THANKSGIVING

NOTES

A PSALM – FOR GIVING GRATEFUL PRAISE

1 'Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations'

Psalm 100:1-5 (NIV)

Two of the most important words in the dictionary are 'Thank' and 'You' – Thank you!

It's not just a polite and courteous thing to do. When we say it in a way that is sincerely meant, people feel valued, appreciated and that their contribution has made an impact. If we could only get hold of the power of these words then marriages would be stronger, workplaces would have higher morale and people in general would have a greater sense of self-esteem.

So today we want say thank you! Thank you for all you do here in the life of the church but especially, as we think about the work of Compassion, we want to say thank you on behalf of all the children who are sponsored by individuals, families and groups across the church. Your regular giving is providing an education, ensuring children have enough to eat, giving them access to healthcare, alongside spiritual and emotional development. The letters you write are such an encouragement and bring great hope to a child with dreams and ambitions – thank you!

If they were here right now they would put their arms around you and say those words 'thank you!' If their parents and siblings were here, they too would echo them – thank you!

The Psalmist exhorts us to 'enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise'. David praises God, gives thanks and reminds us in **1 Chronicles 29:14** that 'Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand', so we give thanks to God for using us to do His work.

We can only give what God has already given to us. We are called to be good stewards of the resources, finances, time and talents bestowed upon us so ultimately the praise and thanksgiving can only go to Him.

The only response of a thankful heart is a generous lifestyle. It reflects the giving nature of God and attracts his blessing. When we hear the cry of the poor, he hears our cry too.

The Good Samaritan gave his **Time**, his **Touch** and his **Treasure** to restore a broken person. Not only did he demonstrate a spirit of generosity but a sacrificial heart that was committed to seeing it right through to completion.

Sometimes we give up because the going is tough or we don't have enough finances but the poor still need a friend. These precious children need an opportunity and by God's grace you are giving them that as He supplies everything you need to make a difference.

Here's what Paul says about generous giving…

2 Cor 9:6-14 says…

> *6 'Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*
>
> *7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*
>
> *8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*
>
> *9 As it is written:*
>
> *"They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."*
>
> *10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

I love the fact that as a result of our giving not only do we know that we are appreciated by the children and families but God is praised by others who see the love and compassion of his people.

So today – thank you! Children, families, churches, communities and perhaps even nations are being transformed because of your investment!

It's a privilege to be used by God

Have you ever stopped to think of what a privilege it is to be used by God to do his work? Let us consider the feeding of the five thousand in John 6:1-14. As you know, the large crowd had been with Jesus for some time and were starting to get hungry. The disciples were worried because they didn't have enough food. Now Jesus, being God, could easily have turned the stones into bread, but instead he invites a small boy to be part of his miracle.

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John 6:8-13

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9 "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Perhaps we feel small and insignificant in the grand scheme of things. Perhaps you feel like the little boy with your loaves and fishes. Well, please be encouraged that God doesn't ask us if we have enough, He simply asks us what we have to offer. Just like the boy in this story, when we give what we have to God, He can do far more with it that we can ever imagine.

To illustrate this, I've a short film that I'd like to show you.

Show the DVD

Isn't that incredible? To think that one person's step of faith can start a chain of events that results in so many lives being transformed for the better. It's a great example of God using our small step of faith to do incredible things for His glory. Who knows how God can use each of us. Individually and collectively, the impact we make is huge.

Compassion partners with nearly 7,000 local churches in 26 countries across the world. They help these churches reach out to care for the vulnerable children within their communities. With your help, Compassion is supporting more than 1.7 million children worldwide.

As an organisation that's Christ-centred, Compassion is inspired to respond as Jesus did – focusing on individuals, recognising their individuality and showing them how precious and unique they are.

These children are being given practical benefits like food, clothing and education and loving Christian staff know them personally. They ensure the children are safe, that they are given a chance to learn about Jesus and his love for them and that they have a place where they can just be children and enjoy the freedom of playing with their friends.

When you sponsor a child you are committing not only financially, but also relationally by praying for a child and sending letters to encourage them and their family. It's amazing how a child can bridge the global divide and unite us as the Body of Christ.

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Perhaps it's no surprise when Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:40 40 *'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

I hope today that you feel proud to be part of God's answer in our hurting world. The truth is that none of us can single-handedly change the world, but we can all change the world for one child.

So be encouraged and uplifted. Thank you for being part of God's plan to heal His hurting world.

Thank You and God bless you.

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