

Giving God "Thanks" According to Psalm 100, (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Adapted with gratitude from "The Thanksgiving List" by Bruce Lee @ SermonCentral.Com

We have read in the Bible that Solomon was the richest man in the world; Maybe you've found yourself thinking, "What a lucky man he was!"

- But Solomon, with all his gold, never enjoyed the benefits of electricity.
- He never owned an air conditioner, never talked on a telephone, never drove a car or flew in an airplane.
- Solomon never experienced the joy and benefit of a flush toilet, never tasted a hot, freshly-baked chocolate chip cookie.
- When he caught a cold, he couldn't run down to the store and pick up a bottle of Nyquil to help him breathe easier and sleep better.
- He never listened to a radio or viewed a television, never e-mailed a favorite photo of his children back to dad or mom, never video chatted with the Queen of Sheba down in Africa.
- In fact these days, we now have numerous luxuries surrounding us that we consider ordinary and we take completely for granted that Solomon, the richest man in the world, never even dreamed of.



This coming Thursday is the only day of the year that many people will finally take time to stop and count these blessings. That is if they bother to stop at all. It is a sad reality of our consumer based culture that during this time of year merchants have pitched all their commercial energy at getting us past the thanksgiving meal as fast as possible and out shopping with our Christmas wish lists in hand. Black Friday is well named, because being thankful does not a good consumer make.

But before we run out to join the Christmas feeding frenzy, why don't we take today and the next four days of this week to slow down and take an inventory of all that we do have to be thankful for. Before we pull out that wish list, why don't we make a Thanksgiving list of all the things for which we are thankful? Here's my top-ten list of all the things I am thankful for.

10. A warm comfortable house – many people in this world today have no place to live. Even in America, poor people often live with their family four, five, or six people deep in the same apartment or trailer home.

9. Food - we always have plenty to eat at our house. Many people around the world don't. It is hard to think that even in America there are still those who are worried about getting enough food to feed their family; yet there are. That is why all year round, but especially this season we gather together collections of food which we can share with our less fortunate neighbors. So that at least on Thanksgiving day everyone can sit down and give thanks around a table full of food.

8. Clothes – I never have to worry about whether there will be clean clothes for me to put on each day – I have an overflowing closet full. Many people only have the clothes that they are wearing.

7. Health – I am thankful that I am blessed with good health. Many people are fighting serious illnesses which keep them from enjoying a full and happy life.

6. My country – I am thankful that I live in a country where I enjoy great freedom. In many countries you can be, kicked out of your family home, put in prison, or even killed just for telling others about Jesus.

5. My Church – I am thankful for the Churches that I have grown up in and been a part of for 65 years. Without the support and encouragement I have received from so many Christians throughout the years – who have both taught me about and exemplified Jesus' love for me – there's no telling where I would be today, or what I would be doing.

4. Friends – And I am thankful for so many friends (Christian or otherwise), who have always been there for me in time of personal need providing a support system which has helped me continue to do what I love to do.

3. I am very thankful for family: I hope family is nearly at the top of all of our lists. I have a 94 year old father still living still sharing his wisdom and love with us, brothers and a sister with whom I used to fight but now miss when we are apart, my own two children whom I have sent out into the world with my blessing and prayers.

2. Right there on the top of my list is my wife Betty, who for over 33 years has put up with the best and worst of times both in me and with me. Who has always been there as my helper/partner, confident and sometime fellow conspirator. We each encourage us together to be our best with enough slippage and goofing off to keep life happy.

1. And of course most of all I am thankful for Jesus. Who loved me so much that he left his heavenly home to seek and find me, and then to die in my place so that I might find forgiveness for all my sins, might be rebirthed into his forever family, might look forward to eternal life with both himself, with God the father, and also with all those who through the ages have trusted in Christ as their savior (what a big family that is going to be)!

We are so blessed to be living where and when we are now living here in America, and especially With Jesus we have so much for which to be thankful this coming Thanksgiving day. But has it ever occurred to you that even if we didn't have all this in abundance, we would still have so much to be thankful for?



No Americans were more underprivileged than those 102 settlers whom disembarked from the Mayflower in late autumn into the wilderness of the American coastline 399 years ago this month. Through the middle of winter, with little more than hand axes, they had to begin clearing the wilderness to building their own homes, by hand, with no government agency to help them. 58 of them died from the cold and starvation that first winter.

They had no means of transportation but their legs. No way to carry a load but on their backs or in their arms. Their only food came from the sea and the forest, and they had to get it for themselves. They had no money and no place to spend money if they'd had any. They had no amusements or entertainments except what they made for themselves, no means of communication with their relatives in England, no social security or Medicare. But anyone who dared to call them underprivileged would probably have been sent packing.



That following Spring when the Mayflower returned to England, not one of the surviving colonists got back on board to return home. In the fall of 1621 and every year thereafter, even through what came to be known as "the starving years," they set aside a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God?

Why? Because they did have four of the greatest human assets helping them to not only survive but thrive in this new land: initiative, courage, a willingness to work, and an endless faith in the providence of God in their behalf.

Our Pilgrim forebears had "***an endless faith in God.***" That almost sounds strange to us here today. Especially as we now live in a time when powerful forces are hard at work to strip us of every reminder of that that very Christian foundation upon which our nation was built. That from the very first our forbears had determined that we would be "one nation, under God."

Our "Declaration of Independence," published 156 years later, declared to all the world that, "*We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, and that **they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights . . .***" And it ended with these words, ". . .with **a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

Thanksgiving Day is more than turkey day. It is NOT a day that celebrates anyone's birthday or commemorates a battle fought on some field. Thanksgiving has always been a day set aside to express our nation's thanks for the providence and protection of God.



In 1789, George Washington made this public proclamation: "Whereas, it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the **providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor,** and "Whereas, Both Houses of Congress" (Did you hear that, "Both Houses of Congress?") "have by their joint committee requested me `to **recommend to the people of the United States a day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God. . .**'

But today how many people even know what it means to be thankful, or how to express their thankfulness to God? The 100th Psalm was written to deal with this problem: to remind us both of our need to be thankful and list out the ways that we can demonstrate our thankfulness to God. We are a people who have been truly blessed by God. And of all those who "*give thanks to Him and praise His name*" we should be at the top of the list!

According to the 100th Psalm this is how should we give thanks?

Make a joyful noise to the Lord **all the earth!**
Serve the Lord with gladness
Come into His presence with singing
Know that the Lord is God...
Enter His gates with thanksgiving

I believe God had even us here today in mind when the Psalmist David wrote this verse, Did you notice to whom it is addressed? The first verse is addressed to "**all the earth,**" and the last verse concludes with "**to all generations.**"

So this psalm of thanksgiving applies to every person both here today and in the whole wide world. And yet only eight other countries around the world have an official day for giving thanks. I wonder how our world would be different if all nations would begin to observe a Thanksgiving day?

American author Alex Haley, who wrote "Roots," had an unusual picture hanging on his office wall. It was a picture of a turtle on top of a fence post. When asked, "What is that picture about?" Haley would answer, "*Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think that they are wonderful, and begin to feel proud of myself, I look at the turtle on top of the fence post and remember that he didn't get there on his own. He had help.*"

That is the basis of thankfulness to remember that we got here with the help of God, and that He is the provider of every blessing we have. So now let us look more closely at the five ways this Psalm lists out for us to show our thankfulness.

The first command is in vs. 1, "***Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.***"

There are times to be quiet and solemn in the life of the church. We most often think of being quiet during prayer time. But over 60 times the bible records where a person cried out to God with a "loud" voice!

What about singing hymns, is that loud enough for us? In the Bible they sang with loud instruments trumpets and cymbals making a joyful noise.

What about preaching. The prophets often stood and cried with a loud voice even Jesus at the ninth hour cried with a loud voice.

The point here isn't just about volume but what comes from the very depths of your being. There is no such phrase as silent praise. Or quiet Thanksgiving in the bible. Jesus provided you with the greatest of blessings so from the depths of your being you should joyously proclaim your praise to God.

Missionary to China, Roland Allen tells the story of another, a medical missionary for many years in India who served in a region where there was progressive blindness. People were born with healthy vision, but there was something in that area that caused people to lose their sight as they grew older." So this missionary developed a treatment which would stop progressive blindness. People came to him and he performed his treatment, and they would leave realizing that they would not have to become completely blind, because of him their sight had been saved. He said that they never said, "*Thank you,*" because that phrase was not in their dialect. Instead, they spoke a word that meant, "*I will tell your name.*" Wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary who had cured their blindness. They had received something so wonderful that they eagerly proclaimed it.

And that is what this Psalm says we should be doing. When we realize that God has been so good to us that we can't keep it inside any more. From the depths of our being we need to let the whole world know, we need to make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

The second command is, "***worship the Lord with gladness.***" But it better translated "serve the Lord with gladness."

- It doesn't say "serve the church."
- It doesn't say "serve the nation."
- It doesn't even say "serve others"
- "It says, "serve the Lord with gladness."

Because everything you do for your family, for your church, for your nation, for your neighbors, can be done as an act of worship, as a way of giving thanks to God. Thus we are to

- Sing with gladness.
- Pray with gladness.
- Show hospitality with gladness.
- Come to church with gladness
- Go to work with gladness
- Take out the garbage, clean your rooms, rake the leaves, and even clean out the gutters with gladness

Because you know God loves you, and Jesus gave His life for you so that you might now live your life through Him and with Him for the glory of God. **Whatever you do, the command is to do it as if you are serving the Lord, and do it with gladness.**

The third command is, "***come into his presence with singing.***"

In these first 3 commands, God has said, "I want you to be happy. Shout with joy, serve with gladness, and come with joyful songs."

Take a moment and think about whether or not you are that happy.

- Is there joy in your heart?
- Is there celebration in your soul?
- Is there delight in your spirit?
- If not why not? What is blocking your happiness?
- As one of our hymns says, *How can we keep from singing?*

The Psalmist says, this is how we show our thankfulness to God.

The fourth command is, "

Know that the Lord is God.

It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, the sheep of His pasture."

Psalm 100:3

God took every bone, every joint, and He welded them together with sinews and muscles and covered them with skin and gave us eyes that see, ears that hear and brains that think, and fingers that can pick things up. God made us, inside and out. He made you the way He wanted you to be. And He made me the way He wanted me to be. That is a mystery, isn't it? I don't understand why, but somehow in God's providence He decided that this was the necessary way to make each of us.

He made me at birth with crossed eyes, which he then gave doctors the ability to straighten out, but never to restore to me the type of depth perception that other people had; that guaranteed I would never be a pro baseball player or a commercial pilot (something I really wished I could be since I grew up right beside an airport runway watching planes take off every day).

Neither did God make me a doctor or an engineer, or give me a brain to invent a new innovative appliance. But he did give me lots of energy and a clear voice, along with the desire to be a teacher, a caregiver, a pastor. And he is still making me. God is not finished me yet, He is still working on my weaknesses. He is still fine tuning my gifts. I am still an unfinished product.

What is he making you to be?

God is still working on your life. God is your maker, and you are created in His image. Therefore give Him thanks for what you are now and what you can become.

God says, "***We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.***" Most people don't want to be sheep. I remember as a kid in the Christmas play. Everyone wanted to be one of the wise men. Or Joseph or a shepherd. But no one volunteered to be the sheep. "*It's not any fun being sheep,*" we say. But the problem is, we don't know where the green pastures are. And every time we go out searching for them, we invariably end up lost in the wilderness.

God says, "You be the sheep. Let me be the shepherd, and I will lead you beside the still waters and to the green pastures. Just let Me lead." And your life will be filled with joy and thankfulness.

The fifth command is to,

" Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations."

In the O.T. the temple symbolized the presence of God. So whenever the people came to the temple and entered the courtyards they knew that they had come into the presence of God. Now that temple no longer exists. But the place where we meet to worship God is called a "sanctuary," indicating that it is a place where we can meet God.

But God is everywhere; you know that. He is with you as you drive on the highway. He is with you when you are at school or work. He is with you at home. He is with you every moment of your life. That is the real source of our thanksgiving, isn't it?

O Lord, help us to be thankful
that you do "not treat us
as our sins deserve or repay us
according to our iniquities"
Psalm 103:10 NIV

I have often wondered what if God began to treat us like we so often treat Him?
What if God met our needs to the same extent that we give Him our lives?

- What if we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain?
- What if God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?
- What if God took away His message because we wouldn't listen to His messengers?
- What if He wouldn't bless us today because we didn't thank Him yesterday?
- What if God answered our prayers the way we answer His call for service?
- What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we did not follow Him today?

O Lord, help us to be thankful that you do "not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10 NIV)

I pray that this will be a meaningful Thanksgiving season for you. When you set down at the table, in your warm homes, and you have plenty, don't forget God. He has blessed you with everything you have. Take time to read the 100th Psalm again. And if you'll heed those commands, your heart will overflow with thanksgiving to the Lord.

Let us pray together,
Lord, you have given us so much. Please give us one more thing: a grateful heart...