Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) said: "The one who does not thank people does not thank Allah." (Sunan Abi Dawood #4811)

Thanking people is indirectly thanking Allah Ta'ala. It signifies our acknowledgement and appreciation of the bounties of Allah Ta'ala. If we fail to thank the people we see and meet, how will we ever become grateful to Allah Ta'ala, who we cannot see in this world. Thanking people is a stepping stone to becoming a grateful servant of Allah Ta'ala.