

"Danny, what do you say? What do you tell grandma?" As far back as I can remember, whenever someone gave me something, or did something for me, my parents would remind me to say: *"Thank You!"*

Are parents still teaching their children to say: *"Thank You"*? By the way some children and adults act, you'd have to shake your head: *"No."* More and more children and adults act like they are entitled to have others give them things, or do things for them. And when they get them, they show little or no appreciation for it.

Could this same attitude carry over into our approach to prayer? Is prayer our "gimme" list? Some sort of Christmas wish list for God?

When you read Paul's letter to the Philippians, it's hard to believe it was written by a man in prison facing the possibility of a death sentence. His letter oozes with appreciation and thanksgiving. That's why today's lesson: **Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God**, reminds us: *"What do you say? What do you tell God?"* ... as it teaches us to say: **"Thank You!"**

The Lord wants to hear our hymns today, but he also wants to instruct our life every day. He does that in 2 ways: 1) *Rather than worry – pray.* 2) *Rather than complain – give thanks.*

Do you get anxious? Do you worry? Of course we do! Everyone does. So, what have you been worrying about lately? What makes you anxious on this national day of Thanksgiving?

- Is it COVID and how it impacts our loved ones? Will they be safe? Will we be safe?
- Is it our jobs? Will we have a job, or will we find out there's going to be layoffs or a closing in the coming months?
- Is it our families? What kind of world will our children and grandchildren grow up in?
- Is it our finances during our retirement years?
- Is it the threat of violence ... scenes we saw this past summer and last week at Mayfair Mall?

Why do we worry and get anxious? Because we've learned that as we go through life, we have no control. Can we stop someone from being killed in a car accident? Can we prevent someone from getting cancer? We try. We try to eat the right foods and exercise and still we hear of people – the picture of health - fall over dead. We know of people who were faithful and hard workers who came to work one day and found out their position had been eliminated.

What can we do about our worry and anxiety? Paul lets us know: **"Do not be anxious about anything."** Easier said than done. He can tell us all he wants don't worry, don't be anxious, but then we do just the opposite – we fixate on our worries and concerns?

How do people deal with anxiety? Some use medication to handle the changes and keep themselves calm. Some look inside themselves to find inner strength to function. Some occupy their time and their minds with other things like work or pleasure or projects.

The truth is we'll never find the strength we need in medication, looking inside ourselves, or keeping ourselves busy with other things.

We find the strength we need only when by looking outside of ourselves: **"I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength."** He does as he provides the perfect vaccine for all that worries us: **In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** Rather than worry – pray!

Take your worries to the Lord in prayer. Does it do any good? Every time! He always listens. He has to, he promised in his Word: **"Call on me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you."** He'll listen to every request and answer every request. Whether his answer is *"Yes," "No," "Wait,"* or *"No, because I've got something even better in mind for you,"* we can trust he'll always have the best answer for us.

Julia shared how God had answered her prayer. She was addicted to prescription drugs and stole to buy them. One night she prayed for the Lord to deliver her from her addiction. The next day ... she was

arrested for her crime. She said: *"I knew God answered prayer but I never realized how he was going to answer my prayer. As I was interrogated by the police, I never felt such peace and relief."* She did exactly what Paul tells us to do – Pray!

We can have the same confidence as Julia had, when we bring our requests to God. Through the water of Baptism, the Lord personally adopted each one of us into his family as his child. Which means, we aren't bringing our requests before an angry king. We're going before a forgiving Father who doesn't remember a single sin we've committed. We're going before a loving Father who has promised to hear and answer in a way that is always best for us.

When we have a problem, our God invites, no, he actually commands us to pray to him. Did you happen to notice how Paul wants us to include something in each of our requests? As I read it, see if you can catch it: **"By prayer and petition, with THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God."**

When we have a problem, do we see any reason to give thanks? When we're facing surgery, do we thank God for the situation we're in? At times like those thanksgiving is the furthest thing from our mind, because we're busy telling God about our problem.

What's the enemy of thanksgiving? Complaining! It drives the happiness right out of you and makes you feel crummy about everything.

Do you complain? Of course we complain! Everyone does. So, what have you been complaining about lately? What makes you crabby on this national day of Thanksgiving?

- Is it your parents, your teachers, your boss who seems to be treating you unfairly?
- Is it a friend who continues to disappoint you and let you down?
- Is it your ungrateful children or students or co-workers that have you griping?
- Is it that no matter how hard you work, it never gets easier?
- Is it nagging pain or sadness or emptiness?

Why do we complain and get crabby?

- We complain to make ourselves look better. If I make you look bad, I look better by comparison.
- We complain because we aren't content and satisfied.
- We complain and focus on the negative, because we lack a grateful approach.
- We complain to draw attention to ourselves and sympathy from others.

There's a double downside to complaining. Not only does it make the complainer feel worse, but whoever is listening feels worse too!

So, what can we do about our complaining? God comes up with the perfect vaccine for this, as well: **By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** Rather than complain - give thanks!

Sometimes God has us go through these times of change, disappointment and loss so we see things we might have taken for granted. As we reflect on the things we miss this year, we're lead to say: *"Thank You, God."* Here's a starter list of things for which we can be thankful. You can add to it on Thanksgiving.

- **Family.** What a gift from God! We don't deserve them, but God loves us through them. He knows we're not perfect, but he still fills our home with his goodness.
- **Teachers.** Since the kids couldn't be in school, we found out how important teachers are and how much we appreciate them. God blesses us and our kids through them.
- **Health care.** Could you imagine dealing with everything over these past months without doctors and nurses, testing and hospitals ready to help when needed?
- **Grilling.** Because it's the best way to cook and it makes food taste great every time. *"God, thanks for making it that way."*

Many of our plans have been canceled this year. But cancel Thanksgiving? No way! It might look different this year, but God is still good, and his love still endures forever. Oh, what do you say when you offer your prayers? What do you tell God? *"Thank you!"*