

# Ed Schroeder on Thankfulness

*Co-Missioners,*

We take you this week for another dip in our library, where we dredged up a twenty-nine year old article that Ed Schroeder wrote for *Lutheran Women Today*, an erstwhile publication of the ELCA. You'll wonder, perhaps, why we bother you with it. It seems on the surface to be altogether irrelevant to the urgencies of our 2020 summer. As we see it, that's exactly the point. Now is the best of times to mull on Ed's topic—thankfulness as an afterthought, which indeed it is at the moment. For what and why shall we give thanks in a world gone mad, and how can we begin to do this amid the perils of virus and braggadocio that have so firm a grip on our present attention? We think Ed has an answer to this, grounded as ever in the best reason under heaven for thanking God every day. We hope you'll find it helpful, to say nothing of relieving.

*Peace and Joy,*

*The Crossings Community*

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## Thankfulness: An Apostolic Afterthought?

by Ed Schroeder



***“And—oh yes—be thankful.”***

These words, tacked on almost, as an afterthought, are a loose translation of the apostle Paul's words in Colossians 3:15—his well-known advice about new life in Christ.

Thankfulness an afterthought? For Christians, that can hardly be true. Or can it? Before we answer, let's examine some New Testament accents on **gratitude**, **thanksgiving**, and **being grateful**—all biblical words that are variations on one “loaded” biblical Greek word, **eucharistia** (meaning “good grace” —more about that later).

**Gratitude.** First off, let it be said that gratitude is not an attitude in the New Testament. Nor is it something we do because of the way we feel. It is, rather, an action, a public event. The gospel calls us to thankfulness regardless of how we feel about things, including our feelings about ourselves or about those who receive our gratitude.

So, for example, the New Testament Greek term **agape** is not a feeling or attitude of warm fuzzies toward someone. Instead **agape** is the word that describes concrete help given to someone in need, despite how we might feel about that person. The meaning of **agape** becomes clear when our Lord bids us to love our enemies, to do genuine good for those whom we clearly don't like. Even if people are out to "do us in," we are called to be Christ's agent and do good for them. So it isn't gratitude, but something else, that motivates people to "do love."

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