

We Thank You Lord

Thomas F. Heston

Abstract. This poem, essay, and song are about cultivating gratitude for our gifts, overcoming obstacles to serving others, and how a dying patient's courage reminds us that we can provide comfort and strength even in dire circumstances.

Healing Gifts

*In the still of the night, a melody rises,
Notes of comfort to soothe weary souls.
My hands are rough, but with care, I apply
Balms to the hurting, making spirits whole.*

*Mysterious the workings of mind and soul,
Questioning always as we grow old.
Yet with knowledge and skill, we ease our pain,
And music's sweet waves bring joy again.*

*A teacher shares their gifts of learning,
Lighting a spark of insight yearning.
And songs that speak of what's unsaid,
Lift the sick from their weary beds.*

*So let's give thanks for each talent and skill,
For gifts that cure in a friendly way.
We share our blessings as best we are able,
We'll scatter darkness; we'll bring brighter days.*

*With compassion and care, we dry up tears,
With love in our songs, we calm anxious fears.
Our gifts flourish when freely given,
They bring hope, joy, and reasons for living.*

*So use your talents well, whatever they be,
To serve one another, to help those in need.
Lift your soul, offer care and might,
Fill the world with your healing light.*

We Thank You Lord is about being thankful for the gifts we receive throughout our lives that help us give more to others. When I've faced someone with an unknown diagnosis, I have frequently focused excessively on my challenges (being overwhelmed by not knowing) instead of my talents, such as a solid knowledge of key medical principles. When excessive and prolonged, this overwhelming sense creates burnout from the ongoing high stress and negativity. Moral injury will present in the same manner (1). The significant effects can potentially negatively impact patient care (2,3). But we can overcome these obstacles by taking time to be thankful for the gifts we've been given. Gratitude helps improve psychological functioning (4), improve positivity (5), and strengthen social connections (6). Being thankful helps us maximize our ability to help others.

Several years ago, I was working at a small critical access hospital. A critical access hospital (CAH) is a small, rural hospital that provides essential healthcare services to underserved people. Late at night, a patient came to the ER who clearly had only a few hours to live. He knew, I knew, everyone knew. He did not want heroic measures taken; he just wanted to be with someone during his final hours. Yet he lived alone, estranged from family and friends. It seemed remarkably sad. So we admitted him for comfort care, and I listened him recap some of his life story. He was calm and at peace. After a short time, he passed with me at the bedside, holding his hand. I witnessed how his spirit remained strong to the very end. He didn't fear death but seemed to have a positive expectation that he would soon be in a better place (7).

Decades later, he continues to give me and others this gift of peace and strength of spirit. I think about him regularly. Now, whenever I am with a patient near irreversible

death, I remember that I am not helpless, I can still give them something of great and eternal value. I remember my remarkable patient, a spiritual giant. He still gives me the strength for me to be able to give everything I've got so that the patient right now in front of me has a spirit that stays strong to the very end.

We Thank You Lord (Figure 1) was written in the fall of 1985. At the time, we used ink fountain pens to compose as computer music at that time consisted of Fortran software programming. This is an enjoyable song and simple to play. It has several extended chords which I particularly enjoy, including 9ths, 11ths, and the closely related suspended 2nd. These extended notes extending the triad 1/3/5 base chord are traditionally thought to introduce suspense into the melody or a sense of unresolve. In this song, the suspended 2nd gives a sense of suspension, but the 7th, 9th, and 11th chords act more to enrich and deepen the harmony throughout the piece.

The lyrics focus on the gratitude we feel in our hearts. As a Christian, Christmas Day is deeply meaningful. It serves to regenerate my soul and spirit. Although I've spent many Christmases working in the hospital, in December, I still take some extra time to slow down and recalibrate. And what I feel when I recalibrate is the unconditional love given to me at birth by the Lord, but also given to me, despite my flaws and weaknesses, by my family. It's amazing how this recalibration will revive me and stay with me throughout the entire next year.

Music plays a significant role in helping strengthen the spirit and rejuvenate the soul (8). Throughout December and during Christmastime our favorite music includes classical music, traditional folk songs, and pop Christmas songs. They are all good. Include positive

music in your life throughout the entire year. Music will serve you well.

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FIGURE 1. The next several pages are the song "We Thank You Lord"

We Thank You Lord

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We Thank You Lord

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♩ = 96 C Dm7 G Dm11 Am7 Em7

Ba - by Je - sus born on this day that Peace filled the u - ni - verse
Bless - ed Ma - ry Mo - ther of all we sing prais - es for ____ you

Dm9 F sus2 C F sus2 C F sus2 C

7
for ____ ev - ery one. ____
in ____ our ____ songs. We thank You Lord for the love ____ in our hearts. Hol - y
Bless this

Dm7 G Dm11 Am7 Em7 Dm9 F sus2

14
Spir - it we are fill - ed with joy for all of the love You bring in - to our lives. We
day ____ our ____ Lord was born and pray for e - tern - al peace for ev - ery one. We

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the hymn 'We Thank You Lord'. It is written in 3/4 time with a tempo of 96 beats per minute. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-6) features a treble clef with a melody line and a bass clef with a chordal accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Ba - by Je - sus born on this day that Peace filled the u - ni - verse / Bless - ed Ma - ry Mo - ther of all we sing prais - es for ____ you'. The second system (measures 7-13) continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'for ____ ev - ery one. ____ / in ____ our ____ songs. We thank You Lord for the love ____ in our hearts. Hol - y / Bless this'. The third system (measures 14-20) concludes the piece. The lyrics are: 'Spir - it we are fill - ed with joy for all of the love You bring in - to our lives. We / day ____ our ____ Lord was born and pray for e - tern - al peace for ev - ery one. We'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, as well as chord symbols above the staff.

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21

C F sus2 C F sus2 C F sus2 C F sus2

thank You Lord for the love in our hearts for -

29

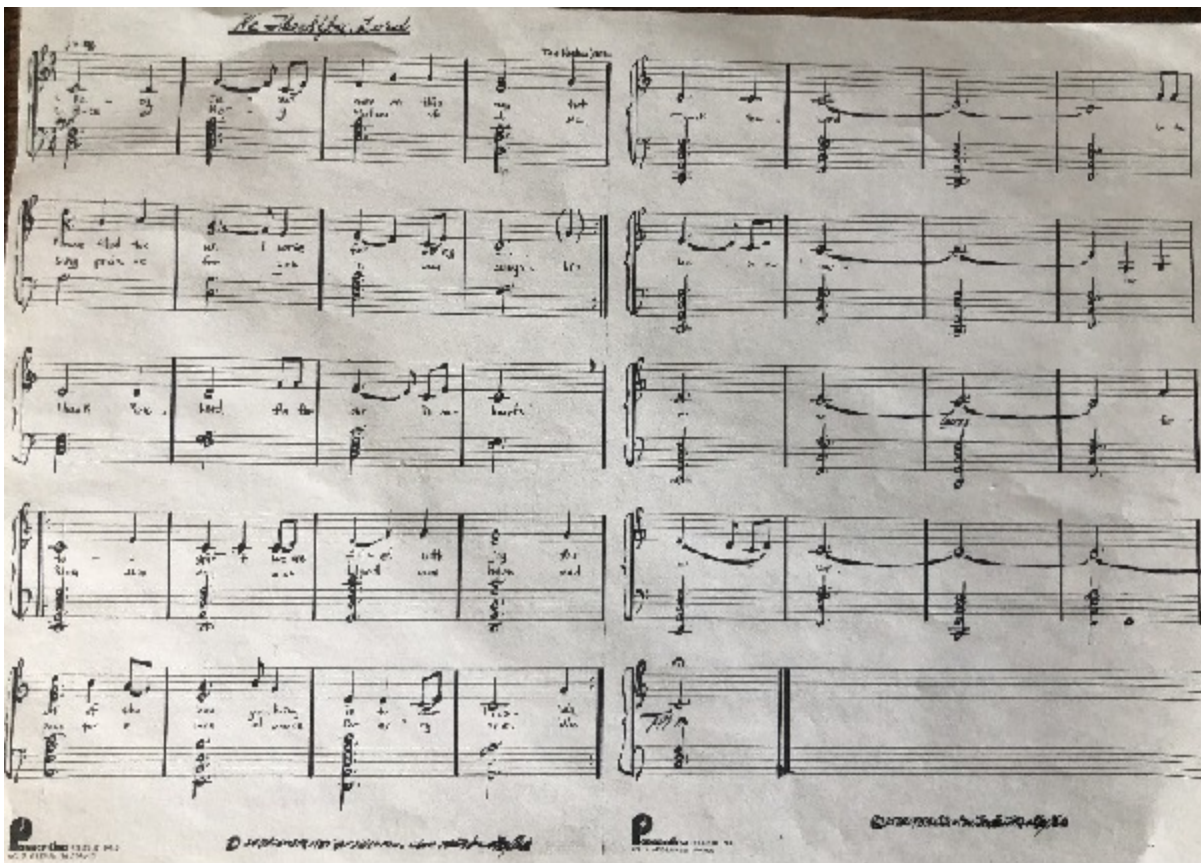
C F sus2 C F sus2 C F sus2 C F sus2 C

ev - er for ev - er.

Being thankful for the gifts we receive throughout our lives helps us give more to others. When I've faced someone with an unknown diagnosis, I have frequently focused excessively on my challenges (not knowing) instead of my gifts (a solid knowledge of medical principles). When excessive, this focus creates burnout, high stress, and negativity. By taking time to be thankful for the gifts we've been given, we can overcome these obstacles. Being thankful helps us maximize our ability to help others.

Several years ago I was working at a small critical access hospital. Late at night, a patient came to the ER who clearly had only a few hours left to live. He knew, I knew, everyone knew. He did not want heroic measures taken, he just wanted to be with someone during his final hours. Yet he lived alone, estranged from family and friends. It seemed remarkably sad. So we admitted him for comfort care, and I listened to him recap some of his life story. He was calm and at peace. After a short time, he passed with me at the bedside holding his hand. I witnessed how his spirit remained strong to the very end. He didn't fear death but rather seemed to have a positive expectancy that he would soon be in a better place.

Decades later, he continues to give me and others this gift of peace and strength of spirit. Now, whenever I am with a patient near irreversible death, I remember that I am not helpless, that I can still give them something of value. I remember my remarkable patient, and give everything I've got to ensure that the patient now in front of me has a spirit that stays strong to the very end.



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