

**asPsalm 105: 1-3; “The Beauty of Christian Thanksgiving”, A Thanksgiving Sermon,  
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

As we approach another National Thanksgiving Day this Thursday, it gladdens my heart that this particular holiday gives us a real opportunity to speak to others around us of what we are thankful for, and whom we are thankful to, for all that He has given to us. It is good when we can link our thankfulness to our God, the One from whom all blessings flow. The only thing which Thanksgiving represents, when it is truly celebrated, is that we are a thankful people for all that God has given to us; all that He has done for us as a nation and as a people. To celebrate Thanksgiving as a citizen of these United States is a very good thing. But to celebrate God’s goodness and His mercy is something which we ought always to do as Christian people.

According to these verses which I just read to you, there is a 3-fold beauty to Christian Thanksgiving which I will open up for you at this time. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – To obey the command to give God thanks is a beautiful thing. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Giving Thanks by talking of all His Wondrous Works is a beautiful thing. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – To Give Thanks by glorying in His holy name is a beautiful thing. Let us think together now of this 3-fold beauty, and of how we might please our God by giving Him thanks.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – To obey the Command to give God thanks is a beautiful thing to God.**

Verse 1 of our text says – “Praise the Lord!” “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!” “For His mercy endures forever.” Here is a joyful command which is given to us. It is one which we ought often to observe to do it. That is, that you and I ought to be often praising the Lord and thanking the Lord for His goodness to us. We ought to be thankful as Christian people that His mercy endures forever. It is not just that He has shown us mercy once upon a time when He saved us. It is that His mercy continues on always and forever. It is good for us to remember that Thanksgiving has been celebrated as a day of thankful remembrance, for the United States of America, as early as 1620, in the Plymouth Colony.

It is with a thankful heart that we as Christians remember the Puritan Pilgrims who first came over from Delph Haven in Holland in the year 1620. They had fled persecution from their native England, not too long before. They launched out to go across the Atlantic ocean to come to the New World. They were searching for a place where they could worship God with freedom of conscience. I think that it is peculiarly fitting that we pause this morning and remember, that what we have come to know as Thanksgiving began with Christian people experiencing trials and testings to their faith. And yet they obeyed this command of our text. They were a thankful people.

Listen to what Joseph Banvard says of them: “The Puritans were men of prayer,” “In all undertakings of importance, they were accustomed to seek direction from their heavenly Father, and implore His blessing.” “Accordingly, on Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1620, religious services were held on board of the Mayflower.” “They fell on their knees, and rendered thanks to God for His kind protection of them during their dangerous voyage across the ocean.” “They implored His favor to rest upon them amid the toils, trials, and temptations upon which they were now to enter.”

This is the kind of people that you and I who are Christians should hope to be like, in our trials and difficulties; on our journey through this life to heaven. We are like Pilgrim in Pilgrim’s Progress. We have set out on a journey from this life to the next, and we would be a thankful people. We would be a thankful people, not only on this upcoming day of Thanksgiving; but as it says in Ephesians 5, verse 20, we would be those who would be “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What is thanksgiving anyway? The Dictionary says, “It is the act of giving thanks; a grateful acknowledgement of benefits or favors; especially the act of giving thanks to God.” Well, this is a good definition. It is an act that begins in your heart and it comes out on your lips. You may be a

thankful person this morning. You may be thankful to be alive, thankful that you have a house to live in, and a family to live there with you. You may be thankful for your daily bread and thankful for good health, and thankful for the many possessions that you have; but do you give thanks to God for all that you are, and all that you have? Everything that is good that is in you is from God's goodness. You know that He has placed it there or He has worked it into your heart by the Holy Spirit. All that you have is from His bountiful hand. Truly you have much to be thankful for. And this is where you should realize the beauty of the command to give thanks.

Many unbelieving people do not give thanks to God at all, but all of us should understand this morning that our God is a God of great goodness. You should tell Him so. It is a good and beautiful thing to give Him thanks. God expects this of His highest created creature man; to give Him thanks. Since the creation of the World He has expected this. You can see this if you will turn with me to Romans 1: 20. Here Paul is showing the guiltiness of men after the fall, a guiltiness which continues in fallen man to this very day. He says – “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

In other words, what Paul is saying is that men used to know much about God in the beginning of the world. The creation itself declared His attributes to them most clearly. And the creation spoke with a loud voice, of God's goodness. Everything that God made was very good. The hymnwriter says: “For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies; for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies; Christ of all to Thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.” We so little think of these things apart from grace and the Holy Spirit bringing it to our attention.

But if we understand that sin has entered the world through the one man Adam's sin, and death through sin, we can understand why men do not see God and His goodness much in the creation. We understand why they have become futile in their speculations. There are many who think that all of mankind have evolved from apes. Their foolish hearts are darkened. They are born into this world with sin in their nature. Their minds spiritually blind to the truth of God's word. They do not glorify God by believing that He created this amazing world. They do not think about how He speaks to them in and through His blessed Word.

And it tells us here, what a great grief this was to God; that – “They were not thankful”. And people are not truly thankful to God today either, unless they believe the gospel, and unless grace changes their hearts. This is one of the main things that characterizes unbelievers; they are unthankful for the goodness of God which He has so richly and freely bestowed upon them. They will not tell Him that they are thankful for all that He has done for them. Psalm 107, verses 8 and 9 say – “Oh that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” “For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.”

Notice that it says there, that it is the soul of the one who is hungry that is satisfied by God. You may have much reason, humanly speaking to give thanks for all that the Lord has given to you to satisfy your body with, here in this life. Do you give Him thanks for that? But even more, oh so much more, are the satisfactions which God gives to the soul. This is even more to be given thanks for! Psalm 103 says – “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.”

If this is what God the Father has given to you through the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus has died so that these things might be brought to your soul as realities, then will you not

give Him thanks today, for all that He has given to you, all through your life? Yes, it is commanded of us to give Him thanks. But, O what a beautiful command it is! Turn with me to Psalm 92 and I will speak to you a little about the beauty of the acts of thanksgiving. Listen to what it says here in verses 1 and 2. “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night.” Now in doing this very thing, giving thanks, I hope that you can see that it is a beautiful thing in God’s sight. We give Him thanks for His lovingkindness and His faithfulness every night, and He is pleased with us. Oh, what a great privilege this is; to give thanks to God in the morning and the night, each and every day of our lives.

It is good to have personal and private devotions of thanksgiving in the morning, and more of the same in the night. If this seems legalistic to you, you have not really understood the beauty of true devotion to God. You have not yet come to the place where you have a very thankful heart. It is an attitude which you should repent of, for if you do not obey the command to be thankful, you most probably will have a complaining heart. And how can God be glorified in this? Think of it this way: The whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord and so should you not stop to thank Him for it? Once every morning for His lovingkindness, and once every evening for His faithfulness. This is how the command to give thanks is obeyed.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – We give Thanks by talking of all His Wondrous Works, and it is a beautiful thing in God’s sight.**

Verse 2 says – “Sing to Him sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works.” I remember when my children were very young that I used to sing Psalms to them before they went to bed at night. One of those Psalms was Psalm 145C in our book of Psalms for singing. It says – The eyes of all upon Thee wait; their food in season Thou dost give; Thine opened hand doth satisfy the wants of all on earth that live. The Lord is just in His ways all; in all His works His grace is shown; the Lord is nigh to all that call, who call in truth on Him alone. He will the just desire fulfill of such as do Him fear indeed; their cry regard and hear He will, and save them in the time of need.

What is this Psalm saying, but that we ought to talk of all His wondrous works. Tell them to our children, and sing Psalms to them about them. Psalm 145 verses 14-16 says – “The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down.” “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season.” “You open up Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” What great things here are spoken of God and His works. If you are bowed down He will raise you up. If you are hungry He will feed you.

So let’s go back now, and think once again of how God’s mighty works were seen and remembered by the Pilgrim fathers. Let’s think about their thankfulness for food. Edward Winslow, in Mourt’s Relation says this: “Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labor. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week.

At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which we brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.” You can see here that these Christian people truly believed that they were partakers of plenty and they attributed it to the “goodness of God”.

John Stetson Barry in his book – The History of Massachusetts, Vol. 1, P. 103, says this: “In the fall (September of 1621) the First Harvest of the colonists was gathered.” “The corn yielded well, and the barley was indifferently good, but the peas were a failure owing to drought and late

sowing.” “Satisfied, however with the abundance of their fruits, four huntsmen were sent for fowl; and at their return, ‘after a special manner,’ the Pilgrims rejoiced together feasting King Massasoit and ninety men for three days, and partaking of venison, wild turkeys, water fowl, and other delicacies for which New England was then famous.” “Thus the time-honored festival of Thanksgiving was instituted – a festival which, originally confined in its observance to the sons of the Pilgrims and the State of Massachusetts, has not become almost a National Festival, peculiarly appropriate as an expression of gratitude to God, and an acknowledgment of dependence upon Him for His bounties and productive of a treasure of pleasing reminiscences connected with the joys of our childhood.

And also the mature but more exquisite delights of our own hearth sides, where parents and children, brothers and sisters, and all the loved objects of the family group, renew, at the festive board, the vows of affection, exchange kind greetings, and revive recollections of the past to enliven the present; while the pilgrimage of life is brightened and sweetened by innocent amusements and healthful recreations, and a sense of obligation to the Giver of all good is implanted more deeply in the heart, sanctifying our trials and enhancing our blessings by a consciousness of the presence and protection of God.”

Well said I think, and very applicable to us here today. Is it not a good witness to our family if we can open the Bible at some point and read a couple of verses of Thanksgiving to all who are gathered? To remember God for His goodness? Let us pray to be able to do so and give Thanks to Him for all that He has given to us, both materially and spiritually.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – To Give Thanks by glorying in His holy name is a beautiful thing to God.**

Verse 3 of Psalm 105 says this: “Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord.” Dear Christian, is this you today? Do you glory in God’s holy name? Do you glory (and glory here means, do you highly prize and boast) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.? Do you boast in His righteousness? Do you boast in His strength and power to save and keep, and help you to walk every day on the path of righteousness;? Spiritually, He takes you by the hand, and He is leading you along to glory. Are you thankful for all that He provides for you day by day to keep you in this life, so that you can learn from Him that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you can ask or think, according to the power that work within you?

Listen once again to what John Stetson Barry says of what happened to the Pilgrim fathers during the next year. (1623) – “The situation of the colonists in the spring of 1623 was peculiarly distressing. By the scantiness of the crops and the prodigality of their neighbors, their granaries were exhausted and they were reduced to want. The narrative of their sufferings is affecting and thrilling. By the time their corn was planted, their victuals were spent, and they knew not at night where their food would come from in the morning; nor had they corn or bread for three or four months together. Elder Brewster lived upon shell fish. With only oysters and clams at his meals, he gave thanks that he could seek of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.

Tradition affirms that at one time there was but a pint of corn left in the settlement, which being divided, gave to each person a proportion of five kernels. In allusion to this incident, at the bi-centennial celebration, in Massachusetts had congregated at Plymouth, and orators had spoken and poets sang the praises of the Pilgrims; amidst the richest viands which had been prepared to gratify the most fastidious epicure to satiety, five kernels of parched corn were placed beside each plate, a simple but interesting and affecting memorial of the distresses of those heroic and pious men who won this fair land of plenty, and freedom and happiness, and yet at times, were literally in want of a morsel of bread.

In April planting commenced, and the weather held favorable until the last of May. Pleased with the new order of things, cheerfulness and industry prevailed. There was a stimulus to exertion in the hope of individual benefit. Even the women and children labored in the field; more corn than ever was planted; and more life and zeal were displayed. But though favorable weather

forwarded their plants in the earliest of the season, but from the third week in May a drought set in ; and for six weeks no rain fell, so that the ground was completely parched, and the plants, both blade and stalk hung the head and changed the color, and were judged utterly dead.

To add to their distress, they learned of the repulse of a supply, sent by Mr. Pierce, who had now obtained his surreptitious patent (that is, a patent kept secret from the others because it would not have been approved.), and it was feared that the vessel he was traveling in was wrecked on the coast. At once, therefore, God seemed to have forsaken them. The most resolute faltered, and general despondency prevailed. Even Hobomok was distressed for them. "I fear", said he, "they will lose all their corn, and starve." "The Indians can shift better than the English, for they can get fish."

Barry goes on to say – "But true greatness yields not to permanent despair. As God only could aid them, a day was appointed to supplicate His favor. It was fair and beautiful. Not a cloud dimmed the horizon. Nine hours they continued in prayer, wrestling for a blessing. Yet the sun shone brightly, and the air was sultry. But towards evening a change was visible, and before morning the rain came, sweetly and gently, yet freely and copiously. It came without either wind or thunder, and by degrees in the abundance as that the earth was thoroughly wet and soaked therewith, and the withered corn and other plants speedily revived.

This "rain of liberalities" lasted, at intervals, for fourteen days, and caused even the Indians to say, 'Now we see the Englishmen's God is a good God; for He hath heard you, and sent you rain; and that without storms, and tempests, and thunder, which usually we have with our rain, which breaks down our corn; but yours stands whole and good still. Surely your God is a good God. From this time forward the weather continued favorable, and the harvest was fruitful and liberal, in time convenient, they also solemnized a day of thanksgiving unto the Lord."

Brethren, I have read you all these things to show you how gracious our Lord was to these dear brethren so many hundreds of years ago at the beginning of our country, so that you will see that it is good to glory in God's holy name. If He led them through many dangers, toils, and snares, to be those people who settled this land and founded its first colony and government, will He not lead us along in the same good way? Let your heart rejoice if you are a person who is fervently seeking the Lord in prayer. We will pray to see good things come to His people, and even to see others come to know Him as well, and join with us in our pilgrimage to heaven.