

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, November 20, 2022
Thanksgiving Service
Scripture: Psalm 103

Sermon: Let us Praise the Lord!

In just a few days we will celebrate Thanksgiving Day 2022. It is sad to think that we only have one day set aside each year to give thanks to God as a nation. We should have some time set aside each day to give our praise to God who has blessed us so richly.

Thanksgiving is the act of expressing specific gratitude to God for the blessings God has given us, whether those things are physical, spiritual or material and to give him our praise and thanks.

As we grow as believers, we should see an attitude of thanksgiving develop in our lives. A relationship with Jesus Christ should transform us into a joyful, positive and grateful soul.

One sign that Jesus Christ is living in your heart is gratitude. Someone once said that God lives in two places. He lives in heaven and in a humble, grateful heart.

So as believers we should make an effort every day, not just on Thanksgiving Day, to appreciate all the blessings God has given to us. We should be filled with a spirit of thanksgiving and praise to God.

As we look at Psalm 103 today, we are reminded to *“Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.”* Psalm 103 is designed to remind us of the blessings and exaltation of God while also acknowledging the problem of pain, suffering, sin and death.

David, who wrote the Psalm, surveyed God’s goodness and encouraged the angels and the works of God’s creation to join him in divine praise.

The only answer to the problem of pain, suffering, sin and death, is the life and work of Christ. Instead of our prideful self-satisfaction, faith in

God realizes God as the source of all blessings and thankfulness. It is an expression of faith that responds to this realization.

In our individual lives, as well as the Body of Christ gathered for worship, it is fitting to give thanks for: God himself, God's Benefits, God's Forgiveness and Healing, God's Redemption, love and Mercy and God's Satisfaction and renewal.

Each worshiper is to lift up his or his own heart in praise to God giving thanks with a grateful heart.

David's praise is given to God whom he knows and to God's Holy Name, the authority over his life.

We "bless" the Lord himself before we recount his blessings. All God does is because God is a loving and holy God.

As the Psalmist blesses God, he throws himself fully into his worship and he gives "*all that is within me, bless his holy name.*"

The Psalmist calls us to worship God with our entire mind, body, and soul. The soul encompasses our entire being to bring praise to God. Our hearts must be connected in a relationship with God to be truly grateful and able to give our full praise to God. We are to have joyful praise to a known God whom we can relate to each day and commune with.

We are to thank God for the benefits and the things we take for granted in life. We are to be humble, remembering that we are a forgiven people of God.

In Deuteronomy 8 Moses is addressing the people and he reminds them, "*Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.*"

We are not to forget his benefits. Moses also said to the Israelites, "*The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must*

commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.”

It is when we make other things our god or ourselves that we lose sight of being grateful and thankful to God, giving him alone our praise.

Many people in our country don't even think of God in their lives. They don't love the Lord God with all their heart. Too many people praise themselves and their own hands so that God isn't given any thanks or praise.

We are also called to give thanks and praise to God for forgiveness and healing. Sin is a spiritual disease that results in separation from God. There is indeed a healing of this disease through reconciliation and repentance of sin, which means first recognizing the seriousness of the disease. In Christ we are healed from the disease of sin and given new life by Jesus dying on the cross and suffering the pain and death that was meant for us. Jesus took our place. Confession of sin brings cleansing and that brings praise to God. The greatest healing is forgiveness of sin.

We are to give thanks and praise for God's Redemption, love and mercy because he redeems our life from the pit and crowns us with steadfast love and mercy. This means God comes to rescue us from death and delivers us to life.

Psalm 16:9-11 says, *“Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

God also surrounds us with steadfast love, loving kindness and tender mercy. It is a great promise of hope for those who haven't felt love and those who need to feel God's mercy. God's mercy is reflected in God's compassion for his people. God suffers with us.

A sure sign of God's tender mercy is that we don't continually suffer all the consequences of our sin. We are not fine apart from God. Security and mercy are found only in God.

Give thanks for God's satisfaction and renewal. God satisfies us with good so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord alone satisfies the longing heart, and it is then we can give thanks and praise.

Isaiah 40 it says, "*The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall into exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*"

These days we see many people who are tired and weary, and they aren't here worshiping God, seeking his guidance and his wisdom and his healing presence. They aren't giving God thanks and praise with their soul.

The person, though, who dwells in God enjoys continuous revival, and soars like the eagle. We are not to lose heart. We are to give thanks and praise to God each day and to encourage others to give God their thanks and praise even when life is difficult and your circumstances seem hopeless, it isn't with God.

God is faithful and that is a reason for thanksgiving and praise. His mercies are new every morning; great is God's faithfulness.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6, "*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*"

The sad truth is most of us aren't as grateful as we should be. When it comes to having a spirit of thanksgiving and praise we fall short, don't we. We are much better at grumbling and complaining than we are at giving thanks and praise. Despite all the blessings, sometimes we're anything but thankful.

We are often like the nine lepers in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 17. There we read of ten lepers who stood at a distance and cried out to Jesus as he was traveling along the border of Samaria and Galilee. The diseased lepers cried out, "*Jesus, Master, have pity on us. Jesus heard*

the lepers and said to them, 'Go show yourselves to the priest.' And as the lepers went they were cleansed. One of them when he saw he was healed came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him." This cleansed man was giving thanks and praise to God with his whole soul.

In verses 17-18 Jesus says to this one leper who returned. *"Were not all ten cleansed?" he said. "Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"*

Jesus' emotional response to the ingratitude of the nine lepers gives us a glimpse into the heart of God. Jesus was disappointed that only one person cared enough to express his gratitude.

William Barclay, a commentator on the Bible, writes, "No story in all the gospels so poignantly shows man's ingratitude like the lepers in Luke 17. The lepers came to Jesus with desperate longing; he cured them and nine never came back to give thanks." Barclay says, "So often once a person has got what he wants, he never comes back."

Doesn't that look like all of us at one time or another? We take God's goodness and his blessings in our lives for granted. We receive great blessings yet often we don't give God our gratitude.

"Blessed be the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his blessings."

Let us give all praise to the Lord for our friends, family, neighbors, our community, our country, all the blessings that God has given each of us and our church as we celebrate our 143rd Anniversary this November 24th.

Today and every day let us give God our thanks and praise from whom all blessings flow. Praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.