

# "A Thanksgiving Psalm"

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*Text: Psalm 100*

**Introduction:** One of the most beautiful Psalms of thanksgiving is the 100th Psalm. With all my heart I believe we are a people & a nation that has truly been blessed by God. And of all those who "give thanks to Him & praise His name" we should be at the top! It is not uncommon to compile wish lists at Christmas, & draw up a list of resolutions for New Years. But there is another list we often overlook - a Thanksgiving Day list of all for which we are thankful.

- ILL. **Thanksgiving Day List** (Housewives):
- "For automatic dishwashers because they make it possible for us to get out of the kitchen before the family comes back in for their after-dinner snacks.
- "For husbands who attack small repair jobs around the house because they usually make them big enough to call in the professionals.
- "For children who put away their things & clean up after themselves. They're such a joy you hate to see them go home to their own parents
- "For teenagers because they give parents an opportunity to learn a second language.
- "For Smoke alarms because they let you know when the turkey's done.

Like you, I'm sure, my list would include the major things - life, health, family, friends, & the nation we live in, despite all its flaws. But even more than that, I'm thankful for my salvation, our church family, & the mercy that God showers upon us each day. With Jesus we have so much for which to celebrate on Thanksgiving!

Today our nation pauses once again to give thanks. And one would assume that because of the example of our forefathers, & because we today have so much, that we would be an extremely thankful people. But it is often just the opposite, isn't it? The more we get, the less thankful we become, the less mindful of God we become, & the more we want. I think that the 100th Psalm was written to deal with that attitude, to remind us of our need to be thankful, & to maintain an attitude of gratitude.

## I. THE BASIS OF OUR THANKSGIVING

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The 100th Psalm was written for the people of Israel. God said to them, "When you come into the Promised Land, & settle down in your warm homes, & you have plenty to eat, don't forget Me. I led you out of the wilderness & I brought you into a land flowing with milk & honey."

But it doesn't take very long to realize that the people of Israel needed a reminder, & I am afraid that we need it, too. Maybe God had us in mind, too, when this Psalm was written. Did you notice to whom it is addressed? The first verse says that it is addressed to "all the earth," & the last verse says that it includes "all generations." This message of thanksgiving is so deep & wide that it applies to every person in every era in every stage of life.

ILL. It's sad, isn't it, that we are the only country in the world, except for Canada & the Philippines (as far as I know), that has a Thanksgiving Day? I wonder how our world would be changed if suddenly **all nations** would begin to observe Thanksgiving?

I think that there is something about giving thanks together to God that breaks down barriers between people & brings about a unity, much like that which occurred as the Berlin wall began to crumble. I think also that there is a real danger in this season of determining our thanksgiving on the basis of how much we have. "Do I have enough turkey to gorge myself sufficiently? Is my money in the bank secure? Am I healthy?" And we let these things determine whether we are or aren't thankful. The Psalmist says that all of these things may change at any time. They may drift away, or burn up, or someone may steal them. The only thing we have for sure is our relationship with the Lord.

**Just scan the Psalm** and see what it emphasizes. In vs. 1 you'll find the name of the Lord. In vs. 2 you'll find the name of the Lord. In vs. 3 you'll find the name of the Lord. In vs. 4 it says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving." And in vs. 5 you'll find the name of the Lord.

**The basis of our thanksgiving is the Lord.**

ILL. Alex Haley, the author of "Roots," had an unusual picture hanging on his office wall. It was a picture of a turtle on top of a fence post. When asked, "Why is that there?" Alex Haley answered, "Every time I write something significant, every time I read my words & think that they are wonderful, & begin to feel proud of myself, I look at the turtle on top of the fence post & remember that he didn't get there on his own. He had help."

## II. FIVE THANKSGIVING COMMANDS

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### 1. Command #1 is in vs. 1, "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands."

It means to "shout with the force of a trumpet blast," a shout of joy to the Lord that comes from the very depths of your being.

Maybe He solved your problem. Maybe He has given you the direction to go. Maybe He has provided a blessing, & you realize that it has come from God. So from the depths of your being you proclaim your praise.

ILL. Roland Allen tells about a veteran missionary who came up to him one day after he had delivered his sermon. The missionary introduced himself & said, "I was a medical missionary for many years in India. And I served in a region where there was progressive blindness. People were born with healthy vision, but there was something in that area that caused people to lose their sight as they matured."

But this missionary had developed a process which would arrest progressive blindness. So people came to him & he performed his operation, & they would leave realizing that they would have become blind, but now they were going to be able to see for the rest of their lives.

He said that they never said, "Thank you," because that phrase was not in their dialect. Instead, they spoke a word that meant, "I will tell your name." Wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary who had cured their blindness. They had received something so wonderful that they eagerly proclaimed it.

And that is what the Psalmist is saying. "Suddenly you realize that God has been so good to you that you can't keep it inside any more. From the depths of your being you shout your joy unto the Lord."

### 2. Command #2 is, "Serve the Lord with gladness."

It doesn't say "serve the church." It doesn't say "serve the preacher, or serve the leaders, or serve the organization." It says, "serve the Lord."

The Bible teaches that if we witness on behalf of the Lord, if we feed the hungry, if we clothe the naked, if we do the work of the Lord, whatever it might be, we are serving the Lord.

Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me."

I'm not sure that we grasp that. Maybe we serve at times out of a feeling of obligation or a fear of guilt if we don't serve, or maybe even because we want to draw attention to ourselves. It's natural for us to desire appreciation when we do something that is worthwhile. But the Psalmist says, "In whatever you do, serve the Lord with gladness."

### 3. Command #3 is, "Come before his presence with singing."

Have you noticed? In these first 3 commands, God has said, "I want you to be happy. Shout with joy, serve with gladness, & come with joyful songs."

ILL. Now just take a moment & look at the people around you. Do they look happy? Or are they just sitting there with scowls on their faces?

The Psalmist says, "Come before Him & serve Him & sing His praise with joy in your heart."

### 4. Command #4 is, " Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

1. God took every bone, every joint, & He welded them together with sinews & muscles & covered them with skin & gave us eyes that see, brains that think, & fingers that can pick things up. God made us, inside & out. He made you the way He wanted you to be. And He made me the way He wanted me to be.

ILL. That is a mystery, isn't it? I don't understand why, but somehow in God's providence He decided that He wanted a medium sized man, not too good looking, not outstanding in anything, but just a normal or not so normal person. So He made me. Someplace along the way He had you in mind, & He made you.

**And He is still making us.** He's not satisfied with the unfinished product. He's not satisfied with your temper. He's not satisfied with the weak areas of your life where you are giving in to temptation. So He's still making us. He's still working on our lives.

2. Then He says, "We are His people, the sheep of His pasture." Most of us want to be shepherds, not sheep. "It's not any fun being sheep," we say. But the problem is, we don't know where the still waters & green pastures are. And every time we go out searching for them, we invariably end up in the far country.

He is saying, "You be the sheep. Let me be the shepherd, & I will lead you beside the still waters & the green pastures. Just let me lead."

**5. Command #5 is this, " Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."**

In the O.T. the temple symbolized the presence of God. So whenever the people came to the temple & entered the courtyards they knew that they had come into the presence of God.

Now that temple no longer exists. But oftentimes the place where we meet to worship God is called a "sanctuary," indicating that God is there. But God is everywhere. You know that. He is with you as you drive on the highway. He is with you when you work. He is with you as you care for your children. He is with you every moment of your life.

That is the source of our thanksgiving, isn't it? But I'm worried. What if God began to treat us like we so often treat Him? What if God met our needs to the same extent that we give Him our lives?

What if we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain? What if God stopped loving & caring for us because we failed to love & care for others? What if God took away His message because we wouldn't listen to His messenger?

What if He wouldn't bless us today because we didn't thank Him yesterday? What if God answered our prayers the way we answer His call for service? What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we did not follow Him today?

**"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." [Psalm 103:10].**

**CONCLUSION**: I pray that this will be a meaningful Thanksgiving week for you & all your family. Take time to read the 100th Psalm again. And if you'll

listen to those commands, your heart will overflow with thanksgiving to the Lord.

Let me put this entire psalm into a perspective with this story.

**Take Your Goat into the Room with You**

In Budapest, a man goes to the rabbi and complains, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answers, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man in incredulous, but the rabbi insists. "Do as I say and come back in a week." A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he tells the rabbi. "The goat is filthy." The rabbi then tells him, "Go home and let the goat out. And come back in a week." A radiant man returns to the rabbi a week later, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat—only the nine of us."

Will you be a one who fills the table and room with a bountiful supply of thanksgiving? Be thankful! Amen!

**YOU KNOW YOU'VE OVER-DONE THANKSGIVING IF:**

- Paramedics bring in the Jaws of Life to pry you out of the oversized Lazy-Boy
- Your after dinner moans are loud enough to signal Dr. Kevorkian
- The potatoes you ate set off another famine in Ireland
- You get grass stains on your bottom after a walk, but you never sat down
- Your "Big Elvis Super-Belt" won't even go around your waist
- Pricking your finger for a cholesterol screening only yielded gravy
- That rash on your stomach turns out to be steering wheel burn
- Your arms are too short to reach the keyboard & delete this