

Singing Songs of Thanksgiving to God

Portions adapted from, The Best Reason To Give Thanks. Jonathan McLeod @ SermonCentral.Com

Having danced the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem and enshrined it in a special tent to await the building of the temple, King David made offerings of thanksgiving and wellbeing before the Lord. He then appointed priests *"to regularly invoke and thank, and praise the Lord God of Israel,"* along with others who were using cymbals and sounding trumpets; this was not to be a quiet event (16:4-6).

David then blessed all the people in the name of the Lord, giving to every single person in Israel – man and woman alike – a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins; you might call this the Hebrew version of the first Thanksgiving Day.

On that day, David also gave the priests a special psalm to sing to the Lord; portions of which appear in many his other psalms. This psalm was divided into five stanzas:

- First, giving thanks to the Lord,
- Then, singing praises to the Lord,
- ascribing – giving credit – to the Lord for what He has done,
- and worshipping the Lord in all His glory;
- but all of these acts of praise were based not upon what they had now, but upon the people **REMEMBERING** how God through the years had blessed them as both individuals and as a nation.

David's thanksgiving psalm then concluded with the phrase ...

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

I think that is good advice for us to be following today; especially this idea of **REMEMBERING** how **GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE FOR US HAS ENDURED FOREVER**. For around this time every year, I am newly impressed with how hard our country seems to be trying to forget all of God's blessings. The current spirit seems reminiscent of Bart Simpson's Thanksgiving prayer: *"Dear God, we paid for this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing."*

To all such prayers, God replies...

You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But REMEMBER the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth..."
Deuteronomy 8:17-18 NIV.

Around this time, people also start making lists of what they want for Christmas, especially with newscasters continually reminding us, *"if you see it, buy it now, because it may not be there later."* But shouldn't we first make Thanksgiving lists — of what we already have and are thankful for?

When asked, most people reply that they are thankful for their family, their home, their job, health, etc. That list is good, but it's incomplete. We who are Christians should also be thanking God for *His steadfast love that endures forever*.

Interestingly, in the original Hebrew, there is no word for "endures." It was added by the translators. The Hebrew simply reads, "**His love forever.**" This then is the biggest, most basic reason we should be remembering and giving thanks, **because God's love for us is and has always been ETERNAL; His love is forever! It didn't have a BEGINNING and it will never have an END.**

Have you ever thought of how long ago, God first knew you and loved you?

In another of his psalms David praises God for seeing him when he was yet unformed, for knitting him together in his mother's womb and before he was ever born numbering the days of his life (Psalm 139:15-16). Yes we should be thankful that even before our birth, we were being wonderfully made by God's hand, but according to the Apostle Peter, God was already thinking of each one of us even before the very beginning of time. Writing to the believers of his day, Peter reminded them.

you were ransomed... with the precious blood of Christ ... He was destined before the foundation of the world ... but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake 1 Peter 1:18-20

[Remember] that **you were ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. **He was destined before the foundation of the world**, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. 1 Peter 1:18-21

Did you hear that? Christ's necessary CRUCIFIXION was already planned before the creation of the world. The entrance of sin into the world through Adam and Eve was not an event that somehow caught God by surprise. It didn't cause God to begin to ponder what He should do to correct it. God knew what was going to happen from the beginning. So before He even set the universe in motion, He determined to send Jesus Christ to die for the salvation of our race. Can you imagine the second person of the Divine Trinity, throughout eternity remembering that one day He would have to meet death in our behalf.

But why would God even set our world in motion if He knew that one day its rescue would cost the life of his own Son?

The simple answer is love. We sing songs, *Love is all you need* and *Love makes the world go round*. That is truer than you can even imagine. Our Bible says – and now you know that this was before you even existed – that "*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16).

As was planned from the very beginning, eternal life can be offered to us now because of the death of Jesus Christ; who was, is and ever shall be God in human flesh. Remember that in

some way incomprehensible to us, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are one God. So when God gave us Jesus, He gave us Himself.

A minister was talking with a married couple who were having marital difficulties. At one point the husband spoke up in obvious exasperation. "I've given you everything," he said to his wife. "I've given you a new home. I've given you a new wardrobe. I've given you a new car. I've given you..." The list went on. But when he had ended the wife said quietly, "That much is true, dear. You have given me everything...but yourself."

What God's love had planned for us in the past, which has been given to us in the present, is the gift of His life in exchange for ours – so that *everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved* (Romans 10:13) and this forever love still has a future fulfillment for every one of us as well.

Jesus told His disciples that beyond His death He was going to prepare a place for them (and us), and He promised that He would return to bring us home with Himself (John 14:2-3). Whether that happens with our own physical death or at the end of time, whether *we are away from our body and at home with the Lord* (2 Cor. 5:6-10), or with the trumpets sound we are changed and ascend to meet Christ in the air (1 Cor. 15:51-53), this is the promise we should be **remembering**, not only for our future hope but also for our present thanksgiving in which we should be *regularly invoking, thanking, and praising the Lord God of Israel whose steadfast love is forever.*

Also, because of what God's love planned for us from before the beginning, which came to pass with Christ's birth *in the fullness of time*, we now have the assurance that we are not only forgiven, but also as the aged Apostle John reminds us that right now we are living as God's children.

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

He then concludes, *and all who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.*

Did you hear that? We are God's Children NOW!

This is what we should constantly remember and be daily thanking God for. And this is also how we should respond to such eternal love. *All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.*

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love is forever" 1 Chronicles 16:34.

- In the past, God made a plan. Jesus would die to save us.
- In the present, God makes us an offer. Anyone can have eternal life through faith in Jesus.
- In the future, we will live with God and He will live with us. His home will be our home.

That is what we should be remembering and like those Hebrew priests standing before the Ark of Covenant, we should be daily invoking the name of the Lord, giving our praise and thanksgiving to the Lord God of Israel, *whose love is forever*.

How can we do that? Here are a few ideas:

- As you admire nature (the last of our colorful fall leaves), remind yourself that the One who created the earth, is the One who has always loved you.
- If you are asked this Thanksgiving what you are thankful for, think of a spiritual blessing.
- The next time you are about to complain about something, think instead of how from the very beginning God has wrapped His love around your whole life.
- Make a Thanksgiving list.
- Treat every day like Thanksgiving Day.
- Regularly saying the simple prayer, 'Thank you.'
- And REMEMBER that the very best gift of Christmas was birthed in a barn – not wrapped under a tree. So, make sure that a crèche scene (a nativity scene) is the first Christmas decoration you put up...perhaps even beside your Thanksgiving table.

Let us together, invoke God's name to give Him thanks and sing His glorious praises.