

Thanksgiving 2005 Psalm 100

November 23, 2005

Psalm 100:1-5 (NKJV)

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!

[2] Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

[3] Know that the Lord, He is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

[4] Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

[5] For the Lord is good;

His mercy is everlasting,

And His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 100:1-5 (Living)

Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth! [2] Obey him gladly; come before him, singing with joy.

[3] Try to realize what this means--the Lord is God! He made us--we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

[4] Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving; enter his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. [5] For the Lord is always good. He is always loving and kind, and his faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day and I have decided that rather than continuing the series on Foundational Truths tonight, I will talk to you for a few minutes about Thanksgiving.

We are so spoiled in America. We have more than most everybody else on this planet. The majority of people on this earth live on a fraction of what we live on here in America. We should be the most thankful people on earth. But the truth is, most Americans are not. For the most part Americans take their many blessings for granted.

Someone named Paul wrote this on the internet the other day....

“We live in a country where food is plentiful, jobs are plentiful, medicine is plentiful, and education opportunities are plentiful. I know you can tell me about the unemployment, jobs going overseas, a shortage of flu vaccine, and a number of other bad statistics. The truth remains that when compared to any other country, past or present, this country is still the best place to live. We might consider our unemployment high, but it is nothing compared to what other nations deal with.

Everything we have, from the air we breathe to the pleasure of Blue Bell Ice Cream, is a gift from God. If it wasn't for God's grace we would never experience any of this, and God gives, not because we have earned it, but because He loves us. I don't deserve to live in this great country with the freedoms and opportunities it has, but God put me here because He knew this is the best environment for me to discover Him. When I was God's enemy He still gave me what was best for me.

When we live a life of gratitude we have a perspective of hope. Rather than being pessimistic about the future because I believe someone is holding out on me, I believe there is reason to be optimistic because God is willing to give me what I need. Regardless of who wins the presidential election or which party controls the House and Senate, I am optimistic about what lies ahead. My life is not tied to what happens in Washington, it is tied to my faith in a generous and loving God. No matter what happens the future is bright because of Him.”

Sometimes it takes a tragedy to put things back in perspective.

Shortly after the tragedy of September 11th, the following e-mail made the rounds on the internet.... It was called, “What a Difference a day makes”.

On Monday, we e-mailed jokes.

On Tuesday, we did not.

On Monday, we were fussing about prayer in school.

On Tuesday, we would have been hard pressed to find a school where someone was not praying.

On Monday, our heroes were athletes.
On Tuesday, we relearned who heroes are.

On Monday, there were people trying to separate us by race, sex, color, and creed.
On Tuesday, we were all holding hands.

On Monday, we were irritated that our rebate checks had not arrived.
On Tuesday, we gave money away gladly to people we had never met.

On Monday, we were upset that we had to wait 5 minutes in a fast food line.
On Tuesday, we stood in line for 3 to 5 hours to give blood for the dying.

On Monday, we argued with our kids to clean up their rooms.
On Tuesday, we couldn't get home fast enough to hug our kids.

On Monday, we went to work as usual.
On Tuesday, we went to work, but some of us didn't come home.

On Monday, we had families.
On Tuesday, we had orphans.

On Monday, September 10th, life felt routine.
On Tuesday, September 11th, it did not.

Isn't it amazing what a difference a day can make? Isn't it also amazing how soon things return to the way they were before?

The day after September 11th, people were praying. Congress and the president were working together. People were singing God bless America. There were national days of prayer and thanksgiving. Millions upon millions of dollars were given to help the victims.

A few months later it was back to the same old bickering between the Republicans and the Democrats, and complaining about everything from the weather to the price of gas.

We need to be thankful all the time.

Ted Koppel, the host of A.B.C.'s Nightline, emigrated to the U.S. from England in his early teen years. His parents were originally from Germany, but moved to England at the start of World War II. They had lived through food rationing, and had known the scarcity and desperation that accompanies war.

So a few years later, when Ted heard an advertisement on the radio about an antacid that could heal the pain of overeating, he began to cry. He couldn't imagine that he now lived in a country, the U.S., where people had problems with eating and drinking too much. He knew that in his native country, there were still people scrambling to get enough food to feed their families.

We complain when we ought to be giving thanks for the blessings God has so richly given to us.

I will be the first to admit that the last few years have been tough for a lot of people in the world. Even here in the United States many of our fellow citizens have been through great adversity. Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and the war in Iraq, to name a few, have affected us all in one way or another. And yet there is still so much for which to be thankful.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor imprisoned in 1943 for his political and Christian opposition to the Nazi regime, understood thanksgiving. For two years he was imprisoned at times the war raging all around him. His cell wall was struck by collateral damage, the window was blown out and he endured the miserable cold German winter for days on end.

On the day of sentencing he conducted a service for the other prisoners. One of those prisoners, an English officer who survived, wrote these words:

Bonhoeffer always seemed to me to spread an atmosphere of happiness and joy over the least incident, and profound gratitude for the mere fact that he was alive... He was one of the very few persons I have ever met for whom God was real and always near...

On Sunday, April 8, 1945, Pastor Bonhoeffer conducted a little service of worship and spoke to us in a way that went to the heart of all of us. He found just the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment, and the thoughts and resolutions it had brought us.

He had hardly ended his last prayer when the door opened and two civilians entered. They said, "Prisoner Bonhoeffer, come with us." That had only one meaning for all prisoners--the gallows. We said good-bye to him. He took me aside [and whispered in my ear]: "**This is the end; but for me it is the beginning of life.**"

The next day he was hanged in Flossenburg.

How could Bonhoeffer worship God in a Gestapo prison with the gallows in view? Somehow he had learned that his joy didn't depend on his circumstances and there was always something to be thankful for. In that particular case he was thankful because he knew where he was going when he died.

Abraham wrote his Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1863. Let me read a portion of it to you...

"We have been recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown.

But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. We have vainly imagined in deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us."

Does that sound like it was written 142 years ago or does it sound like it could have been written today?

Abraham Lincoln exhorted this nation to give thanks unto God and to recognize that the blessings we enjoy come from Him rather than taking those blessings for granted.

America needs to be reminded of that fact again today. The stores that refuse to even use the words "Merry Christmas" during the Christmas season need to be reminded of that fact. People who are demanding that the words

“Under God” be removed from the Pledge of Allegiance” need to be reminded of that fact. People who want to remove the Bible and the Ten Commandments from our public buildings need to be reminded of that fact.

The Apostle Paul said.....

Philip. 4:4 (NKJV)

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

The psalmist wrote.....

Psalm 100:1-5 (NKJV)

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!
Everyone of us is told to praise the Lord.

If you want to please Him....Praise Him!
If you want His presence in your life....Praise Him!
If you want victory over depression....Praise Him!

[2] Serve the Lord with gladness;
Come before His presence with singing.

It's not a drudgery to serve the Lord. It's a pleasure. It's a privilege. Living for God is a joyful experience! When you think of all God has done for you it fills you heart with singing even if you cant carry a tune.

[3] Know that the Lord, He is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Aren't you glad that you can know who God is? The God who is revealed to us in the Bible is truly God. And He made us. We were created in His likeness and in His image. He has a plan and a purpose for each of our lives. We are His sheep. He is our Shepherd.

Psalm 100:4-5 (NKJV)

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.
[5] For the Lord is good;
His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endures to all generations.

Thanksgiving is not something that was thought up by George Washington or Sarah Hale or Abraham Lincoln. Thanksgiving is the natural response to the goodness of God!

Praise is the only appropriate response to God's greatness and goodness.

Therefore one day a year is not enough to praise Him.

Psalm 34:1 (NKJV)

... I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

That should be the attitude of everyone of us!

The Apostle Paul abounded in thanksgiving.....

Acts 28:15 (NKJV)

And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

2 Cor. 9:15 (NKJV)

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

1 Cor. 15:57 (NKJV)

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Tim. 1:12 (NKJV)

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry,

Col. 1:3 (NKJV)

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

And Paul exhorted others to follow his example.

Col. 3:17 (NKJV)

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Thes. 5:18 (NKJV)

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It's not a matter of giving thanks once a year. It is rather that your life is characterized everyday by your thankfulness.

All that is good comes from God. He is worthy of our continual praise.

Develop an attitude of gratitude!

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Rejoice in the Lord always!

Give invitation!