

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

THANK YOU, GOD

Psalm 100:1-5

November 22, 2020

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- Giving thanks establishes the correct order of things.
- Giving thanks in difficulty provides the reset we need.
- Of all people, Christians should be the most thankful.

INTRODUCTION: Turn with me to Psalm 100 and while you are turning there, I want to tell you about a survey regarding stay-at-home moms. The mothers in this survey were asked to list the things that they were thankful for.

1. “For husbands who attack small repair jobs around the house because they usually make them big enough to call in the professionals.
2. For children who put away their things & clean up after themselves. They’re such a joy you hate to see them go home to their own parents.
3. For teenagers because they give parents an opportunity to learn a second language.
4. For smoke alarms because they let you know when the turkey’s done.” (*Melvin Newland, Sermon Central*).

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 100:1-5

Shout 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.

EXPLANATION: The psalmist suggests that people say a word of thanks when they enter the temple gates. Here's why: giving thanks prepares the heart for praise.

ILLUSTRATION: Almost everything that's worth anything requires preparation. Before a person has surgery, all types of preparation must take place. Initial visits, x-rays, MRIs, perhaps a liquid diet or fasting. And then there's the prep required by the surgical staff – disinfecting the room, getting all the tools and instruments together, scheduling. I had a minor surgery once and in the surgery room, it was very cold on purpose. I was under local anesthesia only so I knew what was going on. The doctor asked if I minded if he played his favorite Jimmy Buffet CD. Of course, I wanted the doctor to play whatever helped guide his scalpel with precision. No wonder surgeries cost so much, because so much preparation is required.

Skilled jobs require months or even years of training. Construction of a building requires lots of preparation. A decent sermon requires hours of preparation, believe it or not! A decent Sunday School lesson requires hours of preparation. A good Thanksgiving meal requires lots of preparation.

APPLICATION: What is your preparation routine for worship? Of course, getting up in the morning and going through the routine of getting dressed and driving, or for those watching at home – getting your Bibles and planning to turn on the program at 8:30 AM. If you have children, your preparation for attending worship has its own set of challenges. But, as individuals, let me ask, what is your spiritual preparation for worship?

The psalmist tells us: (When he says “Enter his gates”, he is talking about the temple gates.) “Enter his gates with Thanksgiving”. Let me suggest that step number one for preparing for worship is giving thanks.

ILLUSTRATION: A life without giving thanks is a life without life. Helen Keller could not hear or see, yet she was a thankful person. A little child looked into Helen Keller's face and asked, “Isn't it awful not to have two good eyes?” Helen replied, speaking with her fingers through Miss Sullivan, “Not half so bad as having two good eyes and not being able to see.”

GIVING THANKS ESTABLISHES THE CORRECT ORDER OF THINGS

ILLUSTRATION: On November 9, 1620, the 90-foot-long Mayflower carrying 152 passengers came near what we now call Cape Cod. Sixty-five days on the ocean, and now they had land in sight. In their first published account of that day, Pilgrim leaders said, *“By break of dawn we espied land. The appearance of it much comforted us, especially seeing so goodly a land, and wooded to the brink of the sea. It caused us to rejoice together, and praise God that had given us once again to see land.”*

But they had only just begun. Over the winter and the next year, of the 18 couples, one man and four women died. Four entire families died. Only three complete families survived. Six children lost one parent, and five children lost both parents. Sometimes they had nothing to eat; other times they only had grains of corn. Yet one year into it, they decided to celebrate Thanksgiving because they were grateful God had carried them this far. In 1776, the Declaration of Independence was written, but 150 years earlier, the Pilgrims declared their dependence on God. That’s where our nation really began.

ILLUSTRATION: R.C. Cunningham wrote, “Have you ever noticed when Jesus gave thanks? Once he gave thanks for loaves and fishes on the mountainside—common things. Once he gave thanks to God for revealing his secrets to babes—common people. Once in the darkest hour of his life, on the night when he was betrayed, he gave thanks for the cup that spoke of his impending death. Thankfulness in all things, the pleasant and unpleasant, is the mark of Christian maturity.

APPLICATION: You’ve heard me say that the goal of satan is for things to run backwards. That’s a pretty simple, home-spun sounding statement, but indeed it is true. In the scriptures, every time satan makes an appearance, you’ll note that. He told Adam and Eve to do the opposite of what God wanted. And he does it again and again and again. Can you imagine how satan hates Thanksgiving Day when people gather to give thanks to God? Satan never has a happy Thanksgiving. Satan wants our Thanksgiving to run backwards. He wants us to give thanks to ourselves for what we have accomplished. On our nation-wide, one-day-pause where we stop

to thank God Almighty, let us see it as a reset – a time where we thank God for ALL things - yes, even this crazy year – and thereby establish the order of things.

If Jesus gave thanks for the common things and the unpleasant things, we should too.

Not only does giving thanks establish the correct order of things, but...

GIVING THANKS IN DIFFICULTY PROVIDES THE RESET WE NEED

This is clearly the point we do not want to hear. This is the point in the sermon where we want to fall asleep and have someone nudge us when the topic becomes more enjoyable.

EXPLANATION: Paul wrote to persecuted people in Colossae and Thessalonica. They were poor, many of them probably slaves living in heathen cities. Paul said in his letter to the Thessalonians, “In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God.”

ILLUSTRATION: Barry Black, Chaplain to the US Senate, is thankful in a similar way. In his book “From the Hood to the Hill,” he says, “If I have learned anything else from life, it is to recognize my debt to unintelligent or unpleasant people -- people who deliberately misrepresent and slander me, people who've stood in my way, attempting to deny me my heart's desire. I offer my thanks to these people because they have taught me a great deal about myself. By slamming certain doors in my face, they forced me to find other doors that led to even greater acceptance and blessings. I am a debtor. There is nothing shameful or degrading about that admission--it would be shameful to refuse to admit it.”

APPLICATION: Have you ever thanked God for a problem? Have you ever thanked God for a difficult situation you were going through? Do you realize that our difficult situations drive us to him? It’s interesting how many people ask for prayer when they are going through difficult situations. A person might be far from the Lord, or even claiming to be an atheist, but will ask for prayer during trying times. A few people have shared with me about their troubles and they’ve said something like this: “I am not really a believer in God, but if you would pray for

me, I would appreciate it.” You see what those people don’t realize is that God has used their problems to bring them to him. Andrae Crouch has one of the most profound lyrics in his song “Through It All” – “For if I’d never had a problem, I’d never known God could solve them.”

Anyone who says “Come to Jesus, and your problems will be gone,” or “Come to Jesus and you’ll be rich,” or “Come to Jesus and you’ll never have any needs,” is speaking lies! But having a Savior who forgives us of our sin and opens our eyes to God’s will in this world – and a Savior who sets the example of giving thanks even to the point of death – that’s the Savior I want to follow.

Let’s review:

- Giving thanks establishes the correct order of things,
- Giving thanks in difficulty provides the reset we need, and next:

OF ALL PEOPLE, BELIEVERS SHOULD BE THE MOST THANKFUL

We have so much for which to be thankful. Thankfulness sets a general tone for life. Thankful people are generally happy and optimistic. I believe the starting point of a solid Christian testimony is thankfulness. Unthankful Christians are not winning friends or influencing people. They are probably driving people away.

ILLUSTRATION: A man quit giving because he said God wasn’t blessing him. His idea was that giving an offering to the mission of the church was like buying a lottery ticket and knowing in advance that it was a winning ticket.

ILLUSTRATION: A woman in her 80’s keeps a journal of things for which she is thankful. Before she died her journal had over 500 entries. She said, “There are a couple of repeats, but I don’t think God minds being thanked twice.”

Don’t you see such a difference in attitude between the man and the woman? The man is only in it for what he can get. The woman has a list of things for which she is thankful.

APPLICATION: Children learn to pray by being thankful. Listen to a child's prayer. Children thank God for people, friends, grass, trees, dogs, cats, and a whole host of other things. When I was a child my dad told me I could quit thanking God for doorknobs. Maybe we need more child-likeness in our prayers instead of speaking shopping lists of what we want.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 17:11-16

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" ¹⁴When he saw them, he said, "Go, and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan."

EXPLANATION: Only one of the ten returned to the one he knew healed him! I wonder what the other nine thought? They probably thought, "We are healed because we obeyed." In other words, because they felt they were healed because they did the work. The one who returned to say thanks knew that Jesus was the reason he was healed.

Giving thanks acknowledges that someone else has done the work.

Believers should be the best givers of thanks because we know what God has done for us! He's given us a Savior. He's forgiven us of our sins. He allows us to fellowship with him 24/7. We can go directly to him with Jesus as our only intermediary. He's provided us with a way to eternal life in heaven through Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: Giving thanks is the sign of a grateful heart and the greatest thank you is through action. It is through repenting of sin. It is through thanking Jesus for being your savior, and it is through giving your life to him. And, letting him take your life and turning it into what he wants it to be. Because a life without Christ is a life not even coming close to living life to its fullest.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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