

Thanksgiving

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Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

[0 : 00] Well, let's turn in our Bibles to the Psalm which we read, Psalm 92. And as God would help us, I'd like to concentrate on verse 1.

Psalm 92, verse 1. It is good to give thanks to the Lord to sing praises to your name, O Most High.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord to sing praises to your name, O Most High.

We have just been singing songs of praise. Three times we've sang songs of praise.

All about extolling and praising God. Because you know, that is why we were made. That is why we were placed on planet Earth.

[1 : 10] The Lord God is worthy of praise for who He is. Just for who He is, He's worthy of our praise.

But when you and I consider what He has done for us, what He has done for Christians, what can we say?

How much more worthy God is to be praised and to glorify His name. We've agreed that we should spend this day in thanksgiving.

And you know, thanksgiving is something very, very important. Much more important than I certainly thought for many, many a long year.

And you know, the older I get, the more I sometimes think that one of the strongest marks of genuine Christianity is constant gratitude, constant thankfulness to God for His unlimited mercies towards us.

[2 : 27] Thanksgiving is, as I indicated already, a much more subtle thing than we might think. I always remember an old elder I had in my home congregation in Inverness.

He was aging and he became very ill and it became pretty clear that he was terminally ill, but he had to have an operation. I am talking about 30 odd years ago.

And quite often in these days, they just opened them up and when they found out what it was, they just closed them up instantly. Well, we were all expecting the very worst, but here, when they opened up, they found that the huge tumor was not malignant.

And I always remember his brother elder telling us that when he went to see him, everybody, of course, was so delighted and so pleased and happy for him.

And they went in to see him in hospital, this elder, and he came as well. He said, Finlay, you'll be very, very thankful for the news. All he said, I don't know.

[3 : 40] I don't know. I'll tell you this. I'm very, very happy, but I'm not sure if I'm thankful. And that set my mind thinking the difference between being glad about something in itself and having the true Christian grace of thankfulness.

So I've chosen to concentrate tonight on looking at this spirit of thankfulness which every Christian ought to have.

You remember, our first parents actually fell through unthankfulness.

When you think about it, ingratitude in the Garden of Eden. When you think of the test that was given to Adam, can you think of a more minimal prohibition?

He can eat as much as he likes. He can eat as often as he wants. He can take as much as he wants.

[4 : 57] He can eat of as many trees in the garden as he can find, except one. There could not be a more minimal prohibition.

And yet, that's the one thing we in Adam wanted. And don't you see it in your children and your grandchildren?

Give them all the toys they want. And they say, ah, you mustn't touch that one. Leave that one. You mustn't touch that one. That's the one they want. Why? Because they were in Adam.

Romans chapter, we're talking about the source, the importance of ingratitude. Most of you who know your Bible will remember that, the second half of Romans chapter 1, where that catalogue, that catalogue of what we used to call unmentionable sins begins.

There's a long list, the second half of Romans chapter 1. And we read at least three times, the solemn, the punishment, the punishment for one sin is abandonment to another sin.

[6 : 28] Verse 24. Therefore, because God committed certain, because we committed certain sins, therefore, God gave them up to the lusts of their heart.

That's verse 24. Verse 26. For this reason. For this reason. Because they did that, what? God gave them up. Verse 28. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up.

The punishment for one sin is abandonment to another. But that catalogue of sins, what's at the beginning?

That snowball, that one little snowball that gets bigger and bigger and bigger to these unmentionable sins, contrary to nature.

[7 : 29] What does it start with? What's the first sin? What's the wee snowball? Verse 21. Although they knew God, although they knew God, they did not honour him, nor give thanks.

Nor give thanks. If we think it's unimportant, God thinks it's very important, and it starts a snowball in gratitude and thankfulness.

Now, we have to admit, because we're children of Adam, because we sinned with him, in him, Thanksgiving does not come naturally.

We're correct, aren't we? We have to teach our children to say thanks. Haven't we? We've got to teach them. It's not difficult. It's not hard.

One word, when they get a gift to say thanks, but it doesn't come naturally, and we have to teach them. And, you know, we often say ourselves too, but we don't feel, what would you say if you taught your child or your grandchild, now, say thanks, and he turned to you and said, oh, but I don't feel thankful.

[8 : 56] I don't feel grateful. What would you say? Say thanks, wouldn't you? Whether you feel it or not. thanks, the word thanksgiving is actually made up of two words, thanks and giving.

Two different things. It's one thing to say thanks. It's quite another thing to give with your thanks. I always remember, I always remember an uncle, an uncle I had who never professed Christianity, was not converted, but I remember him coming up to me once and saying, giving me an envelope and saying, that's a little gift to the church that you didn't attend.

just a little gift to the church. He said, it's a gift of thanksgiving. I thought I had cancer, but I didn't have. And I want to give thanks.

Thanksgiving. We can say thanks, but the scripture teaches us about thanksgiving. You see, in the Old Testament, thanksgiving offerings was over and above the tithe.

[10 : 31] You know, they were giving, the tithe was given, was for the Lord. And what the Old Testament tells us, a tenth, the tithe, is the Lord's.

You're not giving anything to God if you give a tenth. A tenth belongs to the Lord. You're just returning it to the Lord. It is his. But if you're full of gratitude, you give over and above the tithe. Thanksgiving offerings were over and above the tithe because the tithe was the Lord's. Now, in the Bible, I just want to mention three things about about Thanksgiving.

briefly, biblical Thanksgiving in the Bible. Thanksgiving requires an object. You're not just thankful. You're thankful to someone or for something.

It requires an object. And this surely must be the dilemma for the atheist who says there's no God.

[11 : 47] Who does he thank? Well, he can thank the agents of God, but the fruit he plucks from a tree, does he thank the tree? Can he thank a tree?

Can he thank the earth that produces the vegetables? the vegetables? Can he do you need someone to thank? It requires an object.

And of course, God is behind everything. A second thing about Thanksgiving in the Bible, it has the whole connotation of rejoicing.

and you see, the title to our psalm, Psalm 92, is a song for the Sabbath. And you saw how often giving thanks was there.

It is good to give thanks, our text, to sing praises, to declare, to see how great are he works. You have to continue but you do see there, it's for the Sabbath.

[12 : 54] And the whole subject of rejoicing ought to color our Sabbaths. It's a spirit of thanksgiving.

It's a day set aside for giving thanks to God and rejoicing and not mourning, oh we can't do this, we can't do that, we can't do next thing. And you see, it is quite, it's quite, it's quite wrong to be going about with a long facing, oh we should be so thankful you know.

The biblical connotation is rejoicing, isn't God wonderful, isn't God great, we should be full of joy and thanksgiving with the spirit, it's the spirit of thanksgiving, not just the words we use. thanksgiving. And a third thing about thanksgiving in the bible, there is a public dimension to it. Not in secret, it shouldn't be kept in private, but as we read in the scriptures, in the presence of your people. And that is why the church from his earliest days appointed days of thanksgiving, a public dimension to our gratitude and our thankfulness to our God.

[14 : 27] And it is significant to note that thanksgiving glorifies God. You might think so, but it does.

Psalms 50, verse 23, the one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me.

Or as we sing, whoso offers praise glorifies me. You know, people often say, I'm a poor sinner.

How can I glorify God? Thank God. That glorifies God. What can I give God?

You can give him thanksgiving and that glorifies his name. And that fulfills the very purpose that we human beings were placed on planet earth.

[15 : 33] Don't worry about praise and thanksgiving in heaven. It's going on all the time. Angels are surrounding his throne in heaven all the time giving praise and thanks to God.

But God was concerned about planet earth. And he made you and he made me and he made the human race and he placed us on planet earth so that on earth there would be image bearers of gratitude praising our maker and our creator on planet earth.

Have you looked at the recent images you get of the universe? Planet earth so small in one universe?

In one universe? You have to search and search and search to get planet earth. And God is interested in what goes on in planet earth.

Praise has to ascend to heaven from planet earth in one universe. One universe. I think I've mentioned it before or if not it will be repeating I met shook the hand actually of the third man who walked on the moon.

[17 : 11] James Irwin was his name. He died a couple of years ago I think it was. But he came to Enverness and he was meeting with a few men and he spoke to us. We were all longing to see what had he got to say about walking on the moon.

And he said he ended his speech by saying listen the really important thing to speak about is not man walking on the moon but God walking on the earth.

And that was said by a man who actually walked on the moon. Wonderful. Like God would look at planet earth and placed beings like you and me.

And then we blew it. We blew it in Adam. But God didn't send us instantly to a lost eternity. He redeemed a number that no man can number for multitude that we could reflect the image of God on earth and send praise and thanks through the planets through the universes up to God in heaven who started it all off.

well thanksgiving glorifies God and that is exceedingly important to God.

[18 : 42] You and I as I might not think so much of it. I don't know if I've mentioned this here before but I'm always amazed that in Acts chapter 12 we find King Herod killing James the brother of John with the sword.

And when he saw that it pleased the Jews he proceeded to arrest Peter also. That's at the beginning of Acts chapter 12. When you carry on to the end of the chapter you find at the end of the chapter you find that same King Herod sitting on his throne.

And on the throne he sticks his chest out too far and takes the glory to himself. And what we find in verse 23 is immediately immediately he stuck his chest out too far and took glory to himself instead of giving glory to God immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

It's very important to give glory to God. God. It's why we were made. It's why we're here. And why is there so much so many people unfulfilled because they're not doing what they were made to do to praise God, to bless God, to rejoice in God.

It's vitally important. God's Now, what should we give glory to God for most of all?

[20 : 42] Surely, for you and I, our salvation. And that salvation is by faith. You see, originally, we could have got to paradise by just keeping the commandments.

but we fell in Adam. So, that system of getting to heaven is destroyed.

You can no longer get to heaven by being good enough. And if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, give up trying to be good enough to earn heaven.

You can't do it. There has to be another way to get to heaven. And it's instead of achieving, instead of being good enough, it's trusting Christ who was good enough, who is good enough.

I think if you begin looking at the scheme of redemption, the first thing we have to thank God for, as we thank him for salvation, is for permitting the principle of substitution in the first place.

[21 : 57] permitting the principle. You see, our sin is a debt which we owe to God.

But what kind of debt is it? There are different kinds of debt. There's money debt, and there's criminal debt. Money debt, if you owe the garage a hundred pound, and you can't pay it, your friend can go along to the garage and say, look, what does my friend owe you?

Oh, he says, a hundred pound. Well, he says, there's a cheque, a hundred pound. He'll accept it. It doesn't matter who signs a cheque, as long as he gets a hundred pound. That's money debt.

But you cannot do the same with criminal debt. If that same friend of yours kills somebody and is sentenced to life imprisonment, can you go along to the authorities and say, look, I'll take the prison sentence of my friend.

I'll go into jail for him. Can you do that? No, no. You see, the principle of substitution does not apply with regard to criminal debt. Sin is that kind of debt we owe to God.

[23 : 17] It rests upon the head of the person committing that sin. A debt where substitution is not normally permitted, but God out of his mere good pleasure.

because he so loved the world, he permitted the principle of substitution to apply in the case of human beings.

Isn't that something to thank God for? I mean, the whole process of, the whole scheme of redemption falls down if that doesn't kickstart the process as it were?

Because normally it doesn't apply, but in this case God chose to permit the principle of substitution in the case of human sin.

You see, he didn't do it in the case of angels who sinned. when they fell, no redemption, no salvation, no substitute.

[24 : 31] Isn't that the first thing to thank God for in salvation? He permitted the principle of substitution to apply in our case. Now, if God stopped there, that would have been mercy.

That would have been mercy if he stopped there. But listen, if he had said, now look, I'll permit the principle of substitution, but you find a substitute.

You see, if you can get someone to stand in your place, that would have been mercy. That would have been mercy. But in salvation, God comes to us in the gospel and says, look, you needn't bother looking for a substitute.

I've found my son. he's willing to be the substitute. Here he is. Receive him. Take him. Isn't that something to thank God for?

Not just permitting the principle, but supplying and providing the substitute. Isn't that wonderful?

[25 : 43] Isn't that something we should praise God for? on earth. We'll certainly be praising them in heaven for it. But down here, can we send up praise and thanks through the planets, through the universes, up to heaven?

That's why we were made. That's why we were redeemed. If God had stopped there, if he had just stopped there and said, okay, I'll go that far, but you create faith yourself, you create it in yourself, that would have been mercy if he'd stopped there and said that.

But no, God himself says, call upon me. If you being evil, if you know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit?

Who to? The illustration is a father to his son. So you see, if you parents know how to give good gifts to your kids at Christmas, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to his children?

That's not the gospel. That's not the gospel. It's true, but it's not the gospel. The gospel is how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask.

[27 : 22] Isn't that the gospel? You don't have to work out a milect. You've just to ask. Ask for mercy. That's the gospel.

Luke 11, 13, I think it is. Or is it 13, 11, one or the other. I wish to praise God. But then you see, there's another verse in the Bible.

And it says, without holiness, no one can see the Lord. No one. You see, without holiness, you can be converted.

Or we're all sunk. We're all finished if that's not true. But you see, it's one thing to have forgiveness. But you can't cross the line into heaven.

You can't get through the stile. You can't get through the gate unless you're holy. So if God said at that point, I'll give you faith. I'll permit the principle of substitution.

[28 : 27] I will provide the substitute. I will even give you faith. But from then on, you're on your own. You've to become holy. You've to become righteous on your own.

That would have been mercy. That would have been great mercy. But it wouldn't be salvation.

Because, because what? Because, because Christ gives the Holy Spirit and sanctifies us.

God provides sanctification. Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies. He begins a good work.

We'll continue it to the day of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful, what a wonderful Savior we have.

Thanksgiving, so vital, so important. You know, Robert Murray McChain went to the Holy Land for a trip, and when he came back, his first sermon was on the 24th of November, 1839.

[29 : 49] And he preached a sermon which he entitled, Thanksgiving Obtains the Spirit.

Thanksgiving Obtains the Spirit. And his text was 2nd Chronicles 20, 21. He appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire as they went before the army and say, give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever.

And when, when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon.

And his point was, look at the power of thanksgiving. Here they were going to battle. Who do they put in the front line? Who do they put in the front line?

The shields? The ones with the swords? No, no, the singers. The singers, they went in front before the army.

[31 : 08] You say they're fodder. But when, when they began to sing and praise the Lord, the Lord sent confusion among their enemies and gave them the victory.

that's the power of thanksgiving. God looks down from heaven and takes note where we say, what a waste of time.

No one heard you. God heard through the planets and the universes. God looked down and saw human beings redeemed by the blood of his son, praising and thanking him.

well, what a lot we have to thank God for. But you know, the older I get, the more I realize that we should thank God not just for what he's done, but for what he has not done, for what has not happened.

you've all heard of Matthew Henry. We'll close with this. Matthew Henry was once robbed.

[32 : 24] He was traveling through a wood, I think going to preach, I'm not sure, but he was overtaken by a band of robbers who attacked him and robbed him of everything he possessed.

What did he do when he left him? He went down on his knees, and what did he say? Did he say, Lord, what are you doing?

Why me? I was going to preach the gospel. Did he say that? No. He thanked God for four things.

Matthew Henry thanked God when he was robbed of everything he had of four things. First of all, he thanked God that he was never robbed before. that he was the age he was and had never been robbed.

He thanked God for that. Secondly, he thanked God that he didn't lose his life. They could easily have killed him. He could easily have stabbed him.

[33 : 28] But he didn't. So he thanked God. His life was spared. Although they took everything, they didn't take his life. Which leads to the third thing. He thanked God.

Although they had taken everything he had, he hadn't got much. He thanked God for that. But most of all, fourthly, he thanked God that although they robbed him, he thanked God that it was not him who did the robbing.

There's always, always something to thank God for. And it is never a vain thing to thank and praise God if we just take time to think about it.

If God's people do not praise and thank him, who else will? What reason we Christians have to praise and thank God all our lives?

What reason we have? Who has more reason? Who has more reason to have a smile on their face as we walk into town? We're redeemed. Our sins are forgiven.

[34 : 49] The next big thing in our lives is heaven. Who else has more reason to praise God than Christians? And if we do not praise God, here's a warning to those of you who are not Christians.

If you don't praise God on earth, you'll never praise him in heaven. If you're not a Christian, begin. Begin at the beginning. People say, oh, begin reading in this book and that book.

Hey, begin reading in Genesis. Genesis 1. That's where it all went wrong. But praise God, for all the wrong we did, Christ came and undid it.

Christ was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. And what a wonderful job Christ has done of destroying the works of the devil.

And may you and I learn to practice for heaven. Practice praising God on earth for what he's done, for who he is, yes, but as far as we're concerned, for what he's done for us.

[36 : 10] May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word, his truth effectual to every one of us. Let's bow our heads in prayer.