoid a guilty feeling of not doing enough? No! We do this because God shows his love to us and that by our actions people will give praise and thanks to God for his gifts. When people see a believer's actions they look at the person's motivation. Why do you help me? Our acts give us the opportunity to share that we serve out of love and by God's grace. This opens the door to share the good news with them! We tell them that Christ's love for us compels us to do good. Can anyone argue with you about why you chose to help others? People will notice how you treat your neighbor, they will see that God's love is a very powerful thing!

Whatever you do tomorrow or over the weekend to give thanks, you can remember that you have a lot to be thankful for. God gives you everything you need and often much much more! If you buy everything on your wishlist and gift list on Friday and Monday, you still won't be able to buy what you really need. All the store deals in the world will leave you empty of God's indescribable gift. Thankfully he gives Jesus to us everyday for free. Giving thanks for Jesus isn't limited to once a year, or even once a week. God's love makes it easy for us to give him thanks and to share our gifts with others, including the gift of his Son. Amen.

1. What's the difference between the attitudes of thanksgiving and Black Friday?
 2. Why is it easy to share our gifts?
 3. What does God make sure that we have?
 4. Can we measure how much God loves us by how much he gives us?
 5. How is grace unfair?
 6. In what different ways does God use us?
 7. How can we take care of others?
 8. What is a bad motivation to help others?
 9. What do we get to do because we help others?
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1. What are some ways you can emphasize giving Thanks to God on Thanksgiving?
 2. A/D It's really inappropriate for us to fill ourselves full of food on Thanksgiving and go out and spend tons of money on the weekend when there are many people in need.
 3. Why is guilt such a bad motivator?
 4. Why does God want to use us to share his love if we fail at it so often?