

## Reasons to Give Thanks

Psalm 103:1-22

Two men were walking through a field one day when they noticed an enraged bull. The bull saw the two men about the same time and began to charge at them. The two men began to frantically run toward the nearest fence as fast as they could. Noticing that they weren't going to make it before the bull reached them the one man told the other to offer up a prayer. He said he had never prayed in public before, but the first man insisted he needed to pray something quickly. So the second man said he would pray the only prayer he ever heard his Dad pray, "Lord, for what we are about to receive, we give Thee thanks."

One Thanksgiving season a family was seated around their table, looking at the annual holiday bird. From the oldest to the youngest, they were to express their praise. When they came to the 5-year-old in the family, he began by looking at the turkey and expressing his thanks to the turkey, saying although he had not tasted it he knew it would be good. After that rather novel expression of thanksgiving, he began with a more predictable line of credits, thanking his mother for cooking the turkey and his father for buying the turkey. But then he went beyond that. He joined together a whole hidden multitude of benefactors, linking them with the turkey that was now before them on the platter.

He thanked the grocery store checker who checked out the turkey and the grocery store people who put it on the shelf. He thanked the farmer who made it fat and the man who made the feed and included those who brought the turkey to the store. He traced the turkey all the way from its origin to his plate. And then at the end asked if he had left anyone out. His 2-year-old brother, embarrassed by all those proceedings, said, "God."

The 5-year old said he was about to get to Him.

I suppose that's the question we ought to ask ourselves when it comes to Thanksgiving Day or any day. Are we going to get to Him this Thanksgiving?

If we were to go around the room what would we pause and give thanks for? In the spirit of the week preceding Thanksgiving what are you thankful for today?

Our passage today is an expression of thanksgiving and praise. I invite you to turn with me to what is simply titled a Psalm of David. It's found of course in the Old Testament – Psalm 103.

During the 30 year war the victory of Leipzig was the first major battle of the Protestant armies led by Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden. Following this victory he had this Psalm read after entering Augsburg.

It is a psalm that remembers the tender mercies of God toward His people. It looks beyond the present into eternity where the fulfillment of these blessings will be fully revealed and experienced.

I want you to notice also as we go through this Psalm that something is strikingly absent. There are no requests, only praise, only thanksgiving. Other Psalms of praise include a cry of deliverance from some enemy or experience that is difficult and when that occurs thanksgiving to God is offered. This is a psalm that only offers thanks to God. A note in my study Bible says it is "a Psalm of unmixed praise."

I wonder how many of my prayers lack any mention of thanksgiving for who God is and what He has done?

I wonder how long my prayers would be if it was filtered with only expressions of gratitude to God about His character and mighty acts?

I don't remember who said it but it is probably quite accurate. They noted that there is nothing we tend to forget more than thanks. It was a point of criticism, even condemnation for the futile thinking of the unbeliever when Paul said in his letter to the church in Rome that "although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him." (Romans 1:21) A lack of thanksgiving to God on their part led them to futile thinking and darkened foolish hearts.

This is a great reminder of what our time of praise and thanksgiving should look like. It is a call to

personal and corporate thanksgiving. We begin by seeing that David's thanksgiving is complete.

## I. THANKSGIVING THAT IS COMPLETE – vs. 1-6

In verse 1 his praise is internal.

### A. His Thanksgiving Is Internal – v. 1

He begins with a declaration.

#### 1. The declaration surrounding his thanksgiving – v. 1a

The verse begins with either the word “bless” or “praise” depending on if you are using the KJV or the NIV. Both convey the same idea of giving to the Lord what He deserves, which is our thanksgiving, our praise, our worship.

Genuine praise always begins with a humble heart. This is an acknowledgement, an admission on the part of David recognizing that everything he has is due entirely because of God's provision and promise.

God is Jehovah-Jireh the great provider. If we don't have a humble heart recognizing God for who He is and what He has done for us, our thanksgiving is just a bunch of empty platitudes. I believe we can be quite perceptive and discerning to know the difference between someone whose thanksgiving empty clichés versus someone whose thanksgiving stems from a genuine expression.

David begins with recognition of just who it is that deserves his praise – “Praise the Lord.”

There are 22 verses in this Psalm. 11 times he uses the term “Lord”. David also makes direct reference to the using a personal pronoun.

There is no question in the mind of the psalmist just who His thanksgiving is directed to.

Our doxology is such an admission. We'll end our service with that same declaration and acknowledgement.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Him all creatures here below.

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The beings who are gathered around the throne of God in John's vision of Revelation 4 begin with the same acknowledgment. God is worthy of our thanksgiving. Like David, they declare God's worthiness of such praise.

Any praise and thanksgiving that is spoken by us should begin with the same declaration about the Lord that He is Lord – the Great Provider and that all praise begins with Him.

Let's remember that “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly light” so says James (1:17).

David knows who deserves thanksgiving and begins this Psalm with that declaration – it is to the Lord. How often do I launch into my laundry list of do this for me or do that for someone else and neglect the greatest reason to come to Him – to give Him thanks? And when I do how insignificant is it, how trivial on my part are my expressions of gratitude? Did I really wake up this morning and give thanks? Did I thank God for a hot shower and a good meal? Did I thank Him for a selection of clothes to wear? Did I thank Him for the gas to drive my car or for a church building where I come to worship and a church family to worship with? Did I thank God for who He is?

We need to declare that it is the Lord that our thanksgiving should be offered. When thanksgiving resonates internally from a humble heart we will see a depth that supports our thanksgiving and that's what we see from David.

#### 2. The depth supporting his thanksgiving – v. 1b

Everything within David is expressing his thanksgiving.

His mind, will, and emotion.

His body, soul, and spirit.

We are to let all that is within us praise the Lord.

Engage everything in thanks.

II Samuel 6:12-15, 20-22

The word “soul” is the conventional way that the Hebrew would express everything within them. It did not differentiate between flesh and spirit or between inner being versus outer being. It was a

way to describe his very self as a living, conscious, personal being. The heavens declare the glory of God, but all those inanimate objects have no ability to give the Lord thanks.

We can teach birds to sing and monkeys to do sign language but even if we could teach them to utter some word of thanks it would have no meaning, no depth because they don't understand and can't know the Creator as you and I can. They don't have the cognitive wherewithal to understand but we were created with the capacity, the ability to give the Lord thanks with meaning.

The depth of David's thanksgiving is evident as he praises the Lord with all his inmost being. We might put it this way – put your whole heart into it. His thanksgiving is internal. His thanksgiving is then inclusive.

## B. His Thanksgiving Is Inclusive – vs. 2-6

### 1. His request – v. 2

It's real simple. The request is this, "don't forget a single blessing of the Lord."

Why did Joshua order the 12 leaders of Israel to go back into the middle of the Jordan River and collect a stone they were to pile up on the bank? It was a reminder of all the Lord had done to bring them to the Promised Land. It was a reminder to give thanks that God always keeps His Word.

Stones help us to remember to be thankful. Psalm 145 reminds us to pass them from one generation to the next generation.

David then gives the reasons we should be thankful.

### 2. His reason – v. 2-6

#### a. God forgives sin

We could camp out there for a month of Sundays and talk about how God is able to forgive sin and why He forgives sin, when that takes place and how. Simply, be thankful that God forgives sin.

When we come to the place of knowing the depth of our depravity and the price that had to be paid for our sins to be forgiven then we will give thanks.

## Luke 7:36-50

A wealthy English merchant who lived on the European continent was satisfied with nothing but the best. This attitude extended even as far as the cars he owned. His pride and joy was a Rolls-Royce coupe that he had owned for years and that had given great service all that time. One day, while driving down a bumpy road, his car hit a deep pothole resulting in a broken rear axle.

The owner had the car shipped back to the Rolls plant in England and was surprised by the quick repair that was performed. He received no bill for the work and, knowing his warranty had run out, he had expected one. He waited for months and still no bill came. So he finally contacted with the company about the bill for his car repairs. Again the response from the factory was immediate. The reply said, "We have thoroughly searched our files and find no record of a Rolls-Royce axle ever breaking."

This is a case where the integrity and excellence of that company would not permit a flaw in workmanship or materials to be made known. The excellence of Christ does not permit our flaws to be made known to the Father. He accomplishes our forgiveness.

Now the word David uses here for sin is a strong one. It doesn't mean mistakes, it is all the wretchedness that characterizes the old sin nature, all the things Jesus died for. When we understand how dirty we are because of sin all of which has been forgiven, then we are better able to begin to offer thanks for His forgiveness.

#### b. God heals diseases

Some read this and conclude that there shouldn't be a single sick Christian.

No colds

No flu

No aches and pains

No cancer

No diabetes

No diseases

But we know that's not the case.

Isaiah 53:5 says that by His wounds we are healed. And certainly when we look closely at the life and ministry we see that healing people of their diseases was something that Jesus could do. So does this verse mean then that we should be healed of all sickness and diseases. Or does it mean that in the context talking about forgiveness of sin that the healing is spiritual? We do find in Revelation 21:4 that all pain and suffering, and death will be done away.

What I believe is that even though God is able to cure physically, it most certain does refer to spiritually. Iniquity is likened to disease both of which weakens and corrupts physically or spiritually but as I said, in the context of being forgiven, our moral and spiritual life are restored.

Noted psychiatrist and author Karl Menninger stated that "if he could convince the patients in his Psychiatric hospitals that their sins are forgiven, 75% could walk out the next day."

Certainly we should always give thanks for physical healing, but even if we aren't healed of some physical abnormality we are to give thanks especially for spiritual healing that comes through our faith in the Lord.

c. God redeems

But what does He redeem from? Notice the NIV uses the term "pit". The KJV perhaps provides a clearer understanding by using the term "destruction". Sin results in death. We see that in Romans 6:23 and Hebrews 2:18. When Christ died on the cross, His shed blood bought us out of the slave market of sin so that through faith the purchase agreement has been paid on our behalf. To redeem generally conveys the idea of rescue and protection. We have been rescued from destruction, a stay of execution from the King and nothing is

going to sever that protection. We read in Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from God's love.

In 1995 wide receiver Irving Fryar was given the most inspirational player by his team, the Miami Dolphins. He turned His back on a licentious and abusive lifestyle that left him considering suicide. He was saved and took the gospel to his church in Pompano, FL.

He would pound the pulpit telling the congregation that he knew he was lost, he knew he was driving the bus straight to hell, he knew he was taking a bunch of people with him.

He would continue by preaching that football gave him no peace, no joy, no love in his heart. It didn't get him off drugs or help him stop drinking and then he would say "But you know who did it?" "Jeeeeeeeeesus!"

Never forget that you have been forgiven by Jesus – give Him thanks.

Never forget that you have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus – give Him thanks.

Give thanks today because you have been redeemed by God.

Sing it with me: #516

Redeemed how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child, and forever I am.

Redeemed and so happy in Jesus,  
No language my rapture can tell;

I sing, for I cannot be silent:  
His love is the theme of my song.

Give the Lord a shout of thanks, you're redeemed.

d. God crowns with love and compassion  
These are the recurring themes both direct and indirect that runs throughout this Psalm. Without

these there is no forgiveness. Without these there is no redemption.

In Matthew 9:36 we see Jesus was moved with compassion because the crowd was like sheep wandering aimlessly without a shepherd to guide them.

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments we see the Lord moved with love and compassion. He was moved with compassion on Adam and Eve following their sin in the Garden and promised a Redeemer and forgiveness.

He was moved with compassion on Noah and his family and brought them safely through the flood. He was moved with compassion on the plight of Israel held captive in Egypt.

He was moved with compassion time after time throughout the book of Judges to restore Israel. He was moved with compassion, motivated by His great love to send Jesus to live among us that He might die for us.

His great love has prepared a place for us that we might forever be with Him never to be separated again.

Thank God that He is both compassionate and loving toward us. Without them we have no hope.

#### e. God satisfies with good things

We are reminded so vividly of this in Psalm 23 where the good shepherd knows the specific needs of His sheep and tenderly cares, provides and protects them. He has the best interest at heart for His people. The pieces of tapestry that we see are not the complete picture leaving us with an inaccurate view of God or His intentions, but know that even in the difficulties we encounter “all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” Rom. 8:28

He fills the things we need. There is inner contentment so that we desire nothing more or different because we are satisfied with Him and His provision.

Psalm 17:15 “I will be satisfied when I awake with His likeness.”

Psalm 84:11b “No good thing will He withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”

Contentment is the result of a truly thankful heart. A truly thankful heart results in contentment.

In the fifth century, a man named Arsenius determined to live a holy life. So he abandoned the comforts of Egyptian society to follow an austere lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need.

We live in a society flooded with goods and gadgets need to ponder the example of that desert dweller. A typical supermarket in the United States in 1976 stocked 9,000 items; today it carries 30,000. How many of them are absolutely essential?

God satisfies with good things.

#### f. God renews

There is then in that sense a restoration much like the renewal an eagle experiences following the molting process. The clock is not turned back so that you are younger, but you feel renewed, strengthened.

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:29-31

#### g. God works righteousness and justice for the oppressed

There are plenty of organizations whose purpose is to draw attention to the plight of the needy.

The impoverished

The orphaned

The malnourished



The widowed  
 The drug addict  
 Those bound in the slave trade and sex-trafficking  
 They raise a banner and a rally cry to call people to those with needs in some way to help.  
 Many go unnoticed  
 But God knows and works righteousness and justice for the oppressed. His is not a blind eye nor a deaf ear to the pleas of the oppressed.

David often called out in distress from those who sought to do him harm, but we always see God's deliverance and David's thanksgiving.

David considers his life and recognizes some things for which he is truly thankful. His thanksgiving is complete. It is also calculated.

## II. THANKSGIVING THAT IS CALCULATED – vs. 7-18

Something that we need to bear in mind is the infinite nature of God. He is beyond our ability to comprehend. His depth of His character is unfathomable. He is incomprehensible.

The story is told of an Indian tribe in the Pacific Northwest who commissioned one of its braves to visit the ocean and bring back the ocean to them. He embarked on his journey and finally reached the Pacific Ocean where he sat in awe of its vastness. It truly was beyond his comprehension. Before he left he filled a small jar with water and returned to his tribe. When he reached his village he handed them the jar of water and exclaimed to them that it was the ocean.

A famous Swedish explorer by the name of Nansen tried to measure the depth of the Arctic Ocean at one of its deepest parts. On the first day he lowered his rope all the way but did not reach the bottom. He wrote in his journal that the ocean was deeper than that.

On the next day he attached more rope but even then it did not reach the bottom. He wrote in his journal that the ocean was deeper than that.

For several more days he added more and more rope attempting to get to the bottom, but had to leave never being able to measure its depth. All he knew was that it was deeper than that.

The measure of God's nature is deeper than we will ever find out. We will never reach its depth or its limit. Something else of importance when it comes to the character of God for which we should give Him thanks is that His nature is unchanging.

### A. His Praise For God's Unchanging Character – vs. 7-12

It is out of His infinite riches that He displays His character. Notice how calculated David is in His thanksgiving of those attributes. He goes back in the archives of Israel's history to the time of Moses and recounts the many evidences of God's character shown them. Notice what they experienced.

1. God is compassionate and gracious – vs. 7-8a  
 In the wilderness God provided water to drink and manna to eat. Covered by the pillar of cloud by day they were protected from the burning sun. Covered by the pillar of fire by night they were protected from the plummeting temperatures experienced in the desert at night. Scripture tells us that during the 40 years of wandering, their sandals and clothes did not wear out.  
 Are you thankful today for His compassion and grace?

2. God is slow to anger – v. 8b  
 He does not give to us what we deserve, when we deserve it. He is long-suffering. It was a wick that was slow to burn. His patience with us means our salvation.

3. God is abounding in love – v. 8c

4. God is merciful – vs. 9-10

5. God is forgiving – vs. 11-12

### B. His Praise For God's Unchanging Compassion – vs. 13-18

1. God knows our weakness – vs. 13-16

2. God knows our worship – vs. 17-18

The great playwright William Shakespeare wrote:  
O Lord, that lends me life, lend me a heart replete  
with thankfulness.

III. THANKSGIVING THAT IS COLLECTIVE –  
vs. 19-22

A. God's Heavenly Servants Praise Him –  
vs. 19-21

B. God's Handiwork Praises Him – v. 22a

C. God's Humble Servant Praises Him – v. 22b

In 1923 a devastating earthquake rocked the country of Japan. It was recorded as the worst disaster in that region up to that time. A survey team from the Red Cross came and estimated that 300,000 people had perished from the earthquake, the ensuing fires that started from it and from widespread disease. Another 2.5 million people were homeless.

America stepped in by sending a ship filled with food, medical supplies, clothing and volunteer help. The Red Cross raised an additional \$10 million from donations by Americans. This nation saw their plight and stepped in to help. The Japanese people were grateful. They even put their appreciation in writing. Walter Kiernan, correspondent for the International News Service, recalls their words: "Japan will never forget!" But they did forget when almost 20 years later in 1941 they bombed the naval base at Pearl Harbor. They thought America would beg for mercy. They had forgotten past mercies.

But are they the only ones? Long ago the Lord said of Israel, "My people have forgotten me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32). God blessed them, but they forgot God!

Let us individually and collectively offer thanksgiving to God for who He is and what He has done. Let us not forget any of His benefits.

Join with me today and this week to "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name."

We really do have a lot to be thankful for, beginning with our salvation.