



02_Life Is a Benediction

0:00:00.8 Speaker 1: Are you dissatisfied with your spiritual progress, feeling stuck without knowing why, even after deliverance prayers or years of therapy? Recover your dignity, find your purpose, and discover the thrill of walking with God once again. Explore spiritual consultations with Sonja at BibleStudyEvangelista.com. Click go deeper on the home page, then one-on-one and find out how to cooperate more deeply with the Holy Spirit's action in your life with a spiritual consultation.

0:00:28.9 Speaker 2: If you like having Bible study in your pocket and you have an iPhone or iPad, why not leave a review? Search Bible Study Evangelista in iTunes and tell every one how your loving and lifting all you've been given. Here's Sonja.

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0:00:52.6 Sonja Corbitt: Welcome to the Bible Study Evangelista show. I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Catholic Evangelista, and we're in our second episode in our series on gratitude, the healing power of gratitude. And last week we looked at the language roots of the word gratitude and thanksgiving and how they are intertwined with the concept of thanksgiving in the scriptures. Because in the Old Testament, there is not and was not a separate word for gratitude. It was tied up in the verb to bless, Barak, actually. And that's the most common Hebrew noun used for thanks. It means thanks and it's almost always translated, thanks, but it's also tied up in the idea to praise or confess, yadah, because that the Hebrew noun used for thanks is derived from the verb to praise or to confess.

0:01:48.4 SC: So both terms, then, are tied up in the Hebrew language. And you got to remember that the Hebrew language was a picture language. The words were used to paint pictures rather than specific ideas. So that's part of why you have all of these meanings tied up in the one word to bless. And that's really what we spent the time last week looking on is blessing or bene. We looked at the bene, the benefits, the beneficiary and the benefactor. And we're going to look at that a little more deeply today because, I'm telling you after studying this, I think about this Thanksgiving idea all the time. I'm thanking God for everything. And what I'm noticing is, when you're doing that, you have no time or room in your thoughts for any negativity. And that's the point, really. But as you begin practicing it, you really notice it for yourselves. So let's look at the Jewish prayers of Thanksgiving or the Jewish prayers of blessing, because according to the Mishnah, which is a compilation of the oral traditions of the Jewish faith and the standard prayer for food begins with, blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the universe.

0:03:00.7 SC: So the people praying it then are acknowledging God's sovereignty over the specific item that's being blessed, whether it's fruit or wine or vegetables or bread. And if you notice, it

sounds very similar to the prayer of the faithful at the beginning of our liturgy of the Eucharist when the preparation of the altar and the offerings has taken place or is taking place. The priest says, blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness, there's the goodness, bene word, we have received the bread we offer you and the wine that we offer you. So you've got the term blessed, which is the Old Testament word for thanks or gratitude. And then you have the goodness idea, the grace idea, the benefit idea that we talked about last week. The Jewish Talmud is the primary text for the Jewish faith and the Babylonian Talmud is the compilation of those writings after the Babylonian exile. And that particular writing forbids anyone from enjoying any pleasure from the world until they have first offered a blessing to God who provided it. And so the Talmud views the blessing as a means of thanks or thanksgiving because pleasure is only made available through God's goodness and love.

0:04:23.1 SC: And that is an interpretation of the Talmud there. It's a direct quote, actually. And so every devout Jewish person was devoted to two daily forms of prayer. One was the Shema, which I talk about a lot in the masterclass. It's the number one prayer. It comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. "Here O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength because he is the great benefactor." And they would pray that every day. And then the other form of prayer that they prayed daily was called the 18. And I covered this in a very general way in the show on The Our Father, which I'll connect a link. I'll put a link in the show notes to that so that you can go back and look at that because essentially, our Lord's Prayer is a summary or a briefer version of these prayers called the 18 or the 18 benedictions. There's that word again, benna, benediction. And if you break up the word benediction, it means words or speech or good words. So in Hebrew, a benediction was any prayer that began with the word bless.

0:05:42.5 SC: So just reading your daily psalm, you're going to see this everywhere. So to bless is to speak good to somebody else or about somebody else. And so they always wanted to speak good. They wanted to bless. They wanted to thank God and they did it constantly. In the morning when they woke up, they prayed the 18. "Blessed are you Lord God." At night before they went to bed, they prayed the 18. "Blessed are you Lord God." In the middle of the day, they paused and praise the 18. "Blessed are you Lord who abundantly forgives." And so that's part of why we have those those daily prayers such as the Angelus, right?

0:06:19.1 SC: So we're stopping in the middle of the day the way they did to pray these benedictions, the 18. I'm not going to get into what all of those are specifically because I did that in the Our Father show and you're welcome to go and listen to that. It was it was just an hour show. But the point is that they they prayed these 18 benedictions. They would scramble up the order some to sort of make it somewhat spontaneous. But the the form of the 18 was essentially the same. And so when the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Teach us to pray," he said, just pray the way you've always prayed. Pray the 18. And so our Lord's Prayer is essentially a scrambling and a mixing up, a spontaneous offering of the benedictions that they prayed already anyway.

0:07:12.3 SC: And so then after they prayed those benedictions, which were based on, blessed are you Lord God, then they would enrich that little phrase, blessed are you Lord God. So the rabbis then taught their followers how to expand it. And so they would just add whatever it was they were thanking God for. Blessed are you Lord God who heals the sick. And then they'd remember, oh, I have a body and I've been sick and God is the one who's behind my health and my healing. Or blessed are you Lord God who sustains the living and raises the dead. And so they would think to

themselves, I have hope, hope of the resurrection. The rabbis were training the people and God was training the people for gratitude. And they loved doing it because the good life, the happy life involves gratitude.

0:08:02.4 SC: We know this scientifically now, I haven't even gotten anywhere near the research, but we know that this is actually scientifically true. And we also know that it's a matter of morality. It is... And I'm getting ahead of myself here, but it is a matter of morality to thank God because its end is our happiness. The whole point of morality is to discover the location of happiness. How can man be happy? He can be happy by living a moral life. He can be happy by being grateful. And now we know scientifically that this is physiologically true, that gratitude does make you more happy. It makes you more healthy. And so gratitude doesn't come to us when we get more stuff. That is the insane folly of our day. Gratitude comes when you see reality, the reality that every single benefit comes from a benefactor of which you are the grace given beneficiary. And so they would pray the 18, an extra time on the Sabbath. They didn't have to work on the Sabbath, so they thanked God. And those benedictions were also called the Amidah. I talk about that in that show on the Our Father. It means standing because they're supposed to be standing up.

0:09:19.1 SC: If you pray while you're sitting down, you might fall asleep. So they would stand up to pray. And so Rabbi Gamaliel said, every day a man is to pray the 18 benedictions. And so they discussed among themselves, the rabbis, the best way to say them. And the rabbis would say, never say the 18 when you're on a donkey because being high up might make you feel proud or self-sufficient. It's humbling to come down, to be down on the earth or down to earth when you thank God so you don't say benedictions on a donkey. I can't imagine any of us would have to worry about that, but possibly in a car. We don't want to say the benedictions in the car. I don't know. I like that idea. I like the idea of thanking God for my car. And I actually do quite a bit because I prayed for a very specific car, which is a whole different story, and I won't get into that. But I prayed for that car and God was good enough to give it to me. I actually asked Our Lady and she's the one who helped me find it, but anyway, they regularly gathered at the temple to pray these 18. And you see this between the lines quite a bit in the New Testament. In Acts 3, it says that, "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer at three." And that's what they were doing.

0:10:24.2 SC: They were going to the temple to pray the 18 together, the Amidah or the benedictions. And they did it at the temple because the temple was the reminder or the expression of God's presence with them. So the temple, to them, also represented a return to Eden because Eden was the temple for Adam and Eve. It was the place where they dwelt. It was the place actually to where God dwelt with them, the Garden of Eden. And so to them, to do it in the temple was to be with God, to thank God in his presence. God's plan is to dwell with us, to live with us. And that takes place here on earth. And the temple was a picture of that. So people would gather there at the temple to say the 18. And if you couldn't go there, then you're supposed to turn your body toward the Holy of Holies in the east where God's presence was expressed in the Old Testament tabernacle. And they would remember his presence there with them in their midst. And so the rabbis wrote about what to do if you were directionally challenged and didn't know what direction the Holy of Holies was. They said, one who is sitting on a ship must turn his heart in the direction of the Holy of Holies. So then your heart was to be constantly turned toward God because life with God is a life of giving thanks to him.

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[music]

0:12:26.2 Speaker 2: Sonja created the Love the Word Bible Study Method just for you, based on Mary's personal practice and formulated for your personality and temperament. Get your Love the Word meditations every Monday morning by signing up at BibleStudyEvangelista.com. Now here's Sonja.

[music]

0:12:55.0 SC: I'm going to repeat that after the break because it's so important. Life with God is a life of giving thanks to him. That's a part of what our Jewish brothers and sisters have taught us and handed down to us as a part of our faith, as the basis of our faith. Every rabbi taught his own disciples how to pray the 18 in their own way. That's really what Jesus' disciples were asking him. Lord, teach us to pray. They were asking him, how do we pray? What's our way of praying, of blessing God? The Lord's Prayer is the 18 or the Amidah or the benedictions in a summary form. Sometimes, rabbis used to talk about how to pray those 18 in summary form, but then other times in their writings, they use the expanded form. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed or blessed be your name. There's that blessed word again.

0:13:48.7 SC: The early church then prayed the Lord's Prayer three times a day. It was the 18 for the early church. The gratitude didn't stop with that 18, with the benedictions or the Lord's Prayer. Every meal was an occasion to express gratitude. Food was not eaten until people stopped and remembered that it was a gift. They didn't just inhale it the way we do now. A rabbi said, a man must not taste his food until he has blessed it. And so they weren't so much blessing the food, they were blessing God who gave them the food. Whenever we bless the food, we're actually blessing God. We say this with our Catholic blessing, "Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty." I don't know about you, but it's disheartening when I go out to eat and I see people who don't pray over their food. And I mean, Catholics, I'm really talking about Catholics. We don't expect non-Christians to thank God for their food. I see people who are Catholics who don't bless their food and it's not an indictment. It just shows how unthankful we are, how entitled that we are and maybe even embarrassed to have people watch us pray and perhaps even dangerous in some situations where people can identify you as a Christian.

0:15:13.6 SC: But why wouldn't we? Why... In fact, I remember my stepfather, we had this conversation one time about blessing leftovers and he maintained, because he learned this from his father, that you don't ever bless your leftovers because you've already blessed the food at the original meal. And so you don't bless it twice. So I don't know. I mean, that seems a little bit legalistic to me and kind of extreme, but we always had and I believe most families did, they had a habit of blessing God and thanking God for the food that they were about to eat. And so just keep it in mind. That's all I'm saying. The Psalms are full of blessing God and thanking God. Psalm 24

says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." So everything is a gift. It's all grace. And they were so serious about Thanksgiving and gratitude that certain rabbis believe that if you forgot to bless God for the gift of your food, you had to go back where you ate it and thank him there so you wouldn't forget the next time. So if you were on the road, you couldn't thank him on the road, you had to go all the way back to the location of your meal as a way of saying, I'm going to remember to do this next time. It was very important.

0:16:29.2 SC: So if you've been to Chick-fil-A, if we still had this belief and you realized you forgot to thank God for your food in Chick-fil-A, you would have to drive back to Chick-fil-A, go to your table and make them get up and you'd sit down and you'd say, thank you, Oh Lord, for these chicken nuggets. Right? So the rabbis, they argued about how much time you had in which to return to give thanks. Now, I realize this is all extreme. I'm just showing you the lengths to which our Jewish brothers and sisters went to make sure that they were grateful, that they were thankful for the blessings that God gave them, that they understood where the blessings came from and they understood that they were the beneficiaries of the blessings of God.

0:17:10.0 SC: They were very serious about this. And as I said, this is really... It's transforming my own faith life because it's keeping me conscious all the time of all my little blessings, things like... I have done this all the time anyway, but I catch myself in the shower being so thankful for hot running water. Clean, clean, hot running water because it's a relatively new thing for the human race that it would just come out of a tap and it feels so good, doesn't it? And even in lying in bed and my sheets feel so good and you get in and the bed is so comfy and I know it's silly, it seems silly, but I'm really thankful for that stuff. I'm thankful that we live in a time where those things are available to us. The blessing of it. It truly is a blessing, and the Jewish people, they trained to stay in this mindset.

0:18:09.2 SC: And so the rabbis argued about how much time you had to thank God or to return back to the location where you should have thanked God and you didn't. And so they said, you have to do that before the food is digested from your body because they were people of gratitude. And that's kind of, if you think about it, that's what the church talks about with the Eucharist. We should give Jesus thanksgiving because the Eucharist remains in our bodies until it's digested, right? And so we have that time to be thankful. Every item of food received its own unique blessing. You blessed God for the bread and then when the figs came out, you blessed him for the figs and when the wine came out, you blessed him for the wine and if you had meat, you blessed him for the meat. Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, right?

0:18:53.4 SC: So we should always thank God for everything, but especially for our food. And so the principle that they lived by was to bless God for every gift. The rabbis said that he who enjoys anything from creation without blessing, commits misuse. It's a form of theft. They saw it as a form of theft and all of this tradition guided and informed Jesus's life and the apostles life because they were Jews, Mary's life, and at the Last Supper, we see this reflected. We're told when they were eating, Jesus took the bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and then later during the same meal, he took the cup and when he had given thanks, right?

0:19:37.3 SC: So if we pray over a meal at all, we do it very quickly. It's very perfunctory if we even do it at the very beginning, but not Jesus. He blessed each of the elements. He did what every devout Israelite would do and every time another item of food came out, he would say, God, this is from you too. I get to have this. Thank you. Right? And so gratitude wasn't just at mealtime and the

eight benedictions. They had blessings for everything. They had blessings for a lamp because to have light in the world is a gift. They could be living in darkness, but God said, let there be light. So they'd say, bless you, God, Father of all the lights. That's actually in the Psalms. They had blessings for seeing a comet. They had blessings for looking at the ocean. So we can resonate with their prayers. Bless you, God, for making the ocean. They had blessings for visiting holy places, blessings for rain, blessings for completing a home, blessings for do. Do you remember in the very beginning of Just Rest, I added that blessing, that prayer for do in Just Rest. They had blessings for everything.

0:20:38.1 SC: No occasion was too small or menial and the disciples would follow the rabbis around all the time because they never knew when he would say another blessing and they wanted to know, how do I bless God for that? So there are stories of disciples following different rabbis around when he went to the bushes to go to the bathroom because they wanted to know, is there going to be a blessing? And then there was one, there's a recorded blessing. Rabbi Abaye said, "Blessed are you, O Lord, who has formed man in wisdom and created in him many orifices and many cavities." Now that's kind of course to me and you, but it's not really funny if one of those things doesn't work well, right? So the rabbis then would say, shame on you for thinking you're so proper that any part of your existence is too undignified to thank God who thought it up. So shame on us for thinking there's something unspiritual, something not worth thanking God for about any part of our bodies. So the catechism tells us in 1078 and 1079, "Blessing is a divine and life-giving action, the source of which is the father. His blessing is both word and gift."

0:21:43.8 SC: When applied to man, the word blessing means adoration and surrender to his creator in thanksgiving. From the beginning until the end of time, the whole of God's work is a blessing. From the liturgical poem of the first creation to the canticles of the heavenly Jerusalem, the inspired authors proclaim the plan of salvation as one vast divine blessing. Every breath is a gift from God. God himself is a gift to us. Our entire identity is God's love for us. That is your identity. God loves you. It's that simple. And because it is that simple, that is exactly why everything we have, everything we are, everything we receive comes from the benefactor, the heaped up, vehemently multiplied reward, as we saw last week in God's testimony of himself to Abram. And so we can see that gratitude always involves a posture of humility. Because if I think I'm owed something, I'm not going to be thankful for it because I think I'm entitled to it. If you just give me a car for no reason, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. I say thank you. I can't believe how good you are to me. But if I pay fair market value for the car, when you hand me the keys, I'm going to say, okay, cool. But I'm not going to say thank you for this gift. I'm overwhelmed because I bought it. I'm owed it.

0:23:22.4 SC: And so we as humans, we're naturally entitled. We think that our gifts rightfully belong to us. And that is such an error. The more we think we're entitled to, the less we're going to be grateful for. And we wonder, why do people who get more and more show less and less gratitude? The bigger our sense of entitlement is, the smaller our sense of gratitude.

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0:25:26.7 SC: Why aren't we more grateful? That was the very first question that I asked last week at the beginning of the series, why are we not more grateful? Because we are entitled. We think that everything we have, we deserve, and there could not be anything less true. One of the things that really surprised me when I read it was in studying Job in chapter 1, verse 21, he says after losing everything, and that after praying for protection, he says, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." There's that word blessed, bene, right? Blessed be the name of the Lord. And I remember God using this to confront me with my sense of entitlement when I asked him, why me? Why this or why that? And I remember him saying to me pretty clearly, why not you? Why do you think you're better than anyone else? Why do you deserve something that someone else didn't get? Why do you deserve not to have something that someone else did have, something bad? Why not you?

0:26:40.2 SC: So if you're in a habit of asking that question, why me? Why is this happening to me? Why not you? Do you think you really deserve anything different? And the truth is, we really do think so, especially if we're trying to live a Christian life, a true, sincere life with God. We do have this attitude that somehow we deserve blessings. But the truth is, we didn't deserve anything at all. Our sin, our concupiscence, the fact that we're born into sin, we look at that and we say, "Well, that's not my fault. That's Adam and Eve's fault." But we're all sinners. We all choose to sin. Even now when we know better, we still choose venial sin. Sometimes we choose mortal sin. So why not you? Why do you deserve something better than anyone else? And the fact is that we as human beings, because we sinned against God and His love and His commands, we deserve every evil, bad thing that befalls us. We do. We deserve eternal death. That's what our sin merits. And even our righteousness, as I said last week, is as filthy rags. There's nothing even really pure in our good works because we're creatures. We're sinful creatures.

0:28:09.8 SC: And so the only thing that we can really offer God is Himself. That's really it, which is why we have the mass, because Jesus is the priest, the victim, the offering. He's the only acceptable sacrifice. He's the only acceptable good if we're gonna be giving to God, right? And so the point here is, we don't deserve any gifts. We don't deserve anything but hell. One single sin against an eternal God merits an eternal death. I'm just gonna let that lay there for a second. One single sin against an eternal God merits an eternal death. And so God sent His Son so that we could be saved. That is the true and first gift, God Himself. And so everything else, dear one, is just a bonus. Everything else is a bonus. If you look out over your life and you see all of the blessings that you have been showered with, it's all bonus because you didn't deserve anything to begin with. You deserved hell, and that's it. Your sin merited hell. It still does, but God is a benefactor. He gives us

the gifts because He is gift. So why me? Why not me?

0:29:34.4 SC: Our attitude of entitlement is due to a lack of understanding of our position before God and particularly before Jesus's passion and resurrection. Before that, we had absolutely nothing but hell. Nothing. My sinful mind can convince me, I'm entitled to anything I want. And if I don't get it, then God must be messing up or other people must be messing up because they owe me and they ought to pay me. This is what leads to lawsuits. This is what leads to unforgiveness. This is what leads to all of the negativity in our hearts. When we don't get something we really want, somebody is gonna pay. And in a Christian framework, ingratitude is not just a psychological problem, and it's not just this impoverishment of my own emotional experience. It's not just the negativity and the yuckiness that negativity feels like or that it brings, it's a sin. Paul says that it is the hallmark of a life that is opposed to God. And none of us parents want to raise ungrateful kids, right?

0:30:37.5 SC: And so when we're speaking about a life that is opposed to God, Paul says, for although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile. That futility is a mark of negativity. I learned that and I actually talked about that in the book, *Just Rest*. I learned that through a study of Hebrews chapters three and four, because that section where it says, today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, that is a quote from Psalm 95, which is a reference back to Numbers and Exodus. But then there are a couple of other Psalms, Psalm 78 and a couple others that elaborate on the events of the Exodus. And one of the marks of negativity is purposelessness and futility.

0:31:31.7 SC: And so when Paul says that their thinking became futile, their whole lives became purposeless. They became thinkers in futility, round and round thinkers, just futility. I mean, what's the point? Hopelessness, despair. If you're sinking in hopelessness and despair, if you feel purposelessness in your heart, I encourage you to start thanking God for all of your blessings. The first one being your salvation, the fact that you are not destined for hell. They perceived themselves to be entitled, to be owed, the people of God in the Old Testament, in the Exodus, they didn't see themselves as receivers of grace at every single moment. And how that could even be, I don't know, because they were enslaved. And one of the things that that I think of all the time is the entrapment of certain sins of my youth and young adulthood and how I just felt like I was never going to get out of them. I was so trapped, I was enslaved, and I knew it. And I never saw a way that it could be possible that I could live a life of freedom.

0:32:46.5 SC: And so now when I think back to that time, I am so thankful that I'm not trapped in that stuff anymore. I mean, things like addictions and oh, gosh, toxic relationships and this idea of having to please other people. All of that is just such a trap. It's enslaving, it is miserable. And to think about living like that for my whole life, I don't know, I'm just so thankful to God. I think about it all the time that he, as the psalmist said, rescued my foot from the snare that he pulled me out, right? And you, he pulled you out. We could truly be living lives of the utmost misery and perhaps you are or you think you are. But here's the truth. It could always be worse. It could always be worse. And that's what I remind myself of every time I slide into despair or discouragement, I always remind myself, look, everyone's healthy. This is a first world problem, right? I just remind myself and I start to thank God for all of the things that haven't happened.

0:33:57.5 SC: We don't even think about those things. All of the things that could have happened to us that haven't. When I do consultations, I'm almost amazed by this sometimes. As bad as things are

for people growing up sometimes and the trauma that they experience and the neglect and all of those things, it just could always be worse. It really could. And so it's important to keep in mind that our position as human beings, in reality, we are owed nothing and everything we have is a gift. The Bible's word for ingratitude is murmuring or negativity. And as I said, I talk about this a whole lot in Just Rest in that story on the Exodus because the Bible is so clear. It repeats this admonition over and over and over again with the example of the Exodus so that we know what not to do as God's people. And so the essence of their evil unbelief in Hebrews chapters three and four, it's fear, but it's fear that's expressed through negativity or murmuring or complaining.

0:35:07.6 SC: And Paul says that complaining is the expression of a mindset without God. If you live a life of complaining, you are not living in God because if you're living in God, you recognize that everything you have and are comes from him as a gift. You see himself as a gift. God gave the Israelites freedom. He took care of them in the desert. He gave them the law in the 10 commandments. He led them to the promised land, but all they did was complain. And ultimately, they forfeited the promised land altogether.

[music]

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[music]

0:36:36.3 SC: The people of God, after being rescued from slavery in Egypt, God deposited them in the desert in order that they should learn how to trust in him. And so they, they seemed to go without the things that they needed, water and food. But God provided all of those things for them. And yet they were unable to enjoy those blessings, the water at Meribah. They were unable to drink the water at Meribah because they complained about it. It was the bitterness that they brought with them from Egypt that caused them to see the water and receive the water as bitter, even though it was a blessing from God. The manna, they ended up seeing the manna as being worthless. They got tired of it. And so they called it worthless. It was angels food, according to the book of wisdom. And they said it was worthless. Their complaining caused them to consume sick quail until they foundered.

0:37:36.0 SC: All of this I talk about in my book, Just Rest. But my point is here, they weren't thankful. They complained about everything. And so they forfeited the plenitude and the peace of the promised land. And that leads to the connection between gratitude and wisdom. It's unwise to live without gratitude, without thanksgiving to God. Gratitude ultimately is the perception of what is good and it's wisdom. I didn't realize this connection until I started to study Jesus's own Thanksgiving prayers in Matthew 11: 25-30, Jesus gives thanks that God has not revealed these things to the wise and the learned or the earthly wise, right? The educated we could say, or the academics, but he revealed the mysteries of himself and the kingdom of God to children, to the little ones, the simple. And Jesus thanks the Father for that. And in essence, what he's saying is he's thanking God for the simple faith of the apostles that causes them to have faith in him. And so he's

basically thanking God for trust in himself. And what's interesting is the framework of that section points back to an appeal for wisdom in Sirack chapter 51, which is sometimes also called the prayer of thanksgiving because it's modeled on the benedictions, the 18 benedictions, the Amidah that we talked about earlier in the show today.

0:39:18.0 SC: Sirack 51 is the last chapter of the whole book and the Qumran scrolls show that section, the section verses 13 through the end of the chapter, are an acrostic poem to close out the whole book of Sirack. And 13 through 30 are set up a lot like those 18 benedictions. They're a Psalm of praise that appeals to wisdom. And it says in verse 23, draw near to me, you who are untaught and lodge in my school. So it's talking there about what Jesus is asking or thanking God for the simplicity of the apostles faith in him. School that verse 23 is talking about, it's called a house of instruction or a Beth Midrash. It's a place of learning for the Jewish people. And the first mention of the practice of scripture experts in instructing disciples in their own homes. This is a reference to that practice of the rabbis instructing their disciples in their own homes about the faith. And you should read the rest of it. I'm just going to read a little bit of it. "Why do you say you're lacking in these things and why are your souls thirsty? I opened my mouth and said, get these things for yourself without money. Put your neck under the yoke and let your souls receive instruction. It is to be found close by. See with your eyes that I have labored little and found for myself much rest."

0:40:54.8 SC: And that is almost a direct reference from Matthew 11. That passage talks about take my yoke upon you and learn from me. I will instruct you. What is wisdom? It is being a person of simple faith, like a child who thinks the benefactor for everything. So in studying that one little prayer that Jesus prayed in thanksgiving to God for the revelation of God being given to little ones, the simple ones, the wisdom of God is imparted to the thankful, the simple, those who have a simple trust. No complaining, no tantrums, no entitlement, just a simple trust and then a simple thanksgiving. What we see there in the Catholic commentary on scripture is that the wisdom that our Lord asks for doesn't come from study, however sacred study is, but from personal abandonment to him, a trust, a trust that is expressed through thanksgiving. So we see a connection here then between thanksgiving, wisdom and rest or happiness, ultimate happiness.

0:42:16.5 SC: Now, there are some who would make a distinction between happiness and joy and happiness is that kind of fleeting emotion, whereas joy is an abiding rest or peace. And we could argue for that, sure. But in a philosophical sense, when we're talking about morality in the church, it was that peace was called happiness. Where is happiness located? And here we see Jesus teaching us that it's located in thanksgiving, that there's wisdom and there's rest in thanksgiving. Why? Because it's constantly keeping our minds on the goodness of God and the fact that we have been so richly blessed. Our focus is on eternity. It's on the goodness of God and not the things that we don't have or the things that are wrong. And so James, the first chapter of James actually has this very same idea. He even talks about thanking God and suffering. He says in verse two, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work that you may be made perfect and complete, lacking nothing." That perfection word means mature. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him."

0:43:40.9 SC: So there's that connection between thanksgiving, particularly in suffering and wisdom because then he talks about being at peace. Let him ask in faith with no doubting for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind for let not that man suppose that

he will receive anything from the Lord for he is a double minded man, unstable, unpeaceful in all his ways. So we see the connection again in the scriptures between gratitude, wisdom and peace or rest and happiness. And so in the catechism in 722, it tells us the word rejoice and it's talking about Mary's Magnificat, it says, "It is the thanksgiving of the whole people of God and thus of the church, which Mary in her canticle, lifts up to the Father in the Holy Spirit while carrying within her, the eternal son." And so Mary in that word rejoice, the root of it is thanksgiving. It's the thanksgiving the catechism says of the whole people of God. Why? Because her her Magnificat is the song of the church. And so Mary, as a devout Jewish person, she would have practiced the habit of praying the benedictions, the 18, the Amidah, she would have done that as well. And so the attitude of Jesus and the apostles and the whole Jewish people, the attitude put forth in the Old Testament as our example, is the attitude of constant thanksgiving, thanksgiving for everything.

0:45:27.2 SC: And if you are constantly looking for and thanking God for your blessings, you do not have the mental or emotional space for complaining. And so you live in happiness, in wisdom, in peace, that recalling... The psalms show us this, the recalling of our blessings keeps us mindful that God has always provided in the past and that he will now and he will in the future, no matter how bad the circumstances get. God has always provided in the past and he will now too. And that's what the psalms show us. That's what the whole Old Testament shows us. That's what Jesus's own prayer shows us. The prayers of the apostles show us the Amidah, the Our Father, all of that. The point of all of that, and here's your takeaway, is that every single thing comes from the goodness of God. Even our suffering is meant to purify us, to draw us to wisdom, to draw us to peace, to draw us to happiness. And if we can keep our minds trained on that thanksgiving, if it doesn't look thankful right now, if we're in the middle of the suffering and it doesn't feel happy, thank him that you know that there is a good in that suffering. You just haven't seen it yet and you haven't experienced it yet, but you know you will because you always have and God will not abandon you at this point when he has brought you so far.

0:47:04.7 SC: That was the accusation that the people of God made in the exodus in the desert. What did you do? Draw us out here in the desert just to kill us? And that's this panic that we get into when we're suffering. We think that, okay, this time God's not going to come through. Well, if you keep in your mind this attitude of thankfulness of the past, you will know that in the present right now, God will come through. He always has, he will today, and he always will. The whole testimony of scripture is this thanksgiving.

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0:47:51.4 Speaker 5: Thank you for listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Find out more at BibleStudyEvangelista.com.