



Sermon on Psalm 30 Pastor Julie McCain, July 5 & 6, 2014

To start with, if you don't have a pen or a notecard, now is a great time to go get one, and you'll also need your pew Bible open to page 494 at the end of my sermon.

Please pray with me: Speak, O Lord, in words that we can hear. Open our hearts to your word, and plant the light of your grace deep in our hearts. Amen.

Here in Minnesota people jokingly say that we have 4 seasons do you know what they are?: Winter, Almost Winter, still Winter, and does anyone know what the fourth season is?

-Construction!

This year my husband and I have been lucky enough to experience that last season first hand, day after day, with construction going on next to our house.

Now you know as well as I do that construction trucks don't politely wait until you're up and showered before they start making noise.

And they don't stop working on the days when you need some peace and quiet.

For the first several weeks of summer, I woke up to the sound of construction, ate breakfast to the sound of construction, and as I walked to work in step with the sound of backing up trucks, it was not with the best of attitudes.

Each of us has things that push our buttons, things that set us up for a bad day or put us in a bad mood.

Maybe they're doing construction on your street, too, and you understand *exactly* what I'm talking about.

But here's the thing: It doesn't feel good to step out the door in the morning annoyed.
→In fact, it doesn't feel good to step out any door feeling angry or dreading or fearful, or any other negative emotion we could come up with.

So as I walked out of the house to the incessant sound of backing up trucks, one morning I lifted up a prayer. It wasn't a complicated one, just this:
God, grant me a grateful heart today.

That really is all that the Psalms are—they are people honestly talking to God and trying to trust him in the midst of whatever life throws at them.

Now praying it will not whisk away all of our difficulties.

But what it does do is start the process of handing that thing over to God,
Start the process of letting go.

So the first day I prayed that on my walk, I realized that the very fact that we have construction crews working on our roads and our pipes means that we live in a place

where the quality of life is high, where roads aren't allowed to get into a state of extreme disrepair—a place where local and national governments are at work to try and make our lives better.

→Sing praises to the Lord, and give thanks to his holy name, our Psalmist says. And not everyone is able to thank God for the gift of construction.

As I kept walking to work, there was a crowd of children on the sidewalk, throwing balls every which way. One even hit me smack dab in the middle of my forehead. And I realized that those children could be an annoyance I had to navigate around or a blessing I smile at and thank God for.

Sing praises to the Lord, and give thanks to his holy name.

In each and every moment there is the chance to be thankful, and God wants desperately to get into our hearts and help us find gratitude.

I imagine that learning to be thankful is very much like the process of planting a garden.

1. For those of you who garden or farm, what is the process of preparing the soil for seeds like? What do you have to do?

-Get rid of weeds, till the soil, add fertilizer.

2. What would happen if we didn't prepare the soil at all before planting?

-Nothing would grow, or some seeds would grow but lots of weeds would, too.

Our hearts are very much like are gardens, needing hard work and cultivation in order to overflow with the joy and peace that God wants for us.

Sing praises to the Lord and give thanks to his holy name, but sometimes it is difficult, and with good reason.

Now some Christians would claim that if we really want to please God, we can't ever show our doubts or our struggles; some would even claim that Christians shouldn't encounter any difficulties.

Our Psalm gives us evidence to the contrary. He tells us about his own deep struggle, and how he handled it: by honestly talking to God.

He cried out, he asked his questions, and he asked for help: Hear O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!

Sing praises to the Lord and give thanks to his holy name

→And the author of this Psalm does just that, but it isn't because he has a perfect life, it's because he's willing to give God both his difficulties and his joys.

The author of this Psalm is ever on the lookout for what God is doing in his life and for reasons to be thankful, and we must be on the lookout too.

I'm going to read a paraphrased version of the beginning of our text, and I want you to listen for all the things God has done:

It reads: I give you all the credit, God—
 You got me out of that mess, you didn't let my foes gloat.
 God, my God, I yelled for help,
 And you put me together.
 God you pulled me out of the grave,
 Gave me another chance at life
 When I was down and out.

Did you hear any of the things he says God did for him?

-put me together, pulled me out of the grace, gave me another chance.

I give you all the credit, God, he says. The credit for putting me together, for pulling me out of the grave, for giving me another chance.
 It would be easy enough to attribute all these things to coincidence, luck, or hard work. In our hectic lives, it is easy to go through a whole week and not give God credit.

But today, we gather together to:

Sing praises to the Lord, and give thanks to his holy name.

→We gather together to help one another learn to cultivate grateful hearts and give God credit for all he has done for us.

For you see, the light of the world is already in our hearts, in our church, and in our world, pouring out so many good gifts, longing to bless us until our hearts overflow. But we have to be on the lookout.

If the author of the Psalm says God healed him, restored him, put him together, helped him, I wonder what verbs we would use for what God is doing in our lives.

→Is God healing you, walking with you, giving you courage, giving you strength, challenging you?

For me a big one would be that God is giving me joy, in spaces where I could be disgruntled, he is teaching me to find joy.

so that whenever I find myself filled with joy, and I try to thank God for that gift.

So we're going to practice cultivating thankful hearts and looking for God in our midst right now. I want you to get out your notecard, and sometime throughout the rest of the service, write down a word or phrase that is something God is doing in your life. Mine just says: Giving me joy.

You have two options for what you can do with your notecard. You can either place it in the offering and say a prayer of thanks as you do, or you can take it with you and share with someone—your spouse, a friend, or a son or daughter—what you think God is doing in your life right now and why you are thankful for it.

So to close, we're going to join together in thanking God for all he has done in our lives by praying the last paragraph of Psalm 30. So please turn to page 494 of your pew Bibles, and we'll read verse 11-12 (click [here](#) for the verses at Biblegateway.com).

As you go through your day, be on the lookout for what God is doing in your life and how he might be blessing you. Amen.