

Interactive Gratitude - Pastors Michael & Terri Sullivant

In the beginning, the Garden in Eden, was the original temple where God and man and woman met and communed in unbroken friendship.

At the end of the story of Christ's redemption, the new Jerusalem descends from heaven. The original garden has matured to become a city and a temple with garden-like properties. And so, we are on a journey with our Creator to see heaven and earth perfectly reunited and His original design and purpose restored.

The man and woman were not just stewards of God's creation, but they were the high priests of the original creation. They were God's "royal priests." But they and we fell from our high calling. Something went terribly wrong within the human family.

Through the Person and Work of Jesus the Christ, a marvelous rescue of all creation was inaugurated.

One important implication of this for us is that our Creator and Lord has called us to "live sacramentally" in this world. That is, we are to collect the raw materials of his creation into our arms, add to these our love and labor and then offer all this back to God as a sacrifice of praise.

As an example, when we offer up the elements of the Eucharist, we don't offer grain and grapes but bread and wine. It is the cultivated elements that God blesses and then gives back to us having crowned it with saving power and grace.

Jesus "gave thanks" - *eucharisteo*. This word has the root words for both grace (*charis*) and joy (*chara*) embedded with it. This is a three-fold cord.

(Mat 26:26-27 NIV) While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul the apostle says that the minds of human beings have become darkened because of a refusal to be grateful to God.

What if God is absolutely good? The apostle John said, "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

What if human beings are subconsciously falsely accusing God for the presence of evil in our world? What if he truly doesn't deserve this blame?

Christian philosophers have pointed out that our disgust with and reaction to evil actually points to an absolutely good creator. We wouldn't be bothered by evil unless there were an absolute good in the world.

The history of the world informs us that we long to connect with Someone above and beyond us who made us and who is absolutely beautiful and good.

And so the Scriptures continually point us to the act of giving thanks to God for his greatness and goodness and all the good things that he provides for us.

My Interactive Gratitude:

- 1 Gratitude from me to God for something good in my life or my day. Write it down in a simple way.
- 2 Imagine God's response to my gratitude and write it down. What might He be thinking, feeling or saying back to me, especially about who I am to Him?
- 3 Consider sharing with a friend or two what you wrote down and what you experienced.