

“Living with Thanksgiving”

Psalm 100:1-5

As we open God’s Word today, we are going to look closely at a passage of Scripture that will be familiar to many of you. At our recent Thanksgiving Night of Worship I spoke from this same text. I can’t think of a better passage of Scripture that so clearly addresses what we have been studying as a church and what we have all been celebrating this past week. As we know, we have celebrated a holiday known as Thanksgiving. For us it is a day that is set aside to give thanks to God for His grace and provisions in our life. The day for many is marked by lots of food, the gathering of friends and family, football, and perhaps even shopping. But, as Christians it is a clear reminder to us that we are to be a thankful people. God has certainly done many things that are worthy of thanksgiving. I’m thankful that we live in a country where such a day is observed and valued. But I remind you this morning that for the Christian, thanksgiving is not something to be done only on a holiday. Thanksgiving isn’t just one day a year. Thanksgiving, for the believer, is something that is to be done every day. It is to be a way of life for the believer. It causes me to examine my own life and ask, “Am I truly a grateful person?” How about you? Are you truly a thankful person? Some may say, “Well, of course, Pastor Matthew, I’m a very thankful person.” And, in your heart that may be true. That may be your attitude. But today in Scripture, I want us to see God’s signs of true thanksgiving. We see clearly in God’s Word that thanksgiving is more than just an attitude or state of mind. Thanksgiving is an action.

Read Text

I believe wholeheartedly that thanksgiving should be the lifestyle of every believer. All throughout God’s Word we are encouraged to be a thankful people. In fact, over 40 of the Psalms start out by exhorting us to give thanks to the Lord. But when you look throughout the whole Bible there are over 80 passages where we are directly encouraged and, in some cases, even commanded to give thanks to the Lord. Consider these Scriptures:

1 Chronicles 16:8, 34, “Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples...Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

Psalm 97:12, “Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name.”

Psalm 106:1, “Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Make no mistake about it, God calls us to be a thankful, grateful people. We see this clearly in our text this morning. In fact, the subtitle of this chapter is “A Psalm for Thanksgiving.” What does God want us to know about thanksgiving? Who are we to give thanks to? How should we

apply this to our lives? Why should we give thanks? What demonstrates thanksgiving to Him? All these questions and more are answered in this text. I want you to consider four keys to Living with Thanksgiving:

I. Our Relationship to God (vs. 3) – This answers, “Who should we thank?”

Who should we thank and praise? The answer is clearly the Lord. Please understand that we can be thankful and should be thankful for many people in our lives. Each of us likely have people in our lives who have blessed us and impacted our lives for good. However, nobody has done for us what the Lord has done for us. Nobody, no matter how great and how kind, deserves our thanks and our praise like the Lord. He stands out above them all. Now, there is a key word found in verse 3 that is very important. It says, “Know that the Lord Himself is...” This word “know” means “to know by experience.” It means that from first-hand experience we can know and relate to the person that is being described. From there we see that the Psalmist is saying that we can personally know the Lord by experience and can know these things about Him. There are three words that describe Who He is and how He relates to us:

He is God. Jesus is God. This is important for us to understand. When Jesus came to this earth, He didn’t become God. He has always been God. We sometimes lose sight of this when we consider His humanity. Yes, Jesus was 100% man who experienced hunger, pain, grief, weariness, etc., but He was also 100% God. As man He hungered after He fasted in the wilderness for 40 days, but as God He broke the loaves and fishes and fed over 5,000. As man He grieved as He wept at Lazarus’ tomb, but as God He said, “Lazarus, come forth” and instantly Lazarus was raised back to life. As man He was thirsty and asked for a drink of water at the Samaritan well, but as God He offered living water that would spring up from within that would never run dry. As man He was crucified on an old rugged cross, but as God He laid down His life for the sins of the world. As man the false accusers thought they had won because He was no more, but as God the grave could not keep Him because He rose again from the grave. The Lord is God, which is to say that He alone is the only One True God. There is none besides Him. There is none like Him.

He is our Maker. None of us would exist, none would have life apart from Him. We couldn’t make ourselves and haven’t made ourselves. He made us. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Our existence is both derived by Him and is dependent upon Him. Therefore, we are not our own but His. He has a right to us because we came from Him. **Colossians 1:15-16** explains, “He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.” But, there is more than just the fact that He has made us. It also means that He has made us to be His people. Warren Wiersbe explains, “The phrase ‘made us’ means much more than ‘He created us,’ for He also created the nations that do not know Him. It means God constituted us as a nation, His chosen people.” This is what Peter spoke of in **1 Peter 2:9-10** saying, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received

mercy, but now you have received mercy.” If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been twice made. You were made and formed when you were created, but you were also made a part of God’s family through salvation.

He is our Shepherd. This speaks of the reality that He is not only a shepherd who owns the sheep, but He is the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. Time will not allow me to expound on this picture, but Psalm 23 is an excellent commentary on the Lord as our Shepherd. It is important for us to know that He is not a distant deity or a harsh dictator. It is important for us to understand that He is a gentle Shepherd who cares for us, tends to us, provides for us, leads us, looks out for us, ministers to us, and ultimately lays down His life for us.

II. Our Response to God (vs. 1-2, 4) – This answers, “How should we thank the Lord?”

What is an appropriate response to God? What is an appropriate response to give to the One who is God and is sovereign over all? What is an appropriate response for the One who created us and graciously made us a part of His family? What is an appropriate response to the One Who cares for us as a gracious, gentle, and generous Shepherd? This passage exhorts us to respond in five ways. Please understand two key foundational truths before you seek to apply these. First, understand that this list isn’t a pick-your-preference. These words are commands that build upon one another, so we must be faithful to do them all. Second, we must understand faith is the foundation to each of these. God is not saying, “If you do this, you will be right with Me.” The only way that we can be in a right relationship with God is through faith, but truth faith in Him will lead us to good works. **Ephesians 2:8-10**, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” How should we respond to God?

A. Shout Joyfully

We understand what it means to shout. We shout when we get excited. We shout when we experience great victory. Most of us don’t have a problem with shouting. We naturally do this at exciting moments. ****ILL:** Sometimes the most reserved people can get riled up at a sporting event. Why? Because they get excited and they naturally shout. However, God specifically says that He wants us to express our thanksgiving through a joyful shout. Friend, when was the last time you were this excited and expressive about the things of the Lord? When was the last time you were so overwhelmed by God’s grace and victory that you couldn’t help yourself? I have known many who have said, “But Pastor, aren’t we supposed to be reverent in our worship?” It is true that in worship there should be times of silence and reflection. However, God clearly says that there should also be times of shouting. He even commands it. **Psalm 66:1, 3** declares, “Shout joyfully to God, all the earth...Say to God, ‘How awesome are Your works! Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You.’ ” Listen to the command of **Psalm 47:1, 5**, “O clap your hands, all peoples; Shout to God with the voice of joy...God has ascended with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.” The main point of this command is that we are to make a loud noise of exclamation and

praise. Don't hide it. Don't silence it. Don't be ashamed of it. Shout aloud the praises of God. It is interesting to note here that the same word for "shout" here was also used when the Israelites stood at the walls of Jericho as they "shouted with a great shout" (Josh 6:20) and the walls of the city fell flat. Shouting aloud requires us to be confident in the Lord and to be concerned only about pleasing Him.

B. Serve Gladly

Shouting isn't the only way we live with thanksgiving. A second way we express our thanksgiving is through serving the Lord. There is no greater form of thanksgiving to the Lord than to follow His example. Jesus said in **Mark 10:42b-45**, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Did you hear that? Jesus didn't come to this earth for His own purpose or position. Jesus didn't come here to get what He deserves. He came to take the form and the role of a servant. He wasn't concerned about His position or His rights. He was concerned about others. We must be the same. We are never more like Jesus than when we selflessly give of ourselves for the glory of God and the good of others. Do you know where Jesus would be right now if He were at Crosslink Community Church? He would be serving in the nursery. He would be ministering to the children. He would be cleaning the facility. He would be meeting the guests where they are. He would be serving. Those who live a life of gratitude serve and do so gladly. They don't serve because they are manipulated to do so. They don't serve because they feel like they owe their dues. They serve with a grateful heart because they understand what the Lord has done for them. This reminds me of the time when Jesus was in the city of Bethany and was reclining at the table with His disciples when, all of a sudden, a woman came to him with an alabaster box of precious perfume. She was so moved in the moment that she broke the vessel and anointed the feet of Jesus with the expensive perfume. The selfless act of service got the attention of everyone in the room and the sweet smell of her service impacted everyone. She had served to bless the Lord. Suddenly the disciples began to argue about the act and criticize what had been done. Do you remember what Jesus said? In **Mark 14:6** He said, "Let her alone...she has done a good deed to Me." In other words, she has served Me. Did you know that we can still serve the Lord today? **Matthew 25:34-46 (SHOW TEXT)**. What is the clear distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous? Their service to the Lord. The unrighteous live their lives for themselves and what they can get out of it. They are just like the world, mere consumers. But, the righteous live their lives for the glory of the Lord and the good of others. They are like the Lord, so they choose to humble themselves and serve.

C. Sing Joyfully

When we look to God and see what He has done for us, it makes us want to sing. I love the way David said it in **Psalms 40:2-3a**, "He brought me up out of the pit of destruction,

out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock, making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.” Singing is associated with joy and devotion. For this reason, most schools have developed a “fight song” that they sing as their anthem. Even nations have a national anthem for which the people express their appreciation and devotion. Additionally, people write love songs to express feelings and commitment. But, I remind you that the idea of singing songs didn’t start in Nashville or in Hollywood or in Memphis or on the battlefields or on college campuses. God created music and gave singing as a means of expressing the joy that we have in our hearts for Him. God’s Word has much to say about singing.

Psalm 33:1-3, “Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones; praise is becoming to the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.” Singing is appropriate for those who have been redeemed.

Proverbs 29:6, “By transgression an evil man is ensnared, but the righteous sings and rejoices.” Do you see the contrast? A wicked man is entrapped by sin. However, the righteous man is freed and delivered as evidenced in his singing. Simply put, he can sing because he is freed.

Colossians 3:16, “Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” As we sing, we are singing to the Lord, but our singing also impacts one another as we encourage, strengthen, and instruct one another through song.

Ephesians 5:19, We are to be “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.” What is the key to effectively singing to the Lord? It isn’t in our wonderful tones or amazing ability. It is that our hearts are in tune with the Lord. ****ILL**: Every singer knows that the “melody” are the main notes of the song. It is the foundation that everything else is based upon. If we are singing with a sincere heart to the Lord, our heart will make melody, be on the same page, with the Lord.

D. Seek the Lord Corporately

Please don’t let the word “corporately” throw you off. The word literally means, “united, combined as one, or a united group of persons.” The Psalmist says, “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.” To understand this, we have to grasp what this meant in that culture. The verbiage that the Psalmist used was easily understood by the early readers. They recognized that he was speaking of how they worshipped corporately and publicly at the temple. The Israelites would make their long journey to get to the temple to worship God. They would get there to quickly learn that they couldn’t just enter from every angle they desired. There was only one gate through which they could enter to worship. This one Entrance Gate served as a picture that God would only make one way through which people could come to Him. As the Israelites would enter that gate, they

would have hearts filled with gratitude that Jehovah God had chosen them and would one day send His Messiah to save them. Once they entered the gate, they would then be together in the outer courts of the temple. Now remember, nobody could go into the Holy of Holies except the high priest, but everyone who came to offer sacrifices and worship would do so in the outer courts. Do you see the picture? We are told to enter His gates with thanksgiving. When we consider that God has made a way for us to know Him, a way for us to have relationship with Him and to experience abundant and eternal life, how can we not be thankful? But, when we come through the Entrance Gate (through Jesus) we can't help but to come together to offer a sacrifice of praise. Just as the Old Testament saints would joint together for the purpose of offering sacrifices, we corporately offer praises as a sacrifice to Him. **Hebrews 13:15** says it perfectly, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

E. Show Gratitude Continuously

It may sound redundant, but we need to hear it. It isn't enough to have a grateful heart and an ambition to praise. God specifically commands, "Give thanks to His name." The context of the Hebrew command here is that we are to do this continuously. This is why we need the command. It's easy to give thanks when all is good. ****ILL:** When I was a kid, I would often ask to pray for the food. Apparently, I would only thank the Lord for the food that I liked and wanted. It's easy to give thanks for the things that I like and the things that I want. But, what about the things that I didn't want? What about the circumstances and situations that I can't change? What about the hardships that I face? What do I do then? You give thanks. **1 Thessalonians 5:18**, "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

III. Our Reason for Thanksgiving (vs. 5) – This answers, "Why should we thank the Lord?"

As the Psalmist closes the Psalm, he brings us to a conclusion. He summarizes why we should give thanks to the Lord. He tells us the three specific reasons. These reasons never change. The reasons are true when life is good and when life is hard. These reasons are constant when I feel like it and when I don't. It doesn't matter what season or situation you find yourself in. When we know these things to be true, then we have all the reason we need to be thankful. The reason they are constant is because they are founded in Jesus Who never changes. Listen to how He is described.

The Lord is good. This is the sum total of Who He is and what He is like. He is good. **Psalm 34:8a** declares, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." He is good. In fact, there is none good but Him. There is no sin found in Him. He does no wrong and, as a result, all of His ways are good. **Acts 10:38** summarizes, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." He is good. He went about doing nothing but

good, and everything He gives is for our good. **Psalm 85:12a**, “Indeed the Lord will give what is good.”

His mercy is everlasting. To say that His mercy is everlasting means that it is a fountain that never runs dry. We know that He is merciful. This means that He is kind and gracious to us. He does not give us what we deserve, but instead offers us what we could never earn. **Psalm 86:15** declares, “But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.” This describes His mercy towards us, but listen further. **Lamentations 3:22-23** explains, “The LORD’S lovingkindnesses (mercies) indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” Aren’t you thankful for that! His mercies never end. When we doubt Him like Abraham, His mercies are still everlasting. When we disobey Him like Jonah, His mercies are still everlasting. Even when we deny Him like Peter, His mercies are everlasting. His mercies never cease! Hallelujah!

He is faithful. We understand the word “faithful.” In our culture we might use the word to describe someone who is “loyal and trustworthy.” But the Biblical word meant far more than that. In fact, the original word in the Hebrew meant “truth that is reliable and steady.” There are fashions and fads that will appeal to us for a season, but in time they will change. There are philosophies and ideas of every culture and generation, but much of it is eventually changed because it isn’t always true or reliable. Even with people, many of the people who you think will always be there will flee in circumstance and adversity. They aren’t reliable. God is greater than any fashion, philosophy, idea, and any other person. He is God. He is true and reliable. In fact, the same word used here to describe God’s faithfulness was used in **Exodus 17:12** to describe Moses’ hands staying steady in the face of the battle. The point is that God is Truth and therefore He is steady and reliable. He is faithful. **Wiersbe** summarized it well, “From generation to generation the Lord can be trusted.”

IV. Our Responsibility of Thanksgiving (vs. 1b) – This answers, “What are we to do with our thanksgiving?”

I want us to end here with this final thought. What is the purpose of our thanksgiving? It is simply to give God the praise that He is worthy of. But, there is a second purpose as well. We are to openly give God thanks so that we might make Him known. We aren’t called to be silent or shy about our thanksgiving. We see this in verse 1, where the Psalmist says, “Shout joyfully to the Lord, ALL THE EARTH.” Please understand, when the Psalmist says this, he is not referring to the literal earth suddenly having a mouth and shouting praise to God. He is referring to the peoples of the earth. **Wiersbe**, “The psalmist calls for all the nations of the earth to praise Him. This is a recurring theme in the ‘royal psalms’ for it was Israel’s responsibility to introduce the Gentiles to the true and living God.” **Matthew Henry**, “When all nations shall be discipled, and the Gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to.”

Here is the point. How will the nations of the earth shout joyfully to the Lord if they haven’t first been told the Good News about the Lord? In fact, when you combine Psalm 96-100 they are better known as the “royal psalms”. They paint to us two powerful pictures: 1) That God is

worthy of all praise and 2) All the nations of the earth are called to praise Him (Psalm 96:3; 97:6; 98:2-3; 99:3).

Brothers and sisters, let's remember that Thanksgiving is more than an attitude, a state of mind, and much more than a holiday. For the believer it is a way of life where, by deliberate actions of shouting, singing, serving, seeking Him, and showing gratitude, we give Him thanks. The purpose of it all is that we will give Him praise and make Him known.