

THE GOOD THING Psalm 92

Thanksgiving has been around in America a long time, almost 400 years. It goes all the way back to 1621 when William Bradford declared a three day celebration of thanks for God's bountiful harvest during the first year of the pilgrim's settlement. There are few subsequent records of Thanksgiving celebrations until 1777, when all 13 colonies celebrated Thanksgiving at the same time for the first time. After that George Washington declared a day of Thanksgiving in 1789, further solidifying its place in American history. But it was not until 1863 that Thanksgiving became a permanent American holiday by the decree of Abraham Lincoln.

But thanksgiving has been around much, much, longer than the pilgrims. The first thanksgiving celebration dates all the way back to the sacrifices of the first two people who were ever born, Cain and Able, even though Cain's heart was not right and his thanksgiving insincere. But ever since men have been offering their thanksgiving to God for His mercy and blessings upon their lives.

Now, in the 21st century people have all kind of different ways to celebrate Thanksgiving. Many go hunting, or go out to eat, or go to a parade, or play touch football in the yard, or watch football from about 12:00 noon to bedtime. But one person recently came up with a unique idea, and that was to sing Thanksgiving carols. And they wrote a whole book of humorous Thanksgiving carols to be sung to Christmas carol tunes. They are all pretty good, but let me just share a couple of the best ones with you. You might want to sing them around your dinner table this Thursday. The first one is Joy to the World, to be sung to the tune that bears its name:

Joy to the world, the turkey's done, and now it's time to eat.
Let every single one find daughters and sons, and kindly take your seat,
And kindly take your seat, and kindly, and kindly take your seat.

It's time at last we pass the food. We're loading up our plates.
We eat until it hurts, and then we eat desserts.
Oh I don't feel so great, oh I don't feel so great,
Oh IIIIIII, oh III don't feel so great.

But this one is my favorite. The title is Away With the Adkins, sung to the tune of Away in the Manger.

Away with the Adkins, away with Slim Fast
Away with Weight Watchers, they'd all be aghast!
Away with the package that says it's fat free.
Thanksgiving's the day that I eat all I see.

Well, I'm not sure if you are planning to eat all that you see this Thursday. But whether you do or you don't, I pray that you will take the time to give God thanks for the countless blessings that He gives you every single day of the year. And today we are going to take a look at some of them.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 92. The psalmist declares in v. 1 that it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. But this is not the only place that we are admonished to give thanks by any means. No less than six times in Scripture do we read these exact words: "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever". I'd say when God repeats Himself five times what He says must be pretty important. God wants us to give thanks!! Paul writes in Philippians: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). And he says in 1 Thess., "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

So over and over in His Word God tells us to give thanks. And those last two verses tell us that in everything we are to give thanks. Some folks think that's pretty radical. That means in good times and bad times. Good health, bad health. Times of joy, times of sorrow and confusion. Times of abundance and times of poverty. Times of acceptance and times of rejection. No matter what, if the sun comes up we are to give thanks. So what are we to give thanks for? Well, the very first thing for which we should give thanks is for God Himself, because He is the Lord Most High.

We've talked much in recent weeks about the sordid spiritual condition of our world, and we all know that we are on a downward spiral to only the Lord knows where unless we repent. But the moral mess we find ourselves in is not our only concern. What about all of the whacky weather we've had in the last couple of years? We saw record or near-record blizzards last year in the North, and just this Spring the worst outbreak of tornados since 1936. This year we've seen horrible droughts and wildfires in the Southwest, flooding on the Mississippi, and freakish early season snow storms in the Northeast. Why, several months ago they even felt some tremors of an earthquake in Fayette. And this is not to mention the crazy weather that is happening world-wide.

But in addition to all of these concerns, there are all of the personal challenges that we all face at one time or another and some of them can absolutely crush us. Just sixteen days ago a friend of mine's husband discovered that he had cancer and died one week later. And in our heads, if not our hearts, we know that what happened to him could happen to anyone of us. Many are out of a job through no fault of their own. Many suffer every day working for an oppressive boss or in an ungodly work environment. Many have an abusive or unloving spouse. Many single parents are lonely and fight to keep their purity and struggle just to keep the lights on from month to month. Many, many children and young people live under a cloud of sadness because they really don't have a good friend, or because of unfair teachers or they are being bullied or sexually harassed, or because their parents really don't care about them. And I am certain that I am speaking about some of you. I ask you, where is the place that you can run to for some security, for some peace in the midst of all of these storms?

There is only one place, and that is to the Lord Most High! Beloved, He is the Mighty God. The Psalmist said, "...our God is in Heaven. He does whatever He pleases". Friends, if you would have a proper view of God and have a prosperous relationship with God, you must begin with this foundational truth. God is the Lord Most High, and He is in control!! This old world is not spinning like a top, out of control. There is an unseen hand overriding every action of every man, decreeing the movement of every wind and wave, ordaining the release of every lightning bolt and every raindrop. And may I say to you that if you would allow the Holy Spirit to burn this precious truth upon the hard drive of your memory, it would save you from so much stress in your life! God is in control! And for that we should thank Him.

Now, as we carefully read Psalm 92 we can see a number of specific things for which to praise God today. And the first one is in verse 2. Our God is a God of lovingkindness. The word means unconditional, steadfast love. It is love without merit. Friends, you don't have to do anything to receive God's lovingkindness. He loves you just because it is His nature to love you. If you are saved today Ezekiel describes you as a new born baby who was abandoned in an open field, still in its afterbirth, struggling to live. And in that wretched, unlovable condition God came along and purely by unconditional love rescued you and gave you eternal life (Ez. 16: 4-6). Oh, how an adopted child can understand this! They did not do anything to merit their parent's love, but their parents loved them anyway and made them their sons and daughters, just as if they were their very own flesh and blood. And I want to tell you this morning, if

you feel that no one else in this world loves you, you can be certain as surely as you hear these words, the God of Heaven loves you!! And how you can thank God today for His lovingkindness toward you!

But there is more we can all thank God for this morning. Not only His lovingkindness, but for His faithfulness. He is not a God Who loves unconditionally today but loves us conditionally tomorrow, or maybe doesn't love us at all. The love He has for you He will have until you draw your last breath, and if you are saved when you die He will love you for eternity.

Many times on Sunday and Wednesday nights as we begin our share time I will say to you that each one of us has already received a blessing from God today. But that is not just pious, religious jargon. That is what God has said!!! Look with me in the book of Lamentations, chapter 3. Jeremiah has seen persecution like few other of God's prophets had ever seen. He was rejected and mocked by God's people as he delivered God's message to them. He was thrown in the dungeon by Zedekiah and could have died. It is no wonder that he is called the weeping prophet. But in the midst of all of his heartache and sorrow God's grace broke through to Jeremiah and turned his despair into marvelous hope. Look at 3:22-23. What a testimony! We have no way of knowing for certain, but when we all get to Heaven we may just find out that Jeremiah was thinking of His own experience and also of Psalm 92 when he wrote these words. He had found the Lord to be faithful in his own life, and then he read the psalmist's challenge to sing praises to God in the morning for His lovingkindness, so he wrote in verses 22-23, "Lord your mercies and compassions fail not. They are new every morning". And then he read that we should sing of God's faithfulness every night, so he added, "Great is your faithfulness".

A number of years ago someone wrote a praise chorus based on Jeremiah's declaration of praise. I want us to sing it together right now.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.
His mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning, new every morning,
Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord,
Great is Thy faithfulness!

Beloved, I pray that you will believe that this morning!! God's love never ceases toward you! Great is His faithfulness! When you walk through the valley of the shadow of death He will be with you. And until then your cup runs over with blessings, every day, day after day. As you have heard me say before, David literally said in Psalm 23, "Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me,

shall run after me, all the days of my life”. Oh, beloved, may we thank Him today for His faithfulness!

But we are not yet done with reasons to give thanks this morning. Look at verse 5. We can thank Him for His works. Let me mention three.

- His work of **creation**. Gen. 1:31 – “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”
- His work of **salvation**. Friends, we see in the Bible how God’s glory was manifested many times and in many ways. “The heavens declare the glory of God...” (Ps. 19:1a). When Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments, the glory of God covered the mountain as a consuming fire (Ex. 24:17). When the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Solomon’s temple, the priests could not even stand to minister, for the glory of the Lord filled the house (1 Kings 8:11). When Jesus taught in the synagogues He was glorified by all (Luke 4:15). God was glorified by Peter and John’s healing of the lame man in Acts 3 (Acts 4:21). But friends, none of these can compare with the glory that God received in the work of salvation (Luke 2:11, 13, 14; 23:47).
- His work of **liberation** (Rom. 6:22). Beloved, if you are saved, when God saved you He saved you from more than just eternal suffering in hell. He saved you from the power of Satan and sin in your life! And I want us to go back to Psalm 92 and see how He does it.

Look at verses 8-9. God first of all **scatters His enemies**. Oh, beloved, the enemies of righteousness may look formidable to you today, but listen to what God says about His enemies through Isaiah (Is. 40:15, 17, 23-24). Jesus said that He beheld Satan fall like lightning from Heaven. So beloved, if God be for us, who can be against us? **NO ONE**, for He scatters His enemies! But God not only scatters His enemies, He **strengthens** His children. Look at verse 10 again. A wild ox was one of the most untamable beasts around in ancient Israel. And that’s the way it still is today. If you were crazy enough to try, if you climbed up on the back of a bull in a rodeo, you would experience what some call the most dangerous eight seconds in sports. Bull riders know they can walk away with crushed cheek bones, broken noses, and missing teeth every time they ride, and a very few are **carried** away and taken to the morgue. There’s nothing more untamable than a wild bull. But God says in His Word that He gives strength like a wild bull or a wild ox to His children. **And beloved, for that we can give thanks!** We know that we are no match for the devil and all of the fiery darts he

shoots at us daily to destroy us. Peter writes that Satan is as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). But by Heaven's standards a roaring lion is no match for a wild ox! And as you receive God's strength in your life and resist the devil by that strength, James 4:7 says that the devil will flee from you!

But I want you to notice something about this strength that God gives to His children. The psalmist says, "I have been anointed with fresh oil". In other words, "The strength that I need for today I didn't get last week. It is fresh! It is new!" Beloved, do you live in defeat of the devil day by day? Are you spasmodic in your church attendance and not really bothered by it? Do constantly struggle with gossip, or profanity, or pornography, or giving God little if any of your money? Do just not feel like getting involved in any ministry in your church, even though you know you should? I'll tell you why. You are not walking with Jesus on a daily basis and you've used up all of your oil. And you desperately need the Holy Spirit of God to come and fill up your soul with fresh oil. Oh, beloved, every morning that the sun arises we need to go to God and say, "Dear Lord Most High, I yield myself totally to you this day. Come and give me Your strength. Come and anoint me with fresh oil!" But beloved, we can give thanks today because our God is the Lord Most High, Who is in control and Who will fill us and gives us victory over all of our enemies.