



In All Circumstances, Give Thanks

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks...”

– 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18

This Thanksgiving will be different. The pandemic and travel limitations guarantee it. Recent events have disrupted us all. So many have experienced the loss of routines or finances, hopes and dreams, stability and future plans. Others are grieving the loss of a loved one, or have had their world turned upside down by the loss of in-person learning for their kids. However, the challenging circumstances we find ourselves in do not have to control us.

Whatever you're facing, our message is that the *essence of Thanksgiving remains the same*. Gratitude and reflection. Friends and family. Anticipation of the close of a season and the advent of new beginnings. The words of 1 Thessalonians encourage us to “give thanks” and focus on the good – not merely in some things but in all things.

But how? The simple answer is by thinking of those things you are grateful for. The warmth of the morning sun on your face. Crisp fall air. The smile of a child or a simple embrace from a loved one. Meaningful work or a life-giving relationship. The blessings in life remain all around us.

But some blessings are more difficult to see than before.

Rediscovering connection and community now requires more attention and creativity. There are solutions: Times of fellowship via Zoom or

FaceTime with friends or colleagues. Exploring creative outdoor eating options, perhaps with heaters and masks. Discovering the beauty of one's local area rather than seeking adventures abroad.

Life has changed and fostering gratitude doesn't always come naturally. But the good is not far away. Sometimes we happen upon it and it surprises us. At other times we must seek it out with a committed focus. In this time, we need to be intentional about it. Create the good. Pursue the good. Pray and meditate on the good.

In this new day, gratitude is possible. Embrace this reality. Focus on the good, seeking to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and, in everything, give thanks.

Holy God, we are grateful for your mercy and kindness. Give us eyes to see not only your compassionate presence but your provision, guidance, and grace. Amen.

Questions for reflection:

- What are three specific things you are grateful for right now? *Write these down.*
- What is one way you could creatively connect with family, friends, or colleagues during this time?

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