

## **GRATEFUL FOR BEING PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL**

At our last basketball practice before the Christmas break, I was handed a card by one of the new players on our team. I did not open the card at the time, but instead waited until Christmas morning to do so. I was deeply touched by the words she wrote in her card. It said:

**Thank you coach so much for letting me be part of this special team.**

I do not often see this kind of gratitude expressed by somebody so young. As I am getting to know her better, I am discovering showing gratitude is part of her nature. One thing that has stood out to me about her is how she always thanks me after every practice, even when she is exhausted by the end.

I know she is grateful for being part of this team, but in all honesty, I am the grateful one. She was an answer to prayer when she decided to join our team. She did so when we still did not have enough players. She helped me recruit another player to join us this season as well. Her positive energy and attitude have contributed to this being a very special team for me to coach. I guess we are both grateful for being part of a very special team this year.

Her card on Christmas Day got me thinking about the many people who expressed gratitude for being part of something very special when it came to the birth of Jesus. Mary was one person who was grateful for the opportunity God was giving her of being part of this special plan. She expressed this gratitude in a song that she sang called "The Magnificat:"

**"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For He took notice of His lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.**

Mary's gratitude rings out in these words. Her relative Elizabeth also expressed gratitude for being part of this special thing God was doing. When Mary arrived at her home, Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed:

**God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy (Luke 1:42-43).**

Mary and Elizabeth were expressing gratitude even before the birth of Jesus. On the night He was born, the shepherds who were in the fields outside of Bethlehem also expressed gratitude for the opportunity they were given to go see the Christ Child. We are told in **Luke 2:20** that the shepherds went back to their flocks afterward glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

People expressing gratitude for Jesus coming to be our Saviour did not stop after His birth. Shortly after the birth, Mary and Joseph were at the Temple to present the child to the Lord as required by the law. Simeon and Anna happened to be present at the Temple that day and realized Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and showed his gratitude by praising God at that moment for letting him see the Messiah before he passed away. Anna, who had been a widow for a very long time, also praised God when she realized that the Christ Child was in her presence.

These are examples of some of the people who expressed gratitude for being part of something very special when God sent His Son into the world to be our Saviour. Just like these individuals, we too are blessed to be part of something very special when it comes to Jesus. As Christians, we are part of Jesus' team of followers who are called upon by Him to use our gifts to continue His ministry until His return. We should see being part of Jesus' team as something very special and have gratitude for this opportunity.

Maybe we feel this way and have never lost that sense of gratitude. Sometimes we may lose that sense of enthusiasm we once had for being part of this special opportunity Jesus is giving to us. Many different factors can lead to a Christian losing the sense of gratitude they once had.

Something that has helped me never to lose this sense of gratitude for the chance to use my gifts whenever Jesus calls upon me is an event in my life that goes back to 2007-2009. An illness prevented me from doing ministry during those years, and at times I did not know if I would ever get the chance to do so again. Slowly my health returned to the point that I could. Being given this opportunity again has helped me to be grateful for every Sunday I can be part of Jesus' team and share His Word.

Sometimes we need something to remind us of the special opportunity we are being given by our Lord and Saviour to be part of His team. Perhaps the player from my basketball team and her sense of appreciation for being part of something special will be that source of inspiration for us. Maybe being reminded of the gratitude expressed by Mary, Elizabeth, the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna will be that inspiration for us. **We need to remember how privileged and blessed we are to have Jesus want us to be part of doing something special for Him.** If we have lost that sense of gratitude, hopefully in this new year we will rediscover it and embrace the opportunity Jesus gives us to be part of doing special things in His name. It will make a huge difference in our service, in our walk with the Lord, and in Jesus' team being successful here on earth.

One of the gifts I received on Christmas was opening the card and reading the words from my player expressing her gratitude for being part of a special team. Her words put a smile on my face on Christmas Day. Perhaps we can all put a smile on Jesus' face by letting Him know how grateful we are to be part of His special team.

Have a wonderful and blessed New Year

Pastor Dean