

## Give thanks – Paul Day

One of my most vivid memories of childhood Christmases is having to sit down and write thank you letters, usually on Boxing Day. I seem to remember that some years those stockings that came full of Cadburys chocolate bars had cut out thank you cards that you could fill in and send to your Aunts and Uncles who had bought you something, this saving valuable playing time.

And now I am a little older I am more often on the receiving end of those thank you letters – but I am always pleased to receive them. And not just because I enjoy the thought of my grandchildren having to sit down and write them!

Being thanked for things is very special.

We have been greatly encouraged over these past months by the many emails and phone calls thanking us for all the things we have been doing through the lockdown. To know that someone appreciates something is a great boost. We don't do things in order to receive thanks, but those words of gratitude give us a tremendous lift.

But do we make a habit of thanking people?

- Those who serve us in shops or sell us tickets at the train station
- Those who call us on the phone for a chat
- Those who care for us
- The person driving the bus we travel on

The list of course goes on, but the point is to remember those words of thanksgiving and to foster a habit of gratitude. People say that smiles are infectious – that when you smile at someone, they will pass on that smile to someone else. I wonder if thanks are a bit like that. We thank someone for something they have said or done, and they in turn pass on thanks to someone else. What a difference that could make to the world.

But giving thanks is not limited to each other of course. We should always be willing and eager to thank God for things.

In a couple of weeks we will celebrate our Harvest festival. This year we won't be able to sing the rousing Harvest hymns in church, nor will we be able to bring our Harvest gifts to the front of church but we will still be able to thank God for everything that he provides for us – which is surely the central point of

the festival. The danger is, I suppose, that we might limit our thanks to this one festival.

Psalm 136 is a lovely psalm of thanksgiving. It begins ***Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.*** And as we read through the verses we travel through time with the psalmist – from creation through the escape from Egypt and the settlement in the promised land and finally for all his provisions. There is a repeating refrain in every verse – ***for his steadfast love endures for ever.***

God's love endures for ever, but sadly our thanks are a bit more sporadic. So how can we make thanksgiving much more part of our lives? Here are a couple of very simple things we could all do:

- Say grace before food as a reminder that everything comes from him.
- At the end of each day make a point of thinking back over the day and thanking God for conversations, things we have done, things we have learned etc.
- On anniversaries (eg birthdays, wedding anniversaries etc) look back over the past year and thank God for events and people and his constant presence with us

But for now here is a lovely thank you prayer thanking God for his wonderful love for us:

Gracious God  
for your love for us  
gentle as a shower  
healing our pain  
binding our wounds  
**We give you thanks**

For your love for us  
sure as the dawn  
transforming our darkness  
revealing your truth  
**We give you thanks**

For your love for us  
mercifully steadfast  
calling us to you  
raising us up  
**We give you thanks**

For your love for us  
encouraging questions  
open to doubts  
making us vulnerable  
**We give you thanks**

Urge us on, O Christ  
to find wholeness  
through serving you  
by serving others  
in the power of your Spirit