

THANKSGIVING AT ALL TIMES

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“Rejoice in the Lord always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In what is touted as the most popular holiday in the US, many people came from near and far, traveling far distances, braving whatever remains of the Covid scare to gather together as families to celebrate the Lord's faithfulness and goodness in their lives over roast turkey, stuffing and whatever else has been prepared at the dinner table. This scene is replicated in different parts of the world, especially among those who have been exposed to the long standing tradition in the US, albeit with contextualized food fare set on the table.

Such celebrations, multiplied across the globe speak of hearts that overflow to the brim with thanksgiving to the One who is the source of all good things - our Lord, Jesus Christ! Truly, there is none more worthy of all the praises and thanksgiving than Him alone!

That is the same exhortation the Apostle Paul gave to the believers in Thessalonica contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. In this 3-part exhortation, Paul instructs the believers to rejoice in the Lord, to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in all circumstances.

Moreso for Christian believers, this practice surely brings joy to the generous giver of all good things. When we look at our lives, yes, there may be thorns and thistles that we encounter in life, yet, one thing remains that we should never forget, we have a God who loves us and has given us the best gift of all, and for that, we need to be thankful. This should not just be at thanksgiving, Christmas or any other milestone we celebrate, but, indeed, every day as we step back, pause and recall the many ways God has blessed us in spite of the many trials we experience in life

So, let us REJOICE IN THE LORD, both for the good (and even the not so good things in our lives). When we rejoice in the Lord, we do so no matter what circumstances we face; we rejoice in the Lord because we acknowledge His sovereignty over our lives and trust that what He allows us to experience in life is what is best for us. There may be lessons He has in store hidden underneath the trials and difficulties. These may be opportunities for us to grow in our faith in Him and to continue to rejoice in who He is, our faithful, promise keeping God!

Secondly, Paul exhorts the believers to PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. As we do so, we recognize that God is the One who is above all things; it is

only He who can answer the earnest prayer of our hearts according to His perfect will and plan. Therefore, it requires a persistent effort on our part as we persevere fervently as we await the answer to our deepest prayers.

Finally, Paul exhorts us to GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, and what this means for us is, that, we give thanks to Him not just in the good times but likewise in the not so good times, as well. Indeed, in life, we go through all sorts of twists and turns which may leave some of us befuddled, uncertain of what lies ahead. On the other hand, those who go through an extended winning streak in life, so to speak, may fail in this exhortation as the victories experienced may take the focus away from God, the giver and provider of all. Glory that only belongs to God is taken away from Him and is taken by the recipient rather than given to the ultimate giver.

So, in this season, as many around the world celebrate Thanksgiving, and even as we in the Philippines look forward to the coming Christmas celebration, let us be in a season to rejoice, pray and give thanks to God in our varied circumstances!✠