

"I Will Give Thanks To God"

Psalm 111:1-10

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Introduction.

Thanksgiving. For many people it is another long weekend with *family, food, fun*, and—of course—*football!* We know that Thanksgiving can include all of those things, but should be more.

This morning I encourage all of us to be truly thankful ... not for a *mini-season*, but for all seasons; not based on the expectations of others, but based on our own character. The truth is that thankfulness is not natural to our character. This is because we were born with a sinful nature which is self-centered; it is because we quickly get used to the good relationships, conditions and things we enjoy.

In one area of Mexico where tourists visit, you can find people living in conditions which, by our standards, are primitive. They do their laundry in springs next to the village— hot and cold springs, side by side; they do the washing in the hot springs and rinsing in the cold springs. One tourist, watching this, told his guide, "I imagine the people are thankful to old Mother Nature for providing hot and cold water, side by side, free to use." "Actually," the guide said, "there is a lot of complaining. They complain that old Mother Nature doesn't provide soap as well!" Wherever people live, whatever their conditions, we all tend to be like that.

So, today we are going to think about being thankful people. With the psalmist, we should and can say, "*I Will Give Thanks To God*. We should and can be thankful people. Let's look at two questions from the perspective of this Psalm.

Why?

"Why should we be giving thanks to God?" "Why should we be thankful people?" Psalm 111 shows us that every believer has at least three fundamental reasons to be thankful. Three reasons that ought to be ingrained in our character. We should be giving thanks to God ...

For who God is.

Before and beyond giving thanks for our good health, family and friends, nice weather, the booming economy and so many other blessings, we should be thankful for God. He is the giver of "...every good thing ... and perfect gift." God gives good and perfect gifts because He *is* good and perfect.

This unnamed psalmist recognized that. Let's note some of the qualities of God he saw, and for which he thanked and praised God. God is always righteous; verse 3:

"Splendid and majestic is His work, And His righteousness endures forever."

To be righteous means to be straight, not crooked; to be right, not wrong. Both the Old and New Testament words for righteous mean to act or be in agreement with the standard, God's standard. God is holy; He is good; He is love. He always acts in agreement with His perfect nature.

Psalm 11:7 tells us, "For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness ..." Again, Psalm 33:5, "[The LORD] loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the lovingkindness of In comparison, the best that the best of us can do on our own, God tells us through Isaiah, is "like a filthy garment" (64:6). Jesus said "that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Now, the scribes and Pharisees were the *pros* at doing what they believed was right in their day.

Thank God today, every day, that He is always and forever righteous. You can depend on The last part of verse 4 gives us a second quality of God,

"The LORD is gracious and compassionate."

In His holy and perfect love, God is generous in giving us what we do not deserve, and withholding what we do deserve.

Think about the two terms. *Gracious*. As one writer pictures it, it is "a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to someone who has a need." In Exodus 34:6 God describes, or identifies Himself as "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth."

Compassionate. This word pictures a deep love in action, usually of a superior to an inferior; often of parents to children. Psalm 103:13,

"Just as a father has compassion on children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."

Because He *is* gracious and compassionate, God is gracious and compassionate to us. And, knowing this, how can we not thank Him?

Let's go to verse 7 for a third quality, "*The works of His hands are truth and justice.*" We can, and do *shave the truth*, cut corners, look the other way. But God does not, because He cannot. Everything God does flows from His character. All that God does is true and just because He *is* true and just. Yes, God is gracious and compassionate, but never at the cost of truth and justice.

We see that clearly in our salvation. We were spiritually dead and condemned in our sin. There was no way for us to remedy that on our own. But God, in His grace, compassion, truth and justice, made the way as Jesus, God the Son, the perfect One,

A fourth quality in verse 9, "*Holy and awesome is His name.*" God is perfectly pure. And He is, we know, *God*. His immeasurable greatness and purity, who He is, even without consideration of the things He does, calls for our highest awe, devotion, and obedience.

One last quality here is that God is faithful.

“...He will remember His covenant forever ... He has ordained His covenant forever.” (5b, 9b)

God never forgets His promises; He never forgets us. He is always trustworthy; He always will do what He has said, what He has promised to do. Earlier we sang *“Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”* There is no shadow of turning with God; He is faithful to His creation, as is evidenced in the seasons every year; He is faithful to forgive, to be with us and strengthen us. And, as the end of the chorus states, *“Great is Your faithfulness, Lord unto me!”*

Yes! *“I Will Give Thanks To God”* for who He is.

We should also be giving thanks to God For what He does.

This is often where we start answering the question *“Why give thanks to God?”* What God does is *great*—all that He does is great, all the time!

“Great are the works of the LORD; they are studied by all who delight in them.”
(2)

“He has made His wonders to be remembered.” (4a)

“Why?” So that they can point us to Him, so that we can remember God’s past gracious in our difficult times. As well, look at verse 6,

“He has made known to His people the power of His works, In giving them the heritage of the nations.”

The people of Israel certainly at this point they would think of the exodus from Egypt and the conquering of their land. God *did* drive their enemies out before them. Think of the way which God chose to give them the city of Jericho—they marched around that city once a day for six days; then, on the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times and blew the trumpets on cue, and ... *“the walls came tumbling down!”* They never forgot this great work of God ... and neither have we!

God is the same today as He was then. He still performs “splendid,” “majestic” and powerful works. Think right now of one of the great works of God for you, that you will always remember. *And*, thank Him! Every time you remember God’s great works for you, pause, and thank Him.

Finally, we should be thankful people because of God’s unchanging, everlasting nature and work. Look at the statements. Verse 3 tells us, God’s “righteousness endures forever.” The drop down to verses 7-8,

“The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and uprightness.”

Then, at the end of verse 10 God tells us that *“His praise endures forever.”*

God does not change. Malachi. 3:6, “For I, the LORD, *do not change ...*” Again, in Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” As well, James 1:17 tells us there is “no variation” or “shifting shadow” with God.

What God promises He will do; what God starts He will finish; what God establishes will remain forever. So, God will always be the sovereign, holy, righteous, loving, just and merciful One. The reality of life continuing after death is eternally certain; as is the reality of heaven and hell. God’s saving and keeping you forever is more certain than the gravity on this planet. God’s promises are all “Yes,” or fulfilled in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). All of God’s promises, His “precious and magnificent promises” which He has granted to us in Christ are guaranteed in Christ. (*cf.* 2 Peter 1:4)

And even though we may not praise Him as we should now, notice again that verse 10 tells us that God’s “praise endures forever.” There will never be even a mili-second without praise to Him. There will never be an end of praise to Him. Revelation 4 tells us that there are four angels around the throne of God who “*day and night [who] do not cease to say ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.’*” And then later it says that great hosts of people in heaven will be saying, “*Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*” (7:12)

Why should you and I be thanking God? Because of who He is. Because of what He does. Because of His unchanging, everlasting nature and work.

Now, let’s consider the second important question ...

How?

How should we be thanking God? The Psalmist gives us two directions here. First, we should be thanking God with all our heart.

“Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart.” (1a)

For us the word *heart* figuratively usually refers to our emotions or feelings. In the Bible it pictures the innermost, even hidden parts. For example, Psalm 46:1-2,

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the
mountains slip into the heart of the sea.”*

And so, of us it refers to the inner core, the central core of our being: of our emotions, will, intellect and spirit. “I will thank the LORD with all of my being, from the core of my being.”

One town has the tradition of having a community Thanksgiving dinner. One year, with all the people, excitement and last minute details, the organizers suddenly realized that people had begun eating before anyone prayed for the meal. They scrambled and quickly found a pastor. He told the community, “This is not the first time this has happened. Even King David once prayed, ‘Bless the LORD, O my soul, and *all that is within me* bless His holy

name.”

This twist was not, of course, what David had in mind. And what David and the writer of Psalm 111 *did* have in mind is not quite that easy. It means engaging my mind, emotions, will and spirit at the deepest levels. And that takes clear reflection, thoughtful decisions, energetic engagement and expression. “I will give thanks to the LORD *with all my heart.*”

The second direction from the psalmist is that we should be thanking God with all God’s people.

“Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, in the company of the upright and in the assembly.” (1)

Praise and thanksgiving are not an *either/or*—either individual or corporate. They are a *both/and*—both individual and corporate. It is easy to excuse ourselves from a character and lifestyle of *personal* thankfulness. After all, we do that when we are in church! And, it is just as easy to excuse ourselves from a character and lifestyle of *corporate* thankfulness, because we do that personally.

Thankful people do not let the busyness of work, family, community and personal interests squeeze out constant contact with God which is marked by thankfulness; they do not let the expectations and demands of family and community keep them from regular, joyful and thankful worship with God’s people.

Psalm 122 opens with the writer exclaiming, “I was glad when they said to me, let *us* go up to the house of the LORD. *Our* feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.”

One of the marks of all great movements of God in the church age has been a combination of personal and corporate devotion and thankfulness to God. The revival through the Wesleys was marked by people hearing God’s word together; praising and thanking God together for the breakthroughs and blessings of God in their lives; singing thankfully and joyfully together songs that expressed truths about God, the gospel, and their blessings.

How should we worship God? The two guidelines are clear here: “With all my heart,” and “With all God’s people.”

The account of Christ’s healing of ten lepers is familiar to most of us, and is often read at Thanksgiving. This record in Luke 17 is one of the most moving examples of thankfulness. Those ten lepers were men whose disease excluded them from their families, friends and communities; the synagogues and temple.

They saw Jesus at a distance, and shouted to him, because they were not allowed to get close to people. Their cry was simple and poignant, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Jesus’ answer was also simple, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” For it was the priests, you see, who could declare them clean. But that never happened with lepers.

Luke tells that a wonderful thing happened on the way to the priests, “as they were going, they were healed [cleansed].” How many of them were truly thankful? *One*. Only one came

back to Jesus, and he was a Samaritan—to the Jews a low-life half-breed. He “fell on his face at [Jesus’] feet, *giving thanks* to Him.”

Now to be fair, the other nine were probably not totally ungrateful. But only this one came *publically* and thanked Jesus *with all his heart*.

The lesson is clear: as God’s cleansed, forgiven and blessed people, we are to be people of thankfulness, thanking God with all our hearts and thanking Him with all His people for: who He is; what He has done; and for His unchanging, everlasting nature and work.

In the next few moments as you spend time quietly with God, tell Him you *will* be a person of thankfulness; and then ... thank Him.

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