

The Thankful Heart.

Text: Psa 92:1-6

Suggested Hymns:

563, 564, 449, 284, 567

1) There Is Abundant Cause For Gratitude

2) Consider The Beauty Of A Thankful Heart

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 92:1-6, ¹ *A Song for the Sabbath day. It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;* ² *To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night,* ³ *On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And on the harp, With harmonious sound.*

⁴ *For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.* ⁵ *O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.* ⁶ *A senseless man does not know, Nor does a fool understand this.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday and this reminds us of the first mention of the “Feast of Harvest” and the “Feast of Ingathering” which is recorded in Exodus 23:16. A few verses later we read that *“The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.”*

To this the people rose to the response of thankfulness. Gratitude was the dominant tone in the music of their soul. It was a spontaneous song of humble, trusting souls, which exclaimed with Jacob of old in Genesis 32:10, ¹⁰ *“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant.*

What, then, can we do on this Harvest Thanksgiving Day but ask God to give us *A Grateful Heart.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. There Is Abundant Cause For Gratitude

All creation praises the Lord. The heavens declare the glory of God. Nature sings a hallelujah chorus to its Maker. The birds greet the rising sun with a song and sing the setting sun a cheerful farewell.

But man, the crown of creation, endowed by his Maker with intelligence and speech, can so distrust his vision and cripple his heart and sour his spirit that thanks do not enter his heart and hymns of praise die upon his lips.

He can become so pinched with his troubles and so absorbed in what he has not, that all his words become those of discontent. He can become so bowed down with a sense of injustice and so embittered by jealousy that a whine runs through all his speech.

His eyes and ears and energies can become so concentrated on practical ends that he plods through life without noticing the wonder of God's creation. With every bush and shrub aflame with the power and wisdom of God, he stands there untouched.

He can become so puffed up about the hard and deserving work he has done, about how he has earned his way and paid fully for all he has received, about being a self-made man, that all sense of gratitude to God dries up.

His eyes can be so glued on the things of this earth, and his form so stooped with constantly picking up pebbles on the beach, that he cannot lift up his eyes to God from whom all blessings flow.

Such a person the psalmist calls a *senseless* man and a *fool*. "Senseless" is also translated as dull, stupid or brutish. This *is* strong language and bitter rebuke. Ingratitude to the Giver of all gifts stamps a person as a spiritual fool and dunce. It certainly reveals a sad lack of spiritual insight and understanding and places a man, the crown of creation, on the level of the beasts of the field.

Against this dark background of an ungrateful heart and spiritual stupidity look at the beautiful words of a grateful heart. *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; ² To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night, ³ On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And on the harp, With harmonious sound.*

⁴ For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. ⁵ O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.

None of us is a self-made man. Nothing that we have or are, in the last analysis, has been earned. We are all the recipients of charity — the charity of the past, the charity of our friends, the charity of our country.

Not one of our accomplishments would be possible without the deeds of those who have gone before us and who co-operate with us. What a debt we owe our parents, who have labored and toiled for us and, God grant it, have trained us in the way of godliness and prayed for us!

What a debt we owe the pioneers of our country, who, under God, have built our nation! What a debt we owe the teachers who have instructed us and the Church which has nurtured us! For us many heroes have dared and sacrificed and bled. But above all, what a debt we owe the almighty, reigning, and guiding God of creation, of loving-kindness and grace, of faithfulness and abiding truth.

On this Harvest Thanksgiving Day we ask God to open our eyes to see His hand of love outstretched in blessing over our life. We are to acknowledge sincerely in our heart, and express it in grateful prayer and song, that all gifts of body and mind and soul have been showered upon by Jehovah, the faithful covenant-God of grace.

Unto His name we are to sing praises. The name of the Most High, exalted over all, is God's inmost essence as it is revealed to us in His acts and Word. He revealed Himself to Israel in the desert wanderings by the pillar of fire in the night and by the pillar of the cloud in the day. The heavens above us, with the shining sun and moon, planets and stars, reveal to us the name of the Most High and His preserving power, His benevolence and love.

All that is upon earth, every growing plant, every song of the birds, all the mysterious powers of nature, preach a mighty sermon to the hearts, open to their voice, that this world is held in the hollow of God's hand. What have we that we have not received from the Giver of all good gifts? Our bodies, which are fearfully and wonderfully made, are a creation of God's hands. He has preserved our health and given us wisdom and understanding and success to the labour of our hands and mind.

The crops which we have harvested are His gift. Without God's sunshine and rain the seed in the earth would not have sprouted or matured. He has guarded us and preserved us from sickness, accident, and other misfortune. The land that we own and the money we possess belong to God, the Owner of all things. The peace which as a nation we enjoy we must ascribe to the guidance of God, the Lord of the nations.

And what shall we say regarding the gifts of divine pardon, reconciliation, and peace, and the hope of heaven? Oh, the name of the Lord has been revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, our sin-atonement Saviour, Shepherd, and Friend.

And think of the faith that lives in our heart, and the love of God which dwells in our soul and influences and permeates our life and actions, and the hope of the eternal paradise which cheers our night and gives to our life purpose and a goal beyond fleeting time and the changing scenes of an ever-changing world.

Has not the name of the Lord Most High been revealed to us in the wonderful work which He has performed in our heart? There He has planted the living seed of His Word and by His power caused it to germinate and bring forth the fruit of Christian faith, love, and hope. Wherever we look, whether it be in the kingdom of nature or the Kingdom of Grace, we see the name of the Most High placarded before our eyes in letters of shining gold and silver.

And the psalmist mentions in particular some attributes of God which we are gratefully to admire, laud and praise in all the great works of God, He calls our attention to the grace and loving-kindness of God. The grateful heart is a humble heart, which deeply feels its unworthiness and marvels at the bounty of a gracious God, whose mercies are new every morning to us stumbling, frail servants, who in no way have deserved the goodness of the Lord.

Meditation upon God's mercy will cure us of any inclination to boast of, and gloat over, our achievements and blessings and will help us to walk humbly with God. If the Lord had dealt with us after our sins and rewarded us according to our iniquities, we should all be languishing in poverty, and our nation would be embroiled in the horrors of war. It is God's grace that we are not altogether consumed and that we still enjoy the temporal and spiritual blessings that are ours.

The psalmist wants us also ponder the faithfulness of God. He has been faithful to us in the performance of His promise that as long as the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night have not ceased. He has faithfully fulfilled His promise of love and mercy, of guiding and helping, strength and comforting power in all our needs, in labour and toil, in sickness and health, in gladness and sorrow.

Of course, not all the ways and works of God can we grasp with our understanding. There are mysterious providences of God's grace and of God's punitive justice. Some cherished plan and ambition of your life may have fallen to the ground and caused you a bleeding heart and sleepless nights. In the darkness of some bereavement or grief you cried out with broken heart: "*O God, why?*" But we are to trust the grace and faithfulness of Jehovah, the God of grace in Christ, that all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to those who love Him and that all things must work together for good to those who have made the Most High their Refuge.

We cannot understand and see what purposes God has in mind by permitting wars and terrorism, floods and fires. Nevertheless such events should call all people to repentance and the children of God to deeper consecration and more fruitful living.

There is only one thing which we sinful and short-sighted mortals can do when we look back at the wonderful works of God and contemplate His grace and faithfulness and ponder on the very deep thoughts of God.

We must acknowledge that all our blessings come from the hands of the Most High, and all His providences ought to move us to *give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;* ² *To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night.*

Our hearts, our homes, and our sanctuaries are to be temples of praise and shrines of thanksgiving. With humble adoration we are to exclaim, ⁵ *O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.* Blessed be the name of the Lord!

2. Consider The Beauty Of A Thankful Heart

The psalmist gives us abundant reasons why a Christian's heart should always resound with thanksgiving. He also wants us to ponder on the beauty of

the grateful heart. He only states, *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises*, and he leaves it to the Christian heart to search the oracles of God for the reasons why it is good to begin the day with a hymn of praise and to close our eyes in sleep with a song of gratitude re-echoing in our soul.

We will briefly describe the beauty and blessing of the thankful heart and leave it to your meditation to enlarge upon the richness of the spirit of gratitude:

A truly grateful heart pleases Jehovah. How often He commands His children to render thanks unto Him! Very frequently the Book of Psalms issues the stirring request *“O give thanks to the Lord; for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.”* Encouragements to thanksgiving occur again and again in the epistles of the apostles. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul urges them to *give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*¹

To the Colossians Paul writes, *“And be thankful.”*² The epistles breathe the spirit of a grateful heart, and the Book of Psalms is a music hall of thanksgiving, a mighty collection of thanksgiving literature.

When Jesus cleansed ten lepers, His heart was grieved that nine failed to return to give thanks; but His heart rejoiced over the thankfulness of the one who returned to pay the debt of gratitude. Thanksgiving is obedience to God’s command and a proof that we realise from whom all blessings flow and that we appreciate the goodness and grace of God. Please your God of mercy by the offering of a grateful heart and life.

The grateful heart is the happy heart. Our text says, *For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work.* The spirit of gratitude in the heart puts joy into the soul and a song on the lips and cheerfulness into your outlook upon life. A character that radiates happy thankfulness, contentment, and good cheer is a welcome guest in any company.

The spirit of discontent, however, of sulkiness and complaining and constant dissatisfaction sours life and scatters thorns on the pilgrim way of fellow-travellers. Gratitude makes for a happy, sunny disposition, which is a benediction and dew of heaven upon loved ones and friends. It lends beauty to character and enriches our social life.

The grateful heart is a source of strength in our reverses. Paul indicates this in the wonderful words, *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*³ Running through all our petitions and crying for help should be the melody of thanksgiving and the chorus of praise for all the many blessings enjoyed even in the midst of sorrow and cutting grief. The grateful heart in its prayers is not only conscious of its many needs, but also of its rich blessings. Even though a cross may weigh heavily and the thorn remains, the voice of thanksgiving is not stilled and the heart is not embittered because the soul sees in the dark valley the twinkling stars of God's love and mercy.

Thus the grateful heart, always appreciative of God's sustaining, guiding, and blessing grace, enables us to bear our burdens in patience, Christian fortitude and hope.

Then, too, the grateful heart, being a humble heart, keeps us mindful of the truth that in spite of the burdens that oppress us we are much better off than we deserve. Shall we, who deserve nothing but punishment and are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, ever grumble and be dissatisfied, ever murmur against the Lord and His ways and providences?

The grateful heart remembers its own unworthiness and sinfulness and thus remains cheerful and content in dark days of affliction and want, of sickness and unemployment, of disappointment and grief.

Finally, the grateful heart helps us to continue in our service of kindness and helpfulness to those near and dear to us and to the kingdom of God and the nation which we love. Our love and service are not always appreciated in full measure, and ingratitude and loveless criticism may tend to dampen our zeal and relax our efforts and cramp our heart in glum and bitter sullenness.

But the thankful heart knows that the best of us never sufficiently thank God for all His mercies, and it sees how God permits His sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust and continues to open His hand in blessing upon us all.

Thus the thankful heart, conscious of the Lord's goodness, continues to make life a blessing and does not permit even ingratitude to check or hinder the services of unselfish kindness and to stop the fountain of love.

Oh, the beauty and blessing of the grateful heart! It pleases God, ennoble our character, and enriches our life. It is a bulwark of strength in the days when black clouds darken our way and a power for continuous service of unselfish love.

But after all is said and done, we realise just how weak our earthly thanksgiving is, how incomplete and faulty our life of gratitude is. Therefore we long for that eternal day of thanksgiving when, standing before the great white throne, we shall join the angelic hosts and the saints made perfect in those heavenly hymns of thanksgiving which shall resound through the halls of bliss throughout eternity. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Ephesians 5:20

² Colossians 3:15

³ Philippians 4:6