

BEING THANKFUL

PSALMS 100: 1 – 5

A prominent American who was visiting Argentina was asked by the president of the republic, “Why has South America gotten on so poorly and North America so well; what do you think is the reason?” The visitor replied, “I think the reason is found in the fact that the Spaniards came to South America seeking gold, while the Pilgrim Fathers came to North America seeking God.”

For all their shortcomings, we have much to be thankful for to those Pilgrim Fathers.

A.W. Tozer wrote, “Gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God, and it is one that the poorest of us can make and be not poorer but richer for having made it.”

1. We Live In A Wonderful World

Psalms 100:1 – 5, 1Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. 2Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations

Thanksgiving to God should be the first and highest order of our lives. Out of the entirety of creation we are the only beings made in His image. Though that image is marred through Adam’s sin, we can trace all the good traits of our lives to it.

For one thing, because we are created in God’s image, we have the ability to appreciate His creation and to be thankful. Our world, in fact our universe, are a gift from Him.

They are a continuous source of breathtaking events and miraculous discoveries. In spite of what the human race has fallen to, this world is still a wonderful place to be.

Luaine and I just returned from a cruise. I love the coast; I love the ocean. Did you know that 70% of the earth’s surface is covered by water? And did you know that the oceans are responsible for 97% of our drinking water?

And in the oceans are myriad forms of colorful and mysterious life, and secrets yet to be discovered. The 30% of our planet that we live on contains beautiful landscapes, painted by all the hues of rich colors.

I was born and raised in the majestic snow-capped mountains of Colorado and have explored some of their valleys and lakes and rivers.

I've also lived in the bread basket of America, and have cut wheat from Oklahoma up into the Dakotas, and learned to appreciate the beauty of endless fields of grain rippling in the breeze as far as the eyes could see.

Now we are in the Land of Enchantment, a land of many varied and interesting landscapes—all of them beautiful if one will take the time to appreciate them—all a gift to us from God.

God's graciousness doesn't stop here. Even the moon and sun and stars and planets and the space they occupy with their almost untouched possibilities should be cause for celebration and thanksgiving to the Creator.

When our family was young we would go camping in the mountains of Colorado. At night, away from city lights high on a mountainside, it is truly dark. We would look up and find ourselves surrounded by thousands of stars.

It almost seemed that you could reach out and touch the Milky Way. Think about this—it's been there all the time! Those same heavenly bodies that Abraham looked up to, we were looking at. God loves visual aids.

It has been said that if the stars appeared only once or twice a year that everyone would get out of their houses and away from city lights, and gather to gaze in wonder at the spectacular and seldom seen sight.

As it is instead of gazing and praising we go our busy ways without even noticing the wonder of the show of shows every night.

Even the changing of the seasons should cause an eruption of praise within us. You sometimes hear someone say, "The weather is turning bad," or "We expect good weather tomorrow." No, there is no such thing as "bad" or "good" weather.

The weather and seasons were given to us by God to bless and sustain His creation.

Not only are we highly favored by being placed in a world as wonderful as ours in which to live. But now listen! Best of all in the midst of all this earthly beauty God is preparing us for a home far more wonderful than this one.

As 1 Cor. 2:9 says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”

We are so blessed! God provides so wonderfully for our present and eternal need. Sometimes it becomes necessary to slow down to count our blessings and just say “Thank you Lord.”

2. Have A Thankful Attitude

1 Thess. 5:16-18 says, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Dr. Cone talked about this verse at the Sr. Adlt Bnqt.

With your pen circle always, continually, and in all circumstances—We Christians are to have a joyful heart, live in an attitude of prayer, and be thankful in all circumstances.

In Ephesians Paul wrote, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart...” He was talking about a church service.

But here he is talking about our attitudes—in fact, what should be a continual attitude for Christians. “Be joyful always. Pray continually. Be thankful in all circumstances.”

How can we be thankful in all circumstances? It’s a given that we are not to be thankful for every circumstance. There are bad things that happen that if we were thankful for them we would put us outside the realm of God’s will.

But we should be thankful that in every circumstance Christ’s presence is with us. We should be thankful that we will get through the circumstance because of His strength and guidance.

Attitude is everything. The attitude we carry with us through life is of paramount importance if we are going to truly live a life of thankfulness to God for His blessings and actions on our behalf.

A young mother with two preschoolers was often overwhelmed. One night she fell into bed, exhausted and poured out her frustrations to God. “The kids won’t mind, the house is a mess, my husband doesn’t seem to care ...”--the list went on.

Suddenly, a voice said to her heart, “Which one do you want me to take away?” Everything she was complaining about was precious to her. Immediately, she began to thank God for everything on her list.

Perhaps you aren’t feeling too blessed this year. Maybe you can’t see the gifts that God has given you. Maybe the pain of life has overwhelmed you to the point where you don’t see how blessed you are.

Or, like many today, maybe you have been so blessed that even your blessings don't look all that good anymore. I don't have all the answers.

But I know that when we recognize God's blessings in all their many manifestations in our lives, it makes all the difference in the world about our attitude. Then we can give thanks even when it seems impossible to do so.

Here's a different kind of Thanksgiving list:

Be thankful you don't have everything you want. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful you don't know everything. This gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times. It's during those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations. They give you opportunity for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge. They build strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes. They teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you are tired and weary. For then you lean on Jesus more.

These are the things you can also be thankful for when your attitude is right—an attitude of continual thanksgiving—a day after day after day “Thank you Lord.” Let us praise Him in thanksgiving today.

3. Christ's Invitation: Turn Thanksgiving into Thanksliving

Psalms 107:8, 22. 8Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. 22Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.

It's been said that talk is cheap. We say, “Lord, we're so thankful, we're so grateful for all that you've done for us.” That's all well and good. We should thank God for His blessings.

But it's just as important to live a life of thanksgiving. If we are truly thankful to God it really ought to show in our lives. There is no other sin quite like the sin of ingratitude.

How terrible not to be grateful to God. Our nation is one of the most blessed nations in the world. Yet we are becoming more known for our complaining than for our thanksgiving.

We have been so over blessed that even our blessings don't seem that good anymore. 1 Peter 2 reminds us that those who have been saved are priests.

Have you ever seen a Baptist priest before? Well, you are looking at one. Not only that, if you are a Christian, you too are a priest.

All of us who are saved are priests of God, and every priest ought to be able to offer sacrifices of praise to God. I'm convinced this is more than simply saying, "I'm thankful." It's giving yourself in thanksgiving.

Romans 12:1 talks about this. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

When you think about what God has done for you (in view of God's mercy), shouldn't you give yourself to Him? After all, Jesus gave His body for you!

He suffered, bled and died on the cross. In effect we drove those nails into His hands and feet. All the while He is saying, "I love you, I love you."

Those nails were my sins and your sins. Our hard hearts were the hammer that drove those nails. Our sins put Jesus on the cross. He went to the cross so that we could be forgiven.

He rose again and lives today to be our eternal Savior. His invitation is to believe in Him, accept Him, and live for Him. This is what changes our thanksgiving into thanksgiving.

Application:

As we look around at the land of plenty we live in, I pray that we will see through new eyes each day the ways God has blessed us and never take God or His blessings for granted. We have been blessed beyond measure. Give thanks to the Giver of all good gifts, and live a life of thanksgiving, showing that you are truly thankful.