

November 19, 2016 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
1 Chronicles 16:34/Psalm 100 Give Thanks to the Lord, by Andy
McDonald

There's a song I learned in the early 1990's that I still sing to encourage my heart. It is an adaptation of Psalm 92 verses 1 and 2:

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to praise our God most high.
To tell about his love in the morning and his faithfulness at night.
Praise him! Praise our God most. In the morning, praise him: Praise our God most high.

This week our world here in the United States, will for a moment, focus on giving thanks. Tucked somewhere between parades and football we will give consideration to being thankful.

The text that prompted this sermon is found in 1 Chronicles 16:34. It is just one verse or stanza in David's Song of Thanksgiving that he gave to Asaph and the Levites to sing on the day he brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem to a special tent he had prepared.

It was a great day of national rejoicing. The song begins, "Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness, Let the whole world know what he has done!" The song recounts the actions and involvement of God with humanity and his closing of the song begins with our verse 34 and runs through vs 36:

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. Cry out, "Save us, O God of our salvation! Gather and rescue us from among the nations, so we can thank your holy name and rejoice and praise you. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!" And at the end of the song all the people shouted, "Amen"!

Do you find it comes natural to you, sort of easy to say “Thank You” or is it a little of an uphill battle, a little bit of a struggle to form those two little words, “thank you?”

There is some root in our humanity that wishes to have the upper hand and that desire hangs on even as Christ followers.

We want to be the grantor of wishes

We want to be the one who rescues

We want to save some sinner

We want to bring what’s needed to the table

We want to be strong and adequate and capable

We want to be the missionary bringing light to some heathen

We want to tip our server so they feel more gratitude towards us than us towards them. Sure they served us but we tipped them well, be bought them.

When we open our mouths and say those two little words, “Thank You” we transpose all the power, we become, in that moment the vulnerable recipient. And so our pride does battle with our gratitude. To be grateful, to say thank you makes us recipients, receivers of someone’s grace. And we like to earn what we get, to, by our actions, somehow deserve our blessings!

But what if. What if gratitude and thankfulness is at the very heart of celebration and ministry?

Henri Nouwen wrote: “When I think about what it means to live and act in the name of Jesus, I realize that what I have to offer to others is not my intelligence, skill, power, influence, or connections, but my own human brokenness, through which the love of God can manifest itself. Ministry is entering with our human brokenness into communion with others and speaking a word of hope. The great paradox of ministry is that when we minister in our weakness, we receive from those to whom we go. The more in touch we are with

our own need for healing and salvation, the more open we are to receiving in gratitude what others have to offer us.”

I love the moments we will hear about after our Meet Worship Serve Sabbath on December 3. For those who may not know Meet Worship Serve is when we shut down our first service and classes and sign up and then go out that morning and serve in a whole variety of ways then come back and celebrate at our noon worship.

But there will be the stories that often follow service. Maybe it’s your story, or maybe it will be your story. There are varieties of stories but there is a central theme, basically “I went to help and serve and I was blessed. I got more than I gave. I was the one blessed and served, etc.”

It is funny to me that we hear Jesus say that it is more blessed to give than to receive, but then we are shocked when it happens to us.

But here’s the deal if we always take the gospel and justice and service, if we hog the role of dispensers of the grace that God has given us, how and when do those we serve get the joy of being a grace dispenser?

It is hard for us to realize what Nouwen came to grasp.
“... to accept that the best we can do is probably not give but receive. By our receiving in a true and open way, those who give to us can become aware of their own gifts. After all, we come to recognize our own gifts in the eyes of those who receive them gratefully.”

What this means is that what we like to hear is what we need to say more and with sincerity of meaning. To become good recipients who can with genuine humility of a beggar simply say “Thank you.”

A heart of gratitude changes us, softens us, makes us better people.

Psalm 100 is a short 5 verse Psalm of thanksgiving.

Shout with joy to the Lord, O earth!
 Worship the Lord with gladness.
 Come before him, singing with joy.
 Acknowledge that the Lord is God!
 He made us, and we are his.
 We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, go into his courts with praise.
 Give thanks to him and bless his name.
 For the Lord is good.
 His unfailing love continues forever, and
 His faithfulness continues to each generation.”

In the Message paraphrase vs 4 says Enter with the password, “Thank You!”

Tucked in this short Psalm are six reasons to worship the Lord with gladness, and joy, and thanksgiving. Six justifications of why the password is Thank You.

First is the Lord is God. Peterson paraphrases it “Know this: God is God, and God, God.”

The ultimate, that and who above whom there is none. The Lord is God. When God chose to show himself to Moses he made all his goodness pass before him. He revealed himself as one who shows kindness and mercy to whomever he chooses.”

If there is any fuzziness about what this God is like we have the four gospels that tell us the story of Jesus, God come to us in human flesh, God incarnate. And because God is God we can worship and we can use the password “Thank You!”

Second we come filled with gratitude because He is the creator. Want a heart of joy and gladness and thanksgiving? Just look at creation.

This week in my prayer time I wrote to God, “But of all your gifts beyond family and friends, and maybe ahead of them at times, is your great out of doors, what is called nature or the natural world. I seem to like it best un-messed with by humans, and when human’s tinkering is most appreciated is when it designs and builds “creates” in harmonious ways with nature. Maybe it is materials or design or color but in harmony with nature is everything an airbrush t-shirt store isn’t. Or one of those tourist trap junky souvenir shops is not. Who can beat a mountain overlook, or standing at the beach, or sitting in a swamp, or hiking a trail, or canoeing a remote stream, or studying a single tiny flower. I think of the sanity of Central Park in the middle of Manhattan madness. When what you do is prevalent it calms and energizes at the same time. It awakens and refreshes. Something about nature calls us to be our better selves.”

Our God is God and he is creator. The third reason for entering with thanksgiving is that he made us. We are his creation, his people! His well tended sheep. I’ve talked to some people who have spent a lot of time around sheep and they tell me sheep are dumb. They REALLY need a shepherd to tend them. And we God’s sheep and in our bleating voices because we are tended so well we say “Thank you.”

Those are the first 3 reasons for entering God’s presence with thanksgiving. The other three are all in the last verse of this psalm.

Number 4 The Lord is good! Not capricious, not searching to catch us doing wrong, not withholding any good thing. Maybe that’s not your picture of God. Maybe you have embedded in your mind a more puritanical God from Jonathan Edwards famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. Listen to the word to us from this Psalm “THE LORD IS GOOD!” James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes down from the father.” God is good he is for you wants you has emptied heaven to secure your place with him. And from our position of utter spiritual bankruptcy we simply say “Thank You!” We let him express his gifts, We let him save us and we just say thank you.

Paul was clear we don't say thank you for something we earn we say thank you for a gift.

David goes on to tell us something else about God that supports the reality that God is good. "His unfailing love continues forever."

We are so used to human love that fails. Vows of love, not forever, but just till death do us part, we see them fail.

We sing about it in one of the songs "His love never fails, it never gives up, never runs out on me."

YOU are loved with an unfailing love that continues forever. His love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. You are not at risk of losing his love. He loves you and that is all from his side, nothing conditional about it. It is who he is, God is love. And nothing you can do will make his perfect love any more perfect and nothing you can do that will shrink his love.

David says there's good cause to for enter his presence with the password, "Thank You"!

God is God, God is Creator, God is our maker and we are his people, his sheep, God is good. God's love endures forever, and finally. God is faithful generation to generation his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Some of you seniors are worried about your grandchildren, or great grandchildren and their generation and God and faith and what that will mean. The frame of culture and technology and politics and economics will be what it is, but clearly the picture in the frame of God's faithfulness is a constant.

Your life will be better with more thank you's said. We can say thank you more to the people we love, our spouse, our kids, our parents, our friends.

When we receive from them and say thank you, we enable them to become aware of the gifts God's given them to share.

Living with more gratitude will move us away from the life defeating realms of resentment.

Resentment blocks action	Gratitude lets us move toward new possibilities
Resentment makes us cling to negative feelings	Gratitude allows us to let go.
Resentment makes us prisoners of our passions	Gratitude helps us transcend our compulsions
Resentment exhausts us by complicated jealousies and ambiguities, stirring up destructive desires for revenge	Gratitude takes our fatigue away and gives us new vitality and enthusiasm
Resentment entangles us in endless distractions, pulling us down to banal preoccupations	Gratitude anchors our deepest self beyond this world and allows us to be involved without losing ourselves

How can we break through the chains of resentment and free ourselves from the passion that paralyzes us? Resentment has very deep roots in our human condition and is not easily cleared away. But once we confess our resentments within a safe and supportive faith community, we create space for forgiveness and freedom. When this happens, God's liberating grace is able to make all things new. We learn how to sing a new song and develop a new spirit of thanksgiving in which all of life can be received as a gift. (Nouwen)

This week we celebrate “Thanksgiving” maybe our healthiest holiday in spite of our common gluttony! But it is an opportunity to practice thankfulness. I’m afraid that if we only do it on Thursday, that while we might be blessed that day, that it just won’t be enough to start a habit of taking time to say “Thank You.”

So as you leave today there’s a little bulletin looking handout called “A Week of Thanksgiving.” Starting this afternoon just list to God the things for which you wish to give him thanks. Then each day this week work to create a list that is fresh each day with no duplication no repeats.

Saying thank you this week to God puts us in the right position. We recognize he has the upper hand. We acknowledge what it says in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that “God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus.”

Maybe practicing an attitude of gratitude for a whole week will create in us the humble recognition that our life is not our own to be defended but a gift to be shared. All we have has been given to us. Our part is to be grateful and to give thanks.



What is one of your best “Thanksgiving” memories?

Do you find it easier to say “Thank You” or “You’re Welcome”?

What do we take from people if we are always the giver, teacher, provider, supplier, sharer, rescuer?

How can receiving from others be a gift to them?

What challenges in your life could be solved by greater gratitude?

Psalm 100 gives six reasons to enter God’s presence with the password “Thank You.” What do you think about the six reasons?

How hard is it for you to believe that God loves you forever and that you can’t perform to enlarge or reduce his perfect love?

How can you see God’s faithfulness in your generation?



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