

A Grateful Heart.

Text: Psa 105:1-5

Suggested Hymns:
563, 561, 446, 566, 526

- 1) How a grateful heart is obtained
- 2) The expressions to which our grateful heart should move us

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 105:1-5, ¹ *Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!* ² *Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!* ³ *Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord!* ⁴ *Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face evermore!* ⁵ *Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

The very fact that people must be told to be thankful testifies to the ingratitude of man. If we were all as thankful as we should be, it would not be necessary for any one to tell us: *O give thanks! Forget not the benefits¹ which you have received.*

Like love, thanksgiving is not something that can be produced in us by commanding and driving. It must be a natural growth, an overflowing appreciation of the manifold and untold blessings of God.

But, alas! such gratitude is not to be found among men. Mankind is an ungrateful race. We read in Isaiah 1:2-3, ² *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; ³ The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider."*

Through his own sin and wickedness man brings misery and misfortune upon himself, and then he increases his guilt by refusing to give thanks to God and even accuses God. This is all too familiar. It first occurred in the Garden of Eden

as we read in Genesis 3:12, ¹² *Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”*²

But although ingratitude is everywhere, it is nevertheless shameful as we read in Isaiah 1:4, ⁴ *Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward.* We must flee from ingratitude.

We have come here today not simply to give thanks on this Harvest Thanksgiving Day, but also to be cleansed from our ingratitude and to be filled with thanksgiving, so that throughout the entire year we may offer to God joyful thanksgiving.

With this purpose in mind, let us pray that the Holy Spirit may bestow upon us grateful hearts through the words of our text. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. How A Grateful Heart Is Obtained

A grateful heart is not obtained by a self-righteous appraisal of our own works and merits.

Our text by its very silence concerning man and his works and merits testifies that those who pride themselves on their own accomplishments, virtues, and deserved rewards will never obtain a grateful heart. How can they? We certainly will not thank some one else for that which we ourselves have earned, won, and gained through our own efforts, sacrifices, and self-denials.

Look at Nebuchadnezzar. We read in Daniel 4:29-30, ²⁹ *At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon.* ³⁰ *The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”*

Pride in our own achievement excludes genuine gratitude. And since no one is as successful as he wishes to be, since some tears, some misfortune, some distress, falls to all people, these self-righteous people who are convinced that they deserve much and ought to be rewarded according to their own merits become dissatisfied, embittered, disgruntled, and ungrateful.

No matter how much they gain, they are persuaded that they have deserved more. Every setback, every ill turn in their own affairs, arouses their resentment. They have no confidence in the goodness, mercy and grace of God. By and by, even here in this life, many of them discover that their own merits are mere counterfeits, and then dissatisfaction and despair lay hold upon them. Such examples are Cain, and Saul.

Even David³ and Peter were in danger of this self-righteous ingratitude. We read concerning Peter in Matthew 19:27, ²⁷ *Then Peter answered and said to [Jesus], "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"*

All who are in love with their own goodness and their own merits can never join the psalmist here in our text in praising God. ¹ *Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!* ² *Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!* ³ *Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord!*

If they do, it is mere external lip-service. In their innermost hearts they build an altar over which hangs their own photograph, and before this altar they pray. There they utter in their thoughts such a prayer as this: *"I, I, I, John Smith, what a wonderful man I am! Against what difficulties have I struggled! What obstacles have I overcome! What success have I accomplished! How beautifully I am adorned with all manner of virtues! How much better I am than all my fellow-beings!*

If the world only knew of the genuine value, the precious qualities, the priceless abilities, that are in me! The ungrateful and selfish fools of this earth do not know me; but one there is who knows and appreciates what there is in me of richest quality, that is I myself, and I will daily worship at this shrine of my own precious self."

Even though no one actually builds such altars to himself, yet this kind of refined or secret idolatry lives in the hearts of many people. That concludes the explanation of ungrateful hearts.

Now, if we are to have a grateful heart, we must obtain it in the manner which our text proposes to us, that is, by contemplating God, the Source of all our blessings. His name and His works must be the subject of our meditation.

Our text tells us: *“Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! ² Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! ³ Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! ⁴ Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face evermore! ⁵ Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.*

By telling us to remember His marvellous works it indicates that true gratitude is first of all a matter of the heart. That is important for us, especially, of those who attend church and who are accustomed to sing, *“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”*⁴

It is so easy to repeat such words again and again without being deeply impressed with the truth of what we are saying. Let us remember that even David who has made the most beautiful thanksgiving hymns that have ever been sung on this earth, was in danger of becoming ungrateful, in danger of merely repeating the praises of God with his lips.

Let us therefore be on our guard that at all times when we glorify God in words that the sentiment of our hearts may be in harmony with the utterance of our lips.

Let us therefore remember, actually remember, the marvellous works of God. Think of the wonders of creation, the beauties of it, which have inspired painters and poets, the most gifted of whom have tried in vain to picture in colour and song what they saw in creation. The Psalmist says in Psalm 106:2, ² *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can declare all His praise?*

Today, especially, as we celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving we are to think of the almost unlimited wealth, resources, riches, and possibilities of our country.

The Jews were reminded of the riches and advantages of their little country of about four hundred square miles. We read in Deuteronomy 8:7-14, ⁷ *“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ “a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ “a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig*

copper. ¹⁰ ***“When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.***

¹¹ ***Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,*** ¹² ***“lest -- when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;”*** ¹³ ***“and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;”*** ¹⁴ ***“when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.***

What are we to say of the immense country which God has given to us and to our children here in Australia? What variety of climates, what abundance of products, fruits, vegetables, grain, nuts, herbs, and trees! What fields, mountains, forests, rivers, and seas, that God has provided for us here! It is impossible to list all our blessings.

We have the one language which is spoken and is respected everywhere on earth. The literature, the schools, the libraries, not to speak of the glorious religious and political liberty which we are enjoying under our free government. And all this without any merit of our own. God’s work, God’s gift, God’s blessing! Should that not stir the heart of all of us to give thanks to our gracious God from whom all these blessings flow?

And then remember what God has done for you personally. Think of the parents He gave you, the husband, the wife, the children, the Church, the school, your health. Think of the days and years in which He has sustained you, the happiness He has bestowed upon you. With the Psalmist we say ¹² ***What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?***⁵

Above all let us not forget His marvellous work done for us through the redemption of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. We deserve damnation, but Jesus took it from us. Remember the words of Isaiah 53:4-5, ⁴ ***Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.*** ⁵ ***But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.***

Remember the explanation of the Second Article. *At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.*

All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

How patiently Jesus has sought you, reproved you, forgiven you, drawn you to Himself and to the Father, bestowed upon you His Holy Spirit, and granted you His means of grace in Word and Sacrament.

Remember the explanation of the Third Article. *The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.*

In this Christian church day after day He fully forgives my sins and the sins of all believers. On the last day He will raise me and all the dead and give me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

Whoever sincerely believes and honestly contemplates all these works and deeds of our gracious God would surely be filled with gratitude! In such contemplation, such consideration, a grateful heart is created in us, as was created in Jacob when he said 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; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.***

It was such contemplation that moved David to utter those words of humble gratitude in 2 Samuel 7:18-29. Reading verses 22-24, ²² ***“Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*** ²³ ***“And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name -- and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land -- before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? ²⁴ “For You***

have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God.

It was such contemplation that moved Paul to give thanks in almost every one of his epistles. For example, we read in Romans 1:8, ⁸ *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.* And in 1 Corinthians 1:4, ⁴ *I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.* And in Philippians 1:3, ³ *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.*

Such contemplation also moved Paul to bless God. In such context the word “bless” also means to praise God. We read in 2 Corinthians 1:3, ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.* And in Ephesians 1:3, ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*

If you do not have a grateful heart which makes sweet melody to the Lord for all His benefits and blessings, then remember God’s wonderful works and come to His sanctuary, where they are spoken of.

Then also partake of the Sacrament frequently, where you are assured by God Himself, in the strongest manner possible, that He has given you His richest blessings and whereby you are also assured that He will withhold no real and lasting blessing from you.

We read in Romans 8:32 that ³² *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

2. The Expressions To Which Our Grateful Heart Should Move Us.

But let us not overlook the other part of our text, which tells us of the expressions to which our grateful heart should move us.

If true gratitude fills our hearts, we should at every possible opportunity appear here in God’s house to join the congregation in hymns of praise, and by our appearance also encourage the pastor to do his work with joy and with gratitude to God.

But indeed, the services of God's house should not suffice for us. We should give thanks in our own homes. Our text says *Talk of all His wondrous works!* We do this through family devotions, and private devotion. Our whole conduct, demeanour, behaviour, and conversation should be that of a grateful Christian.

We should gladly and willingly and gratefully contribute to the work which makes known God's wonderful works to all people, whereby ungrateful people are changed into thanksgiving children of God.

There is mission-work and Church work we can support. The circulation of Christian literature, not even forgetting to guard the mottoes, calendars, and pictures with which we adorn our homes. Be sure that they suggest to us and others God's praises. Even our Christmas cards, birthday cards, and the like, should always give all the glory to God and show forth His praises. Our text says, *Make known His deeds among the peoples!*

Keep your heart, therefore, with all diligence. Do not allow it to become a murmuring, discontented, self-adoring, self-righteous workshop of Satan, but give the Holy Spirit every opportunity to fill it with the remembrance and the thoughts of God's glory, holiness, and goodness.

Talk of His wondrous works, sing His praises, call upon His name, make known His deeds, contemplate His mercies, so that, instead of the despair of Cain, Judas and Saul, you may feel the gratitude of David and sing⁶

O that I had a thousand voices
To praise my God with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices,
Would then proclaim in grateful songs
To all, wherever I might be,
What great things God has done for me. Amen.

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

¹ Psalm 103:2

² See also Genesis 4:13-14

³ Psa. 73

⁴ Hymns 525, 526, 538, 642

⁵ Psalm 116:12

⁶ Hymn 446