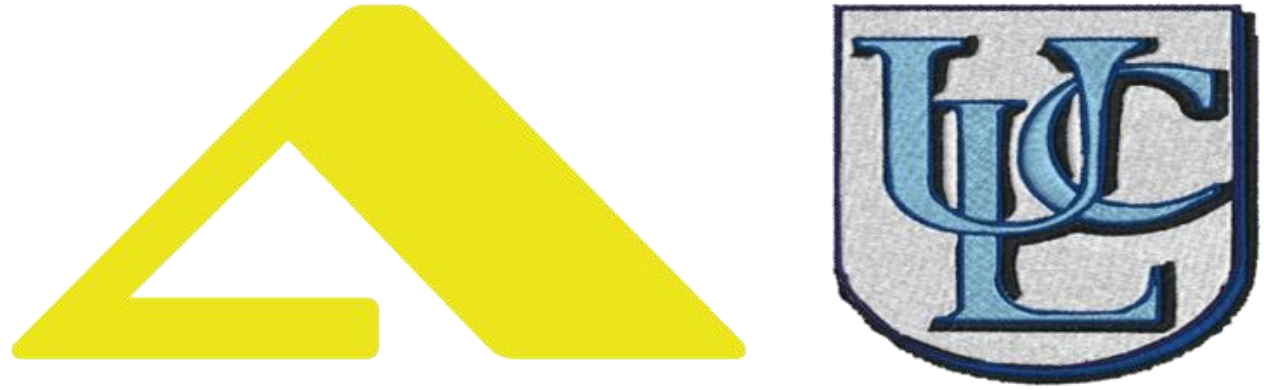

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
Dr. Rob White – Senior Minister
https://aulc.us

Welcome. I am Doctor David Thorne with this week's message. Today's sermon is titled "Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving".

Today's scripture lesson comes from Psalm Chapter 100 verses 1 to 5 and First Thessalonians Chapter 5 verses 16 to 18.

Beloved, every year our nation sets aside a day called Thanksgiving. Its roots in America reach back to a 1621 harvest gathering among
early settlers and Native peoples, and later to calls for public prayer and gratitude. George Washington's 1789 proclamation,
Abraham Lincoln's 1863 invitation to a divided nation, and finally the 1941 designation of the fourth Thursday of November as a national
holiday. But Thanksgiving did not begin with America. Thanksgiving begins with God. Long before any nation set aside a day, the Bible
called the people of God to "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise" as we see in Psalm Chapter 100 verse 4.

So this morning, Thanksgiving Day is not merely a holiday about turkey and tables. It is a doorway, a moment to ask, Who is God?
What has He done? And how should grateful people live? Our text is Psalm 100, a short psalm with a loud command... God's people are to
shout, worship, know, enter, give thanks, and praise. It teaches us that thanksgiving is not a seasonal mood, it is a biblical way of life.

Psalm 100 verse 3 says, "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."
Thanksgiving starts with knowledge-with remembering. We do not give thanks to an unknown force. We give thanks to the LORD, the covenant God,

our Maker and Shepherd.

When the Pilgrims and later generations called for thanksgiving, they were not merely celebrating a good harvest. They were confessing
dependence on God. And that is still the biblical foundation. Thanksgiving is the humble acknowledgment that we did not create ourselves,
save ourselves, or sustain ourselves. Every breath, every meal, every opportunity, every mercy is a gift.

The Bible repeatedly commands thanksgiving because God's character deserves it. Psalm 107 verse 1 says, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is
good; his love endures forever." Psalm 100 verse 5 says, "For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations." Thanksgiving is not first a response to how comfortable our year has been.
It is a response to who God is-good, loving, faithful.

Church, remember this: gratitude grows in the soil of memory. When we forget God, we become complainers. When we remember God,
we become worshipers. So Thanksgiving Day asks us: Have we remembered the Lord? Have we remembered His goodness, His provision,
His faithfulness?

Now here is where the Bible gets honest. In First Thessalonians 5 verses 16 to 18, God says, "Rejoice always, pray continually,
give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Notice carefully: He says give thanks in all
circumstances, not for all circumstances. The Bible does not ask us to call evil good or pain pleasant.
It asks us to trust that God is present and faithful even in the hard seasons.

That is why thanksgiving is more than a harvest festival. It is a discipline of faith. Philippians 4 verses 6 to 7 says,
"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
Thanksgiving is the companion of prayer. When we come to God with thanksgiving, we are reminding our anxious hearts that He has been
faithful before and will be faithful again.

The first Thanksgiving gatherings were not naive celebrations of easy lives. Many early settlers had known hardship, sickness, and loss.
Lincoln's 1863 proclamation came in the middle of a Civil War. Thanksgiving has often been most powerful not when life was easy,
but when people chose to look up in the middle of difficulty. That is the biblical pattern: Israel gave thanks in the wilderness;
David gave thanks in trouble; Paul and Silas sang in prison; Jesus gave thanks before the cross.

So today, whatever season you are in-plenty or want, health or sickness, joy or grief-the call is not to pretend.

The call is to remember that God has not abandoned you. In Christ, your greatest need has already been met. Your sins can be forgiven.
Your soul can be saved. Your future is held by a faithful God. That is reason enough to give thanks.

Psalm 100 shows us that thanksgiving is not a feeling trapped inside the heart. It is released. Verse 2 says,
"Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Verse 4 says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts
with praise." Thanksgiving moves us toward God in worship and toward others in generous love.

Colossians 3 verses 15 to 17 says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts… and be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among
you richly… singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the
Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Thanksgiving is meant to shape our words, our songs, our work, and our
relationships.

And the New Testament makes this practical: Hebrews 13 verses 15 to 16 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God
a sacrifice of praise… And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."
Thanksgiving is not just saying "thank you" to God. It is becoming generous like God. It is opening our tables, sharing our resources,
serving the needy, forgiving the offender, and speaking grace.

What does Thanksgiving mean today? It means gratitude is not a once-a-year meal; it is a daily witness. In a culture of entitlement,
thanksgiving says, "Everything I have is a gift." In a culture of anxiety, thanksgiving says, "God is faithful."
In a culture of division, thanksgiving says, "Let us count blessings before we count grievances." In a culture of self,
thanksgiving says, "God is God, and I am not."

So what should we do?

First, gather and worship. Do not let Thanksgiving be a day without God. Come to church. Sing. Pray. Read Psalm 100 aloud with your family.
Let your table include a moment of thanksgiving to Jesus, not just a list of things you are grateful for.

Second, practice daily gratitude. Each day this week, write down three gifts from God and thank Him for them.
Replace one complaint with one prayer. Replace one anxious thought with one act of thanksgiving.

Third, give generously. Thanksgiving is not just about receiving; it is about sharing. Invite someone to your table. Give to the poor.
Support the work of the church. Write a note of thanks. Reconcile a relationship. Use your resources to bless others.

Fourth, tell the story. Tell someone what God has done for you in Christ. Tell of His faithfulness this year. Gratitude becomes
evangelism when our testimony points others to Jesus.

As we come to this altar, hear the invitation of Jesus. If you have never received Him as Lord and Savior, come.
If you have been living with a clenched fist and a complaining spirit, come. If you need to return to a life of thanksgiving, come.
If you need prayer for a hard season, come. The gates of grace are open. Do not stay away. Bring your burden. Bring your thanks.
Bring your life. Come to Jesus today.

Please bow your head as we pray...

Father, we enter Your gates with thanksgiving and Your courts with praise. We thank You for who You are-good, faithful, loving, and holy.
We thank You for Your creation, Your provision, and Your patience. We thank You most of all for Jesus Christ, who bore our sins and rose
again, so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life.

Forgive us for complaining, forgetting, and acting as though we have earned what You have freely given. Teach us to give thanks in all
circumstances, not because life is easy, but because You are faithful. Guard our hearts with Your peace. Make us generous people-people who
worship, share, forgive, and testify.

Lord, meet us at this altar. Save the lost. Restore the backslidden. Heal the hurting. Comfort the grieving. Use this Thanksgiving Day to
turn our hearts toward You and toward one another. May our homes, tables, words, and lives overflow with gratitude to the glory of
Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed. For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed.

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you all next week.

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