

THANKSGIVING SERVICE | END OF WINTER | HOPE CHAPEL

SEEN, KNOWN, AND GRATEFUL

How Knowing God Sees You Produces a Thankful Life
Elise | Sunday 31 August 2026 | 11AM Gawler

Big Idea: *When we truly understand that God sees us - fully, individually, and with love - gratitude becomes our natural response. Thanksgiving is not just a service we attend. It is the overflow of a heart that knows it is known.*

Introduction

Elise opened with genuine warmth and honesty - this was her first time preaching, and she brought a message drawn directly from her own experience of learning to live a thankful life. She started not with a grand theological argument but with a simple observation: thankfulness changes you. She has seen it change her, and she wanted to share why.

Her starting point was the Thanksgiving Service itself - the practice of stopping to look back. Elise loves this rhythm because it forces us to pay attention. We move so fast that blessings slip by unnoticed. The discipline of giving thanks is the discipline of slowing down enough to see what God has actually been doing.

Psalm 100:4–5 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Thanksgiving is not just an emotional response - it is an entry point. We enter his presence through it. The posture of gratitude is the posture of someone who has remembered who God is and what he has done.

1 | God Sees You - Personally and Completely

The foundation of Elise's message was this: the God of the universe is not managing the cosmos from a distance and occasionally glancing our way. He sees each of us - individually, specifically, completely. Not just the best parts we present to the world, but all of it.

Psalm 139:1–4 *You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying*

down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

Elise sat with this passage carefully. God knows when you sit and when you rise. He is familiar with all your ways. Before a word is on your tongue, he knows it completely. This is not surveillance - it is intimacy. The God who holds the galaxies together is attentive to the particular details of your particular life.

Hagar - The God Who Sees

Elise drew on the story of Hagar in Genesis 16 - a woman who was not a main character, not a hero of the faith, not part of the covenant community. She was a servant, sent away, alone in the desert, at the end of her resources.

And God met her there. He spoke to her. He saw her specifically, in that specific place, in that specific pain.

Genesis 16:13 *She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'*

El Roi - the God who sees. Hagar named God from her own experience. And it is one of the most intimate names for God in all of Scripture. He is not the God of the great and powerful. He is the God who sees the overlooked, the forgotten, the one in the desert with no one else around.

Elise's point was direct: if God saw Hagar in the desert, he sees you. In your ordinary Tuesday. In the struggle nobody else knows about. In the season that feels invisible. He sees.

El Roi - the God who sees. He sees you. Not just the version of you that shows up on Sunday. All of you.

Reflect: *Is there a part of your life right now that feels unseen - by others or even by God? How does the story of Hagar speak to that place? What would it change if you genuinely believed God sees that part of you too?*

2 | Being Known Produces Gratitude

Elise made a beautiful connection: when we truly understand that we are seen and known by God - not despite our mess but in the middle of it - gratitude becomes the natural response. Not a duty, not a discipline first, but a response to love.

Think about the difference between doing something for a stranger and doing something for someone who knows you deeply. When someone who truly knows you - your history, your failures, your fears, your longings - chooses to love you and serve you anyway, the gratitude

that arises is completely different. It is deeper. It is more personal. It costs something to receive.

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

While we were still sinners. Not after we had improved. Not after we had sorted ourselves out. While we were still in our mess, fully seen, fully known - God moved toward us. That is the foundation of Christian gratitude. We are not grateful because life is easy. We are grateful because we have been loved at our worst.

Elise shared personally about a season in her own life where she had struggled to feel grateful - where circumstances were hard and thanksgiving felt hollow or forced. What shifted for her was not the circumstances changing but a fresh encounter with the truth that she was seen. When she stopped trying to be grateful and started sitting with the reality that God knew everything she was carrying and loved her anyway - thankfulness came naturally.

This is the order Elise was pointing to: being seen and known comes first. Gratitude flows from it. We do not work up gratitude and then feel known. We receive the knowledge that we are known - and gratitude overflows.

Reflect: *Has there been a season where thanksgiving felt forced or hollow for you? What was underneath that? And is there a way in which sitting with the truth 'God sees me, in all of this, and loves me' could unlock what the discipline alone could not?*

3 | A Thankful Life Is a Testimony

Elise's third point moved outward - from the personal to the communal. A life shaped by gratitude is not just good for the person living it. It is a witness.

In a culture saturated with complaint, anxiety, comparison, and scarcity thinking, a person who lives with genuine, grounded thankfulness stands out. Not as someone who is naive or sheltered from difficulty, but as someone who has found a foundation that holds even when circumstances don't.

Psalms 34:1-3 *I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.*

David wrote Psalm 34 when he was in a desperate situation - pretending to be mad in front of a foreign king to save his life. And yet: I will extol the Lord at all times. His praise will always be on my lips. This is not written from a comfortable place. It is written from the mud -

and it becomes a testimony that draws others in. 'Let the afflicted hear and rejoice.' The testimony is for the afflicted, not the comfortable.

Elise observed that when we share what God has done - specifically, honestly, without packaging it too neatly - it gives permission to others to look for what God has been doing in their own lives. Thanksgiving is contagious. A community of genuinely thankful people creates an atmosphere where it becomes easier for everyone to see God's hand.

Your gratitude is not just for you. It is a testimony that the afflicted around you can hear and be drawn into.

Elise closed this point with a practical challenge: share your thanksgiving out loud, to someone, this week. Not as a performance, not as a highlight reel - but honestly. Name what God has done. Let someone hear it. Testimony builds faith - in the person speaking it and in everyone who hears.

Reflect: *Who could you share your thanksgiving with this week - honestly, specifically, without packaging it too neatly? And is there someone in your life who needs to hear what God has done for you, because they are in the middle of something similar?*

Conclusion - You Are Seen

Elise closed simply and personally. The God who made you knows you. He saw Hagar in the desert. He sees you in whatever desert you are currently walking through. And when that truth lands - when it moves from information to revelation - gratitude is not something you have to manufacture. It overflows.

This Thanksgiving Service is not just a quarterly rhythm. It is an invitation to stop and remember. You have been seen. You have been loved. You have been carried through another winter. And the God who brought you through it is the same God who goes ahead of you into spring.

El Roi - the God who sees.
He sees you. Fully. In all of it. And he loves you.
Let that be the ground your gratitude grows from.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

Use these on your own during the week, or with your LifeGroup.

1. Psalm 139 says God knows when you sit and when you rise, and is familiar with all your ways. Does that feel comforting or confronting to you? Why? What does it tell you about the kind of God you are in relationship with?
2. Hagar named God El Roi - the God who sees - from her own experience of being seen in the desert. What name for God comes out of your own experience? When have you personally encountered him in a way that gave you a new name for who he is?
3. Elise said the order matters: being seen and known comes first, gratitude flows from it. Have you ever tried to manufacture gratitude without first sitting with the truth that you are known and loved? What was the difference?
4. Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners - fully seen, fully known, and loved anyway. Is there a part of yourself that you find it hardest to believe God sees and loves? What would it mean to bring that specific part to him?
5. Elise said a genuinely thankful life is a testimony - that the afflicted hear and rejoice. Who in your life is in a hard season right now who might need to hear what God has done for you? What would you say?
6. What is the one specific thing you are most thankful for from this winter? Name it - not vaguely, but specifically. And who could you tell this week?

Key Scriptures This Week

- Psalm 100:4–5 - Enter his gates with thanksgiving; the Lord is good
- Psalm 139:1–4 - You have searched me and known me; familiar with all my ways
- Genesis 16:13 - El Roi - the God who sees me
- Romans 5:8 - While we were still sinners, Christ died for us
- Psalm 34:1–3 - I will extol the Lord at all times; let the afflicted hear and rejoice