

Give Him thanks, but why?

November 26, 2009

This time each year many people do their things – cooking turkeys, eating until the buttons on their shirts stretch to the point of popping, getting together with families who would rather not, watching football games and yelling at TV. Oh yeah, going to church and do their religious duty.

But what is missing? Giving the Lord true thanks on this Thanksgiving Day as well as the rest of the year, but why? Because we tend to have unthankful attitudes, ungrateful hearts and grudging mindsets more than hearts that are filled with thanksgivings for Him. We are not told to give thanks to the Lord because we feel good; we are to give thanks to Him because He is good.

Hopefully we can learn good reasons why we should be thankful to the Lord every-day in our lives.

A. IT IS THE WILL OF GOD

Psalm 100:1-5 A Psalm of Thanksgiving. Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! 2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. 3 Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 100 is one of the great psalms of thanksgiving in the Bible. It calls us to realize that we belong to God our Maker, and to praise Him for His goodness, mercy, kindness, patience, love, grace and truth.

Let's face it. Even though the will of God is the gladdest, brightest, most bountiful thing possible ever to conceive, and yet some of us talk about the will of God with a long sigh – "Oh well, I suppose it is the will of God," as if His will were the most horrible thing that we have to endure. We become such spiritual whiners and talk pathetically about 'suffering for the will of the Lord.'

True thankfulness is more than being grateful for what we possess. It's an attitude that permeates our relationship with the Lord so that we may serve Him with gladness, excitement and joy. For the Christian, thanksgiving is not just a day but a way of life.

It is the will of God to thank Him from our hearts everyday. But wait, that is not the only reason. There are more.

B. HEAVENWARD REASON

Psalm 92:2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night,

It is truly good to give thanks to the Lord – because we can first recognize who He is. He is an unchanging God, the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. Thank God, He is not like the New York Stock Exchange that goes up and down like a yo-yo every few minutes.

When we give thanks to Him, our hearts and minds are renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created us.

C. INWARD REASON

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord because it changes us. Gratitude promotes peace in the midst of the storm. The anticipation for what the Lord is going to do can replace anxiety and worship can replace worry when we realize how good it is to give thanks. Then like that old hymn, "Whatever my lot – Thou has taught me to say, 'It is well with my soul.'" We are able to count our blessings rather than complain about our burdens.

Psalm 107:22 Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, And declare His works with rejoicing.

Just as Old Testament sacrifices were accompanied by thanksgiving, so we sometimes have to sacrifice some things in order to give thanks. We sacrifice our self-trust, human reason, personal expectations, disappointments and even our very real pain in the midst of trials. We come to our Living God and say "thank you" in faith. Does it mean that we should be thankful for the pains and sufferings themselves? No, thousand times no. I don't want any pains, nor do you.

While we give thanks to our God in the midst of our sufferings and pains, we get to understand and achieve 'JOY' in the Lord. Joy is an abiding well-being that overrides circumstances because it is rooted in spiritual reality. Truly, gratitude to our God can rearrange the interior of our troubled and doubting hearts.

D. BACKWARD REASON

Luke 17:11-19 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. 17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

It truly is good to give thanks to the Lord because we recognize the pattern of His wonderful works in our life. Let's admit it, folks, Christians can be very forgetful, just like nine of the ten lepers in this portion of Scripture we just read, who never came back to thank Jesus for healing their bodies. One, only one, returned to receive a healing of the soul in his worshipful gratitude.

Reflect on His wonderful track records in your life. Was He faithful to meet all your needs? Have you ever skipped a meal, because He didn't provide it for you? Or you didn't have a place to sleep? There were times Karen and I had to rob Paul to pay Peter when the bills were stacking up faster than we could pay. But our Lord has been faithful to us to provide what we need and more for the last 22 years.

Can you see the pattern of His faithfulness and care? Don't forget all He has done. His past works will change the way you look at your present situation and your future path.

The main reason why we are afraid of the future is that we are not sure whether He is going to do what we want Him to do. Most of us who have been in the Lord for some time know His faithfulness of meeting our needs, but we just are not sure about getting what we want from Him. That is where the things get complicated. It becomes a struggle between trusting the Lord's faithfulness and expecting what we want from Him.

Then the next question would be, is it wrong to have our own desires and expect the Lord to provide the answers? As long as those desires are what the Lord wants, then no, it is not wrong. The more we get to know Him, the more we desire what He desires, the less we want for our own.

So as we approach God to ask for new blessings, we should never forget to say thanks for the blessings already given. We should be just as definite in returning thanks as we are in requesting help. But many times we aren't. We are quick to ask for help, but we are slow in giving thanks.

Sometimes, this can be difficult, because we feel as though we have been dealt a bad hand in life or there are things that have happened to us that we don't understand. While other Christians are blessed with things, opportunities and people in every direction they turn; it seems that all you get are disappointments.

But here is something we need to remember:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It is the will of God to thank Him from our hearts everyday.

E. FORWARD REASON

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

As we live in this world, it doesn't take a long time to figure out that some things and people cannot be trusted – politicians, the stock market, media and even ourselves. But when we give thanks to our God, we are reminded of the One in whom we can trust for the next chapter of life.

Now it is easy for me to give thanks when something wonderful happens to me. When something bad happens, however, I think, I won't give thanks for that.

But I don't know that we ever will fully know what was good or bad in our lives until much later. I would even suggest that what you think is a bad thing today may turn out to be a good thing tomorrow or down the road. And what you have thought of as a good thing may, in time, turn out to be a bad thing.

As you look back in time, you will be able to say that the Lord knew what He was doing.

God will take the events of our lives, the good things and the so-called bad things, and put them in the oven of adversity. When it is all done – sometimes much later – we will realize that it is good. What may seem bad today actually may be good tomorrow. We need to trust God.

To give thanks, we must recognize that God is in control of all circumstances surrounding our lives. We must realize that God loves us and is always looking out for our eternal benefit, even if what we are presently going through is difficult.

We must remember that God is wiser than we are. He is always dealing with us for our best and eternal good. But sometimes, what is good for us eternally is not easy for us temporarily. God will make that decision and work in our lives.

There is so much to give thanks for. Have you been thanking God? Let's not wait until Thanksgiving Day. For the Christian, every day should be Thanksgiving.