

# With Thanksgiving to the Lord

Thanksgiving 2024 – Pastor Jonathan Combs – December 1st, 2024 – Psalm 9:1-2

**INTRO:** Good morning church! I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving! We will be starting a new sermon series next week for the Christmas holiday entitled, “The Three Gifts.” But this morning, we are going to extend our time of Thanksgiving into our Christian fellowship.

**ILL:** Thanksgiving, gratitude, is not only a good exercise for people of all walks of life, but also a faithful one in the Christian life. You see, a feast of thanksgiving is not a modern idea. No, thanksgiving is an ancient Judeo-Christian idea. I could take you to many places in the Scriptures and show you where God called His people to celebrate His blessings with feasts of thanksgiving. These will continue in this life and on into eternity.

The ways in which we feast have differed throughout history. I have some questions for some of my brothers and sisters throughout our nation like where are y’all coming up with some of these unique Thanksgiving pies. (See picture) What in the world is “shoofly pie?”



Now, even as American holiday, Thanksgiving is rooted in Christian faith. If I asked you what you think of when you think of Thanksgiving, you may say the food or the pilgrims/Indians or even Charlie Brown, but few of us would mention it’s American Christian origin. On Thursday, November 26th, 1789, President George Washington issued a proclamation to recognize the role of Almighty God in the establishment of the new Constitution and the United States. He wrote, “I 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 and signal favors of Almighty God.”



**NEED:** So you probably feasted this week and enjoyed family, but did you do this with thanksgiving and prayer to Almighty God? We have tendency to separate the physical from the spiritual and we would do well this morning morning to reconnect Thanksgiving to our Lord. Perhaps today, you feel like you have much to be grateful for. How might you turn that into gratitude and prayer unto God? Perhaps for some, though, it has been a terribly hard season. In those times, thanksgiving can feel completely foreign. However, it is in those times that thanksgiving is all the more necessary for your healing.

**Trans:** Friends, thanksgiving is not merely for the mountaintop but also for the valley. Because true thanksgiving is not a response to a circumstance but rather an act of the will in response to Almighty God.

**BODY:** In Psalm 9, King David wrote of how he willed himself to be thankful to the Lord with all of His heart. We can choose to be thankful to the Lord with all our hearts. How can we choose to be thankful to the Lord? The text gives **three decisions** to choose to be thankful to the Lord with all our hearts.

**READ:** Psalm 9:1-2 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. <sup>2</sup> I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

## How to Choose to Be Thankful to the Lord with All Your Heart:

### 1. **Remember God’s wonderful deeds.**

**EXP:** (1) I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will **recount** all of your wonderful deeds.

“**I will**” - Now you notice that there are four “I will” statements here and that I have only chosen three decisions to be thankful. There is good reason for this and its found in the writing itself. The first word “give thanks” is the only one in the Hebrew imperfect tense which means the action is continuous, incomplete, and open-ended. The other three “I wills” are in the Hebrew cohortative which means a determined intention, or a personal commitment to an action. So King David had the continuous desire to thank God and determined to do three things to be continually thankful to the Lord.

“**Give thanks**” (1) (יָדָהּ, *yāḏāh*) - I will choose to thank the Lord. Practicing gratitude allows us to recognize and appreciate the One who brings goodness to us while also humbling us to give credit where it is really due. Thanksgiving to Jesus causes us to make both an upward (appreciation) and inward (humility) move.

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**“Whole heart” (1)** (לב, *lēb*) - all, totality, everything of my mind, will, soul. Partial gratitude is not genuine gratitude at all. Withholding any part of the heart will eventually lead to withholding the whole. Give Him all your heart in thanksgiving. This begins first by remembering ...

**“Recount” (1)** (סָפַר, *sāpār*) - literally to count exactly, accurately, to number, to remember. David is saying that he took time to count all of the things that God had done for him. Remembering the work of the Lord causes us to overflow with gratitude and praise.

**“Wonderful deeds” (1)** (פְּלִאָּה, *pālā*) - Marvelous, wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous. This is the work of the Lord, these are the deeds of the Lord and they are all surpassing. We exist because God is creative, we are saved because God is merciful, we have relationship because God is loving, we are eternal because God desires us. How? The cross, the resurrection, eternity, purpose, how about every good thing?

**ARG:** James 1:17 (NIV) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

## **So we approach God with a heart of thanksgiving:**

Psalm 100:4-5 (ESV) 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.

## **So bring to mind the wonderful deeds of the Lord:**

Philippians 4:8 (ESV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

**ILL:** We don't always choose our circumstances, but we always choose our mindset. After some time passes in marriage you will have good and bad memories together. Joy and pain, unity and disagreement, inspiration and discouragement. We can't always choose these memories, but we can choose what to dwell on. Those who dwell only on the negative will find that they hate their marriage, they want out and that shouldn't surprise anyone. Dwelling on the wondrous works of God will cause us to worship.

**APP:** Do you take time to think of all that God has done for you? When you dwell in the negative it can be hard to choose thanksgiving, but remembering His work will cause you to overflow with it.

## **2. Rejoice in God's perfect character.**

**EXP:** (2) I will be glad and exult in you ...

**“Be glad and exult” (2)** (שָׂמַח, *sāmāḥ*) - These two words are synonymous in the Hebrew and mean to rejoice, be glad, to be joyful. In some translations it summarizes both as one; in the NLT it says, “I will be filled with joy because of you.” I believe David gives two words to emphasize the intensity of this decision.

**“You” (2)** - KJV says, “in thee.” There are many things in this life to get excited or happy about, but few that offer long-lasting consistent joy. Joy is difficult to find in humanity and earthly things because these things are ever changing, but we can have confident joy in the Lord who is never changing. David decided to find his joy in the Lord, where do you find your joy?

So rejoice in the Lord ... ok ... how do you do that? Let me say this, I don't think we are completely lost on how to rejoice in a person. Let me give you some examples. We celebrate athletes saying things like, “he has a great arm, look at the speed, the ‘it’ factor, born leader, freak of nature.” We rejoice in our relationships saying, “that's my best friend, the love of my life, the apple of my eye.” We know how to rejoice in people. So how to rejoice in the Lord?

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Well ... do you know Him? Have you spent time with Him? Here's a healthy exercise to rejoice in Him, consider who He is. Run this down in prayer and contemplation. God is ... (here are a few)

- Creator: God created everything, the heavens and the earth, you and I ...
- Sustainer: God sustains everything, the unseen thing holding all this life together ...
- Loving: God is loving and cares deeply for people ...
- Gracious: God is gracious and merciful, and forgives sins ...
- Spirit: God is a spiritual being who is not limited by time, space or matter ...
- Personal: God is a personal being who is actively involved in people's lives ...
- Trinitarian: God is one being in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ...
- All-powerful: God is all-powerful and all-knowing ...
- Eternal: God is eternal and never changes.

Now try this, who is God to me personally? God is light, without Him I am in darkness. He gives my life meaning and purpose. He makes sense of my relationships and my needs. He brings meaning to my pain, He makes this life, the ups and downs, have eternal value. Who is He to you?

**ARG:** Psalm 16:11 (ESV) You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

**Many will never be satisfied but God is more than enough:**

Psalm 4:6-8 (MSG) Why is everyone hungry for *more*? "More, more," they say. "More, more." I have God's more-than-enough, more joy in one ordinary day than they get in all their shopping sprees. At day's end I'm ready for sound sleep, For you, God, have put my life back together.

**ILL:** When I was a freshmen in high school, I thought it was so cool to get to ride to school with my big brother who was a senior. I figured I had protection from him and his friends and a certain level of clout. That feeling comes from a need, a need to have a champion. We all want it, some of us may deny it, but we all want a champion. We have the true one in Jesus. Rejoice that you have an ever present friend, an always faithful companion, a completely merciful Savior, and an all powerful defender.

**APP:** Where do you find your joy? When your ever changing environment discourages you, where do you seek to find joy? Only in the Lord Jesus will you find what you seek.

## 3. Sing Praise to God's beautiful name.

**EXP:** (2) I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

**"Sing praise"** (2) (זָמַר, *zāmar*) - to sing, sing praise, make music, to play a musical instrument. Let me ask you this, should we only praise when we feel like it? Regardless of the conditions, I will praise You! Praise is not the expression of my environment but the overflow of my heart.

**"Your name"** (2) (שֵׁם, *šēm*) - name, reputation, fame, or glory. Our praise is specific. We praise many things but our utmost praise should be given to the one Name, the only name under heaven by which we are saved. The name of Jesus. Is His name on our lips in praise, is His glory in our songs.

**ARG:** Psalm 66:2 (NIV) Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.

**We praise Him at all times:**

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT) Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord!

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## **We make a sacrifice of praise knowing what is to come:**

Hebrews 13:12-15 (ESV) So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a **sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

ILL: The prison break of Acts 16 where Paul and Silas were singing praises even in prison ... “<sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing hymns** to God ...”

APP: Do you praise only when you feel like it? C.S. Lewis once said, “Praise is inner health made audible.” When we struggle to praise it reveals our heart, but when we determine to praise anyway it changes our heart.

**CONCLUSION:** Church, true thanksgiving is not a response to the ups and down of this life, but an act of the will in response to Almighty God. Will you choose to be thankful to the Lord with all your heart by ...

- Remembering His deeds
- Rejoicing in Him.
- Singing praise to His name.

Let's pray.