

Give Thanks to the Lord

November 18, 2018

Psalm 106:1-5

1 Praise the LORD! O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. 2 Who can utter the mighty doings of the LORD, or declare all his praise? 3 Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times. 4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people; help me when you deliver them; 5 that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory in your heritage.

Thanksgiving is coming up this Thursday. So, today's service is our typical Thanksgiving service with a message of thanks with encouragement to be thankful to God and to remember we owe our thanks to God for our multiple blessings. Let us praise God for all the things that we are thankful for.

The Scripture today is the best way to start off a reading "Praise the LORD!" It is the best way to start off a day "Praise the LORD!" The psalmist starts with a statement of exclamation "Praise the LORD!" with emphasis, an exclamation point, as if to shout it out loud " Praise the LORD!" Then the psalmist repeats, for further emphasis, by stating "give thanks to the Lord." So, the focus is on praise and thanks to God. Then he states why we are to praise the Lord. It is because the Lord is good. Let's take the time to think this through. We give thanks to God because of the multitude of blessings the Lord has presented to us - especially the gift of salvation. It is a gift beyond human ability to repay. And thanks for God's love and grace granted to us. Today the psalmist tells us to thank the Lord because the Lord is good. To reflect upon how the Lord is good takes more time to analyze than we can accomplish in one sermon. I encourage you to take the time to reflect upon how the Lord is good. The Lord has provided everything. The Lord gives life and provides all of the valuable resources to sustain life. The Lord has sustained the people in the past. The Lord continues to sustain the people in the present. The Lord will continue to sustain the people in the future. And the Lord gives us hope for whatever happens at the end of life. For all of these things we owe our thanks to the Lord for the Lord is good.

The psalmist asks "Who can utter the mighty doings of the LORD, or declare all his praise?" This is an affirmation in light of all that God has done. In other words, no one is capable of adequately praising God. Our praise to the Lord does not measure up to all the Lord's blessings given to us. We cannot do enough, praise enough, or thank the Lord enough, compared to what the Lord has done, continues to do, and promises to do, for us.

So, what are we to do? Well, that is one of my all time favorite questions. What do we do? The reason it is one of my favorites is because too often we do not seek guidance from the Bible. We get busy in life and we get distracted and we fail to do what the Bible tells us to do. We end up doing our own thing instead of God's thing and we expect God to support it when we should be doing the will of God and asking God to help us change. So, the question that is asked "what are we to do?" is a question that seeks divine guidance. The psalmist answers the question. Observe justice and do righteousness at all times. I think it is important to emphasize the key words "at all times." We are to always observe justice and always do what is righteous. We are to conform to God's will of justice and righteousness.

Happiness is found in pleasing the Lord because we appreciate all the goodness of the Lord. We appreciate all the good things the Lord has done, continues to do, and will do. So, we find great joy in our efforts to please the Lord.

The psalmist raises an individual petition "remember me." Individual petitions in our culture tend to be selfish but we learn from the Bible that an individual petition is raised not for selfish reasons. I think it is very important to emphasize that the request is not for the self. The request is for the Lord's will to be done through the individual and for the Lord's glory. The desire of the psalmist is to help deliver the people and to see the people prosper as the Lord's chosen people. The psalmist rejoices in the gladness of the nation because it is God's nation and he rejoices in the glory of its heritage because its heritage is God's nation. So, the individual petition is not about the self, not about the individual, but about God and God's glory and God's people.

The contemporary lessons for us is very powerful because the nature of our society is that individual petitions are for the self. There is an ongoing parallel characteristic of the Bible. That is how it relates to people then is the way that it relates to people today because the nature of people has always been for the self. Whereas, the Bible teaches, encourages, and commands that people be for the will of the Lord.

There is a chronic biblical situation - conflict between will of the Lord and human failure to respond - from Genesis to Revelation. Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament; from ancient Israel, to the time of Jesus, to the world today, it is the same scenario. The disparity between the will of God and the response of the people of God. God's wonderful works are followed by disobedience which is followed by God's compassion. God's commandments and the promise of the people to obey is followed by the failure of the people to obey. God's ultimate solution is the love of God, a gift from God, for our salvation. For that we owe a tremendous debt of thanks to the Lord. So, give thanks to the Lord for the Lord is good.