

THE JOY OF GIVING THANKS

Psalm 107

This Thursday is Thanksgiving Day. Or course, we all are to be thankful 365 days a year, but this is the one day of the year that some of us work at it a little harder. You may have heard me tell the story of a great example from the animal world of what it means to be thankful. It seems that a young couple bought a parrot, named him Freddy, and wanted to teach him how to say many things. They worked and worked with it, but the only thing Freddy would ever say was, “Let’s kiss”. And no matter how hard they tried, that’s all the parrot would say. Well, they got an idea of what might help. They decided to get a second parrot, a female, put it in the cage with Freddy, and hopefully little Freddy would try to impress her and learn

some of the words that she was sure to say to him.

So they got the new parrot and put her in the cage with Freddy, and the parrot began to say many new words to Freddy. But Freddy was not interested in learning any new words, and all he kept saying was, “Let’s kiss”. So they tried another parrot. This parrot was a singing parrot, and she began to sing songs to Freddy, trying to get him to sing along with her. But Freddy sure wasn’t interested in singing and he just continued to say over and over, “Let’s kiss”. So they got a third parrot, a brilliant parrot, and taught her how to say, “Let’s listen to the radio”, hoping to trick Freddy into picking up some new words. And they began to play a radio in Freddy’s room for hours at a time. But alas, all Freddy would say was, “Let’s kiss”. So they decided to go back to plan A. And they found the best looking parrot in the entire state, hoping that Freddy would somehow respond to

her. And when they put her in the cage the first thing she said was, “Let’s kiss”. Freddy’s owners were horrified. But Freddy started jumping up and down on his perch and cried out, “Thank you, thank you, Lord! My prayers have finally been answered”.

Over and over and over the theme of thanksgiving reoccurs in the Bible. When God delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage He established the Passover Feast as a time to remember and give thanks, and it is still observed by orthodox Jews until this day. The psalmist wrote “O Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 106:1). But the Holy Spirit didn’t inspire him to write it just once but a total of five times in four different psalms – the exact same words. And King David thought that thanksgiving was so important that he appointed specific people to offer thanks in the worship services of Israel lest for some

reason thanksgiving was overlooked (1 Chron. 16:41; 25:3).

But the greatest example of thanksgiving ever was our Lord Jesus Christ. Just think about this. John writes that through Jesus all things were made. All things. And yet Jesus stopped to give thanks to His Father for the five loaves and two fish, which He made, and with which He fed over 10,000 people. And when Jesus and His disciples partook of the first Lord’s Supper hours before He died, before He passed out the wine and the bread the Bible says that Jesus gave thanks. Can you imagine? Jesus was giving thanks for the symbols of His horrific, agonizing, hell-experiencing death on the cross. He was giving thanks because of what His death would do for all who would trust Him. Amazing, heavenly love!

Today we are going to study a page of Israel’s history for which they gave thanks. They had been captives in

Babylon for 70 years. But miraculously, after Babylon was conquered by Persia in 539 BC, an edict from the Persian governor Cyrus had freed them to return to their homeland. Many chose not to return, but many others did. And Psalm 107 is a recap of their struggles and how God delivered them out of them all. But it also has a great application for 21 century Christians. It is a graphic picture of how God delivers any sinner from his sin and from eternal punishment when they trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and are saved by His grace. And it is also a call from God to live our lives every day with an attitude of thanksgiving to Him for this great salvation.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 107:1. The psalmist begins by exhorting God's people, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercies endure forever". Now, the word "mercy" means God's

steadfast, unfailing love. The same Hebrew word is translated "lovingkindness" 30 times in the OT. And God says that we are to give thanks for this unfailing love, His great mercies that brings us salvation. But just how awesome are God's mercies? Well, Ps. 119:64 says that the earth is full of God's mercies. Who can measure that? But wait! Ps. 108:4 says that God's mercies are high above the Heavens! Beloved, do you need the lovingkindness of God in your life today? I'm tell you, there is more lovingkindness in Heaven just for you than your feeble mind can conceive! More lovingkindness than all the Big Macs in all the world for one little six year old boy to devour. More lovingkindness than all the fresh water in the world for one little minnow to swim in. For God's lovingkindness to you is higher than the heavens. And the psalmist exhorts us to give thanks to God for His great goodness and mercy

that brings salvation and that cannot be measured and that lasts forever and ever.

But we read in Scripture of at least three other things that God asks us to give to Him. We are to give Him thanks, but we are also to give Him glory. Ps. 96:7-8a, says, “Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples, give to the Lord glory and strength. Give to the Lord the glory due His name...”

Another thing that God asks of His people is offerings. Continuing in v. Ps. 96:8 the psalmist writes, “....Bring an offering and come into His courts”. So God says, bring to Me praises and offerings. But here is what is vital to remember. **Our praises and our offerings both flow forth from thanksgiving!** Ps. 100:4 says, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name”.

Thanksgiving comes first and it leads us to praise Him. But thanksgiving

also leads to giving offerings to Him. We read in 2 Chronicles 29 that King Hezekiah commanded the people to bring thank offerings to the Lord, and in ch. 33 King Manasseh brought a thank offering himself. They were thankful, and they showed it by bringing their offerings.

So God asks that we bring Him praise and offerings, but there is a third thing that God asks us to give to Him. Paul says in Romans 12:1, “I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as living sacrifices...” We are to give ourselves, our entire being, totally and completely to God for His service. But notice the motivation for such an extravagant gift. “By the mercies of God”. Because of the mercies of God, which Jeremiah writes are new every morning, we say “thank you” to Him by offering ourselves to Him as His slave in the work of His kingdom.

So beloved, there is a definite correlation of our praises, our offerings, and our commitment to serve God with our thanksgiving to Him. And every one of us needs to give ourselves a reality check at this point and ask, “How thankful am I to God for all that He has done for me? Well, you can know by those three benchmarks. Your praises, your offerings, and your total commitment to serve Him. For all of these things will be evidences of your thankfulness.

But let’s consider for a few moments - what **has** God done for you? Well, in a word, all that you are, have, or ever hope to be is a gift from God. David prays to God in 1 Chron. 29:14 concerning the offering they are about to give Him, and he says, “But who *am* I, and who *are* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For **all things** *come* from You, and of Your own we have given You”. David said, “Lord we are only giving

back to you what You have first given us”. And beloved, that is so true. The socks or the hose that you put on this morning was a gift from the good God Who loves you. But David said, “Lord, You’ve given us all things”. Your health, your family, the sense to dress yourself and feed yourself, they are all gracious gifts from God. And we are to give thanks for it all.

But this morning I want to show you from Psalm 107 three reasons that Israel had to be thankful to God, and three reasons that you and I have to be thankful for our greatest gift, the gift of our salvation when Jesus came to live in our heart. And the first reason is that when Jesus saved you, He **subdued all of your sins**. Micah 7:19 tells us that God will subdue the iniquities of His children and cast their sins in the depths of the sea. And we see a picture of this in what Jehovah did for Israel. Look at v. 2. The word “redeemed” means to rescue or to release. God’s people had

been released from Babylonian captivity and allowed to return to their homeland. And in the same way, every sinner that repents from his sin and trusts in Jesus is released from his sins, forgiven, and released from the clutches of the enemy of his soul, the devil.

Friends, it is a terrible thing to be in the clutches of sin. The psalmist compares it to being shut up in prison. Begin reading with me at v. 10-16. Now, the word “bound” in v. 10 means to be a prisoner in affliction and irons. God has given each of us one life to live, one life to glorify Him and make this world a better place than when we arrived. And to waste away behind bars and miss your purpose for being alive is terrible tragedy.

That’s what Paul Geidel did. Mr. Geidel served the longest prison sentence in U.S. history that ended with release. He was convicted of 2nd degree murder in 1911 in New York,

when he was 17 years old, and served a sentence of over 68 years. He was released when he was 86 and died seven years later. But what a tragedy to spend almost your entire adult life behind bars, totally missing out on God’s best for you life.

But friends, it is a far greater tragedy to be bound in sin. To be a slave to ungodly habits, to be ruled by greed and jealousy lust and pride and temper. To be helpless to break free from any of these and be what God wants you to be, and what you want to be. But friends, that’s exactly the plight of anyone who does not know Jesus Christ. V. 14 describes sin as a chain, and v. 16 compares sin to gates of bronze and bars of iron. And all of the human strength in the world can never break free from the supernatural stronghold of sin. Proverbs 5:22-23 says that a man is caught in the cords of his sin and that he shall die for lack of instruction as to how to get out.

Now, there are plenty of people who do not know Christ and have overcome enslaving habits. They've quit drinking, they've quit smoking, they've quit pornography. But they are still a slave to sin deep down in their hearts. For Jeremiah tells us that the heart that is unredeemed is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Listen to what Jesus said about the heart in Mark 7:21 (read). "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." And if your heart is unredeemed, to you sinning is just as natural as breathing. And you've been trying for years to change your ways and you've failed, miserably. And the reason is, you just don't have what it takes to change.

A story is told about a deadly tarantula and a duck. They were on one side of a pond, and the tarantula said to the duck, "How about a ride to the other side?" And the duck said, "Are you crazy? You are a killer. Why would I put you on my back just to get out in the middle of the lake and have you sting me and die?" And the tarantula replied, "Now, how much sense does that make? I can't swim, and if I sting you in the middle of the lake and you die, then I die, too". Well, that sounded reasonable to the duck, so he said to the tarantula, "Climb on." So the tarantula got on the duck's back and they started crossing the lake. But when they got about half way across, guess what happened? The tarantula stung the duck. And as they both began to sink to their watery grave the duck's final words to the tarantula were, "Why did you do it?" To which the tarantula replied, "I couldn't help it. It's just my nature". Friend, if you are here today

without Jesus Christ, you are just like that tarantula. You can't help but sin. It is your nature. You are bound in your sin. And unless you are forgiven it will lead to your eternal death.

But this is not your fate if you have come to Jesus Christ and trusted Him as your Savior and Lord. He has subdued all of your sins. He has broken sin's hold on you. Look at v. 14. Now look at v. 16. Friend, if you belong to Christ you are forever forgiven and forever free. And for that the psalmist says, "O give thanks unto the Lord!"

But I want to see a second aspect of our salvation that should cause us to give thanks. Not only does Jesus subdue our sins, but He also **satisfies our souls**. Begin reading with me, please, at v. 4-). In these verses the psalmist describes the condition of all of us before we were saved as that of a vagabond, a homeless person, wandering out in the world with no

place to call home and no one to care. The HCSB translates it this way: "Some wandered in the desolate wilderness, finding no way to a city where they could live". Friends, life takes its toll on people like this. When we encounter homeless people we are taken aback at how many of them have aged far beyond their years. For life is a wilderness and life is hard when you beg for every meal and sleep under bridges, every day living in a survival mode. Every day worrying about your future, never coming to a place you can call your own, never coming to place of rest.

But friends, this is the condition of the human soul without Jesus Christ. It does not matter how much stuff they have accumulated. It does not matter how high they've climbed the corporate ladder. It does not matter the size of their 401k. It doesn't even matter how many Nobel prizes or Oscars or MVPs they may have won. Deep down in their

spirit there is no true peace as to where they will spend eternity. They cannot sing, “It is well with my soul”. V. 5 describes them perfectly: “Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them”.

Look at v. 9 (read). Beloved, if all there was to salvation was that we escape eternal torment in hell, that would be enough to give thanks forever and ever. But thanks be to God that’s not all there is! For when you come know Jesus Christ, He promises you a life of indescribable peace, joy, and power. Look at v. 35-38. The picture here is of a barren wasteland that has been irrigated and turned into gorgeous, fertile farmland. And the farmer lays his head to rest each night with the sweet contentment that at harvest time there will be much reward for his labor. He is satisfied.

Look back at v. 36. The psalmist says that the Lord makes the hungry dwell in this state of bliss that they may establish themselves in it and never

move away from it. This reminds of us of what David wrote, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures”. It reminds us of what Isaiah wrote about the righteous. “The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones. You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Is. 58:11).

Beloved, can you say with all of your heart today that Jesus satisfies your soul, that He fills your hungry soul with goodness? This is His promise to you! This is your earthly inheritance as a child of God. But many Christians never claim it. They spend their lives trying to feed their eternal souls with temporary food. With activities and relationship of this world that will all be gone in a few short years. And their souls are starving. But God says that when you are redeemed, when you are saved by His precious Son, that He will satisfy your longing soul and fill it with

goodness. Listen to Isaiah 55:1-2, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance". And God is saying to you and to me today, give thanks that I have not only subdued your sin, but that I will satisfy your souls.

But I want us to see one more thing about our salvation that we should give thanks for today. Let's begin reading in v. 23-29. When you have the Son of God living in your heart, He not only **satisfies** your soul, but He also **stills your storms**. Look at v. 29 again.

As we close I ask you, what is the condition of your soul today? Are you still bound in your sin? Are you wandering in the wilderness of discontent and unhappiness? Are you in a storm that is about to sink your ship? What is the answer? The same for all three conditions.