



Thanksgiving After Thanksgiving
Psalm 95

The Church at Canyon Creek, Austin, Texas
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THANKSGIVING AFTER THANKSGIVING
Psalm 95

I hope you had a great week celebrating Thanksgiving; a week of family, football, and turkey. But today, the turkey is gone and there's no more pumpkin pie. And tomorrow is Monday. Back to work, back to school. You've got to get up early in the morning, face traffic, and do homework. You've got a house to clean and laundry to wash. All you can do is sigh deeply and get to work.

But this week I saw something that should change our perspective. Of course, it was on Facebook. Here's something to think about the week after Thanksgiving.

1. Early wake-ups = children to love
2. House to clean = a safe place to live
3. Laundry = clothes to wear
4. Dishes to wash = food to eat
5. Crumbs under the table = family meals
6. Grocery shopping = money to provide for us
7. Toilets to clean = indoor plumbing
8. Lots of noise = people in my life
9. Endless questions about homework = my kids' brains are growing
10. Sore and tired in bed = I'm still alive!

This morning, I want to talk about "thanksgiving after thanksgiving." I want to talk about living with gratitude to God every day of the week and every week of the year. So, take your Bibles and go to Psalm 95. This is a grand psalm of worship, and I want to use it as a framework for thanksgiving and to highlight some things for which we should be grateful and give thanks.

¹O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. ²Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. ³For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods, ⁴in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. ⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. ⁶Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. ⁷For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness. ⁹When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. ¹⁰For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. ¹¹Therefore, I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest." (Psalm 95:1-11, NAS).

GIVE THANKS FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

Every day, we should *give thanks for the grace of God*. “O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms ... Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psalm 95:1-2, 6, NAS).

Three times the composer says “come.” This is a corporate call to worship and a personal invitation to come before God. But why “come” into His presence? Aren’t we always in His presence? Yes, but there is a special sense in which we come into God’s presence when we gather to worship.

And look at the verbs of worship. “Sing ... shout ... come ... worship ... bow down ... kneel.” God is inviting us into His presence and giving us permission to unleash our emotions, emotions that come from being made in the image of God and emotions that express how we feel about God. Worship is the heart of the creation speaking to the heart of the Creator. Worship should be expressive. Charles Spurgeon referred to worship as “holy enthusiasm.”¹ At times worship is loud and exuberant, and at other times it is quiet and reverent. Encountering the presence of God can move us shout or it can leave us speechless. We see this mix of praise in Leviticus 9. When the people saw the glory of the God, the Bible says “they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground” (Leviticus 9:24, NLT). And Psalm 2:11 says, “Worship the Lord with reverence, rejoice with trembling.”

Whether our worship is loud and exuberant or quiet and reverent, the stimulus is still the same. It is gratitude for the “rock of our salvation.” It is giving thanks for the grace of God.

Sin is the great barrier that separates us from God. But by His grace, God is willing to forgive us and to remove our sin. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12, NAS). But what did we deserve? Romans 6:23 says “the wages of sin is death.” We deserved death; that’s the penalty for sin. But Romans 6:23 goes on to say “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Hebrews 10:19 says, “We have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus.” Jesus makes it possible for us approach God. Only He can escort us into the presence of God. His crucifixion tore the veil of the Holy of Holies and permits us to enter in. The blood of Jesus washes away our sin, makes us clean, and makes us acceptable before God.

And that’s why we worship. That’s why we “come before His presence with thanksgiving.” With gratitude to “the rock of our salvation.” Remember, thanksgiving after Thanksgiving means giving thanks every day for the grace of God.

GIVE THANKS FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Every day, we should *give thanks for the sovereignty of God*. “For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psalm 95:3-6, NAS).

Our God is the Creator and the “great King” over the entire universe. Because God is sovereign and in control of everything that happens in the universe, He is also in control of everything that happens in my life and in yours. Think about it. He’s got the whole world in His hands and still has time to care about you.

As people of faith, we believe in the sovereignty of God. Yet, when tragedy strikes, there is a collision between our faith and our feelings. When life knocks the breath out of us, our faith says, “Yes, God is sovereign and in control.” But our feelings beg, “Lord, where are You, and what are You doing?” Tragedy puts theology to the test. It always does.²

Joni Eareckson Tada has been confined to a wheelchair for 51 years, becoming a paraplegic after a diving accident when she was a teenager. Today, she is going through her second round of breast cancer. She writes about suffering and the sovereignty of God with such credibility from her wheelchair. “Unless the Bible is wrong, *nothing* happens outside of God’s decree. Nothing good, nothing bad, nothing pleasant, nothing tragic. (Not in my life), not in yours. We may not fathom God’s reasons, we may not agree with his thinking, we may love him for it, we may hate him for it. But in simple language, God runs the world.”³

Perhaps the definitive verse on the sovereignty of God is Psalm 115:3. “God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.” He is sovereign and in control of everything that happens in the universe, and He is also in control of everything that happens in my life and in yours.

So, what does the sovereignty of God mean when circumstances are tragic or unbearable? What do we do then? We “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIV). We trust, because “we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, NAS).

Instead of resenting what He withholds, we must trust WHO when we do not understand WHY. When we lose a job, we give thanks trusting that God causes all things to work for our good. When we get sick, we give thanks trusting that God causes all things to work for our good. When a door closes, when tragedy strikes, when the worse happens, we give thanks trusting that God causes all things to work for our good. We trust WHO when you do not understand WHY.

GIVE THANKS FOR THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Every day, we should *give thanks for the goodness of God*. “Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand” (Psalm 95:6-7, NAS). The Lord is our shepherd, and He takes responsibility to provide everything we need. We can trust Him to do that. Psalm 23 says, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” When we give thanks, we acknowledge our dependence on Him and our trust in Him to provide everything we need.

While explaining Christianity to the philosophers in Athens, Paul reminded them that it is God who “gives life and breath to everything,” that “he satisfies every need,” and that “in him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:25, 28, NLT). Every breath we take comes from God. Our very existence comes from God. Our enjoyment of life comes from God. “Every good and perfect gift

is from above, coming down from the Father” (James 1:17, NIV). Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). We may pick up a loaf of bread from the grocery store and not think much about it, but we are dependent on God every day of our lives.

When we give thanks, it is an acknowledgement of our dependence on the provision of God, and it is gratitude for the goodness of God.

A WARNING

Psalms 95 also has a warning. “Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness” (Psalm 95:7-8, NAS). And then God interrupts the psalmist and speaks for Himself. “When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. Therefore, I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest” (Psalm 95:8-11, NAS).

Meribah and Massah are references to a time when Israel complained to God.⁴ The people rejoiced when God led them out of slavery in Egypt. But when they were in the middle of the desert with no water to drink, instead of humbly asking God to provide, they complained. They even turned on Moses and were about to stone him. So the Lord told Moses to go to the rock of Horeb and strike the rock with his staff and water would flow out for the people to drink. And the miracle happened just as He promised. But Moses named that place Meribah and Massah, meaning quarrel and test, because the people had said, “Is the Lord with us or not?” (Exodus 17:7).

When God did not do what they expected, the people complained. And because they did, an entire generation wandered through the desert and died in the desert and never made it to the Promised Land.

“Do not harden your hearts.”

When you’re about to complain about what you do not have, STOP! Count your blessings, be content with what you do have, and thank God.

Paul learned this lesson from life experience. He said, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12-13).

When you’re about to complain about what you do not have, stop. Count your blessings, be content with what you do have, and thank God.

GIVE THANKS AND CELEBRATE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD

One of the choral psalms is Psalm 136. This psalm was sung or recited 3,000 years ago as a response to God’s goodness. And this morning, I want us to reenact it.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

Give thanks to the God of gods.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who alone does great wonders.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who made the heavens.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who made the sun to govern the day.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

And the moon and stars to govern the night.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who brought Israel out from Egypt.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who divided the Red Sea.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who led His people through the desert.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To Him who gave Israel her inheritance.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To the one who remembered us in our low estate.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

To the one who freed us from our enemies.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

And who gives food to every living creature.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

[and if I may add to Psalm 136]

Oh, give thanks for the grace of God that saved me from my sins.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

Oh, give thanks for the sovereignty of God that turns the worst into good.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

Oh, give thanks for the goodness of God that provides everything I need.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.
FOR HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.

NOTES

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Volume 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, no date), page 164.

² Berkouwer states that “raw reality assaults” our theology. From Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1988), page 32.

³ Joni Eareckson Tada and Steven Estes, *When God Weeps* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), page 76.

⁴ See Exodus 17:1-7.