

Give Thanks To Him

Psalm 100:1-5

He lived from 1865 to 1936. He was English, yet born in Bombay, India. He wrote poetry and authored books such as *Captains Courageous* and *The Jungle Book*, and numerous short stories such as *How the Leopard Got His Spots*, *How the Camel Got His Hump*, and *The Man Who Would Be King*. His name was Rudyard Kipling.

Kipling's writings not only made him famous but also brought him a fortune. A newspaper reporter came up to him once and said, "Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over one hundred dollars a word."

The reporter reached into his pocket and pulled out a one hundred-dollar bill and gave it to Kipling and said, "Here's a one hundred dollar bill, Mr. Kipling. Now you give me one of your hundred dollar words."

Rudyard Kipling looked at the money, put it in his pocket and said, "Thanks!"

I believe we would all agree that the word "thanks" is certainly a one hundred dollar word. We might even say it is more like a million-dollar word, if you can place a value on it at all. It's a small word but it has a powerful meaning. The English word has only six letters but it carries a message that few other words are capable of achieving.

One person has commented, "When that little word is missing, we feel it deeply. You know what it's like when someone doesn't say 'thanks' – you feel hurt, used, ignored, and taken for granted and you wonder why you bothered to do something for the person in the first place." *(David Gauthier)*

Certainly no less should we remember to give thanks to our great God. Max Lucado has written, "*I wake up in a world of miracles every morning. Every time I breathe and use the oxygen and incorporate it into my body it is a miracle. Every time I open my eyes and see the beauty that surrounds me, that's a miracle. Every time I touch the hand of a baby, that's a miracle. Every time I take a morsel of food and put it into my mouth and chew it, and my body digests it and uses the energy from it, that's a miracle.*"

“Just as surely as it was a miracle when God opened the waters of the Red Sea, just as surely as it was a miracle when Jesus fed the multitudes, just as surely as it was a miracle when Jesus healed the blind man, we wake up in a world of miracles every day. And some of us have the audacity to want more.”

One of the most beautiful Psalms of thanksgiving is the 100th Psalm. Please stand with me as we honor God’s Word:

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Of all people, we have been blessed by God, and of all people we should be among the first to *“give thanks to Him and praise His Name.”* But we live in a day when it seems that our entire lives are driven by what is happening in the retail stores, who is selling what and when. Every year we say that it seems that Christmas appears in the stores earlier and earlier, but this year it really did happen that way. It was not unusual to see Christmas items side by side with Halloween candy in late September. Because Thanksgiving is not seen so much as a retail opportunity, here in America our society seems to jump right over it as if it didn’t exist. People slow down long enough to eat turkey, visit with family and perhaps watch a little football, and then they plunge headlong into Christmas—in fact, some of the larger retail stores have announced this year they will open Thanksgiving night, rather than wait for early Friday morning.

So let’s do what we can, in our own little corner of the world, to see that Thanksgiving is more to us than just a hiccup in our schedules, a brief pause before the chaos that Christmas has become. Before we pick up our Christmas shopping lists, before we head to the stores, before we stand in line, before we race all over the place looking for the perfect gift, let’s pause long enough this week to observe Thanksgiving in a quiet, peaceful, holy way. Let’s make another list, one we could call a “gratitude list.” We might include many of the standard items: family, friends, good health, salvation, and so forth, but let’s also include on that list things that much of the time we take for granted.

When my daughter was a college student, she sent me e-mail regularly. One year there was a list making the rounds among college students, a list which grew longer and longer each time it was sent. It was called "Natural High" and worked this way: You received the list, which contained things about life which the college

students enjoyed. At the bottom of the list, you added your own contribution before e-mailing it to someone else. By the time my daughter sent it to me, the list was rather lengthy, but it sparked a few ideas of my own. As a believer in Christ, I saw the list not as a “natural high” but as a rather creative exploration of things for which I am thankful.

Watching a child do something for the first time after you taught him.

Hearing your only grandchild say, “I love you, Papaw.”

A great idea.

Clean sheets.

Lying in bed listening to the rain outside.

Giggling.

Seeing someone you love do something outstanding.

Hugging your Mom or Dad.

A surprise visit from a friend.

Laughing for absolutely no reason at all.

Unexpected rainbows.

Being there for a friend who needs it.

Seeing a full moon and knowing someone far away who cares about you is looking at the same moon.

Truth.

Compassion.

Silence.

Knowing someone will always love you no matter how much you mess up.

Having enough money to help others when they really need it.

Seeing a shooting star.

Discovering a secluded waterfall, and having the time to sit and watch it for a while.

The smell of an approaching thunderstorm.

The sight of the full sun shining on the autumn colors of the trees.

The silence of snow falling at night.

The rays of the sun streaming down through heavy clouds.

The sudden sight of a dew-covered, perfectly-formed spider's web.

Discovering some truth about God you didn't know before.

Getting an hour's work done before anyone gets up.

Discovery.

Warm and loving memories of loved ones who have gone before us.

The crunch of a sweet apple as you bite into it.

Taking your time.

*Things sweetened by risk.
Enough milk for your cereal.
The stillness just before sunrise.
Celebrations for each of the seasons.
The smell of a brand-new leather Bible.
Finding something that was lost.
Seeing an older couple, married for fifty years, still holding hands.
And I would add one more:
Getting e-mail from your daughter.*

But in addition, I'm thankful for my salvation, our church family, and the blessings and mercy that God showers upon us each day. Because of Jesus we have so much for which to celebrate on Thanksgiving! Let's remind ourselves of a few important truths from Psalm 100. But as we look at that Psalm, we discover a very important truth: Giving thanks to Almighty God is not only a good idea, it's not only something we *should do*—it's something we're *commanded to do!*

There are actually five different commands in this psalm, all of them centering around gratitude toward our Heavenly Father. Look with me at the Psalm:

1 We are commanded to Praise God with Abandon, v. 1

The King James Version reads, "*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.*" Some of us joke sometimes that even though we may not be able to sing like others, we at least can make a joyful *noise!* But look a little closer. The phrase "make a joyful noise" is actually the word for "shout." In fact, it's translated "shout" more times than it is "make noise." For example, in the sixth chapter of the book of Joshua, when the Israelites are going up against Jericho, we read "*So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets, and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.*" The word used for "shout" is this same word we have here in Psalm 100.

It was the word used to describe a battle cry, a shout of triumph. It means "to shout with the force of a trumpet blast." The Bible teaches us that when we enter into a time of praise to our God, that we are to give ourselves to it, the way we would shout and applaud at a sporting event. There is most definitely a time for silent

worship, but let us not forget that most often worship in the Bible is *noisy!* In the Bible, people *shouted* when they worshiped God! They sang with total abandon. They gave themselves to the worship and praise of God as they came before Him with thanksgiving. They held nothing back.

Am I saying that we should shout in our worship services? Well, I'm just telling you what they did in the Bible. But at the very least, I believe you'll have to agree with me that most of what we call worship is nothing more than a half-hearted attempt to sing the songs, praying sterile, memorized prayers, and half-listening to a sermon. At the very least, our voices should be lifted up to praise God.

2 We are commanded to Serve God, v. 2a

Let's dig a little deeper here, too. The first part of verse two reads in the King James Version, "*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" Look at that word "serve." In more modern translations it may appear as the word "worship." It literally means "to work, to labor, to toil." We find it very early in the book of Genesis, where it is translated "to till," meaning to work the ground. Genesis 2:5 tells us that there was "*not a man to till the ground.*" After Adam and Eve sinned, God sent them from the Garden of Eden, the Bible tells us "*to till the ground from whence he was taken.*"

How does this apply to Psalm 100? We see the idea of serving God, of working for Him, of toiling in His kingdom, of tilling the ground so the seeds of the Gospel might be planted. We see that this is not something we are to take lightly, as something we can do or not do. Part of the expression of our gratitude to God certainly includes the work we do for Him. Many of us serve in our respective churches, but I wonder how many times any of us do so out of a sense of responsibility, or because no one else will do it, or we will feel guilty if we don't. When we understand that working for the Lord is a part of our giving thanks to Him, a part of our worship of Him, our whole perspective on it is transformed.

When you ladies bake a casserole and bring it to a church supper, you are working for the Lord. When one of you men makes a repair around the church property, you are serving the Lord. Such a thing as cutting the grass or changing a light bulb, or visiting the sick or sending a card or making a phone call or setting up tables or talking to someone about their relationship to Jesus—they're all part of serving God. But the point is that this is something we are to work at, that we should never

do any of it half-heartedly or just “get by.” When we offer gratitude to God, we are worshiping Him, and we are to do so with deep devotion to Him.

3 We are commanded to Sing to God, v. 2b

The second part of verse two reads, “...*come before His presence with singing.*” We are familiar with this phrase, but when we dig a little deeper into these words we find something which has the potential of transforming our worship services. The word for “presence” here in verse two literally means “face.” When we enter into worship, we are actually coming before the very Face of God! “Come before His Face with singing.”

Try this the next time you are in a worship service. Imagine above the pulpit that you are able to see the very Face of God, and that you are actually walking into His presence. What will your singing be like then? Would it be filled with joy then? Would you mumble through the words and half-heartedly endure it until it was over or would your singing be enthusiastic and passionate?

4 We are commanded to Acknowledge God, v. 3

“*Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*” One meaning of the word “know” is “to perceive.” Another is “to discover.” Know this deep in your soul—the Lord He is God.

He is also our Creator. He made every cell of our bodies with such precision and order that the human body is an absolute marvel. When we perceive and discover the wonder of “*us*” we will have to acknowledge God as our Maker. We did not make ourselves, as this verse reminds us. Not even today, with all our advances in technology and research and science, can we make another human being. And when we worship Him with this kind of gratitude, we are forced to acknowledge Him as Creator and Lord. We are His people—that makes Him our King. We are the sheep of His pasture—that makes Him our Shepherd.

When we give thanks to God, we are acknowledging that all things come from His loving Hand of blessing. We are acknowledging that every breath we breathe, every beat of our hearts, every sensation and thought come because of His wisdom and love. And He makes no mistakes.

5 We are commanded to Thank God, v. 4

Everything we've talked about tonight leads us to this. Verse five reads, *“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”*

The idea behind the word for “thanksgiving” here is that of throwing our gratitude toward Him. Imagine an army returning to the city after a triumphant victory over the enemy. There is a procession through the streets as the troops return. Then comes the general on a powerful white horse to symbolize the victory. Imagine the people in the crowds throwing flowers on the street in front of the horse. That's the idea behind the word for thanksgiving. We are “throwing” our praises at Him, our Great General, our Maker, our Creator, Almighty God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, as we worship Him, and we are doing it with shouts of joy and joyful singing as we serve and honor Him.

I pray that this Thanksgiving will be more meaningful for you and your family as you gather. Why not take a few moments and read Psalm 100 together and think about the meaning of these words, and the impact it can have on your life.

Remember that these are actual commands from God: to Praise Him, Serve Him, Sing to Him, Acknowledge Him, and Thank Him.

May your hearts overflow with thanksgiving to the Lord.

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