

A Thanksgiving Meditation

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[0 : 0 0] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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As is true with many people, Psalm 100 is actually one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible. Now, many scholars group this in with the seven Psalms before it.

Psalms 93 to 100, we study and understand that kind of have a similar subject. And that subject is that the Messiah is the king, this messianic king that will reign and will establish a kingdom.

[1 : 0 8] And they view this particular text many times as somewhat of a benediction to this series of Psalms. So they're talking about the messianic king in these Psalms leading up to Psalm 100. And then they bring that to a close in this one as kind of a benediction like we would have at the end of a service.

A benediction that would not only bless the reader, but actually instruct the reader as well. You know, as we study through the Bible, we often find it a difficult task to discern exactly what the author's intent might be from passage to passage.

In fact, as we study through the Gospel of Mark, I've said it a million times already in the first six weeks or so. We'll say it many more times as we study through the book. What was Mark's purpose?

It was to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. And so everything in his book points towards that. Well, it doesn't take us very long to figure out exactly what the author's intent was in Psalm 100 because the title bears it for us.

It's a psalm of thanksgiving or a psalm for giving thanks. That's what it's for. It's interesting. This is the only psalm in the entire Bible that actually has this title.

[2 : 2 1] And it's most likely that it was sung or chanted or utilized in conjunction with the thanksgiving offerings that are recorded for us and instructed in Leviticus chapter 7.

And I think that this makes this particular psalm fitting for our focus this week as we think about the thanksgiving holiday and what does it actually mean to give thanks?

And how is it that the Lord wants us to go about doing that? Not only this week, but day by day. And so I want to even encourage you this week as you go from meal to meal perhaps, if given the opportunity to maybe start your thanksgiving gatherings with a reading of this psalm.

And allow the word of God not only to inaugurate your thanksgiving gatherings, but to kind of structure them as we reflect on what God actually desires of us and what should our spirit be.

I have four simple notes, meditations on thanksgiving that come from Psalm 100. If you'd like to keep notes, I'll try to make note of what would be helpful to write down. Number one, we see the spirit of our thanksgiving.

[3 : 34] The spirit of our thanksgiving. Look with me again at the first two verses. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before his presence with singing. Now these first two verses, they're not recording for us in a historical event. They are actually picturing for us the future kingdom in which Christ will rule on earth.

Ever since the very first sin in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Since the punishment for sin has come into play. And God made that great promise that one day the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

We see that theme all the way running through the scripture. And we see that ultimately being shown in the person of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. But all throughout the scripture, we see this promise and this emphasis that there will be coming a kingdom in which the Messiah will reign perfectly on earth.

And we understand that Messiah to be Jesus. It'll be a perfect time of worship and he will reign as our king. And Psalm 100, as we read through it, continually draws on that imagery.

[4 : 56] But that doesn't mean that it was irrelevant to the people in ancient Israel. Nor is it irrelevant to us today. What's pictured for us in this Psalm is something that we are to actually foreshadow in our own personal worship and thanksgiving now.

In other words, our worship is to be a reflection of what will be taking place in Christ's coming kingdom. And there's three imperatives in these two verses that the psalmist, whoever wrote it, said this is what the spirit of your thanksgiving should be.

Because this is what the spirit of thanksgiving will be in the kingdom of Christ in his future kingdom. Let me just give you those three imperatives. The first one is this, shout, shout.

Look again at verse one. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth. Now what's translated here in the King James, if that's what you're using with me this morning, what's translated as joyful noise is actually a command to shout or to cry out.

It refers to a citywide celebration during which a king would be coming up on his coronation or be taking a throne or perhaps be entering into the city after a tremendous military victory somewhere.

[6 : 19] And the streets would be lined with people. And they would, as in the case of Jesus's entry, they would have their palm branches. They would lay out their garments on the street and they would shout for the king as he came by or as he assumed his place reigning on the throne.

You can imagine what the psalmist has in mind here as he pictures what this will be like in Christ's coming kingdom. You can imagine the new Jerusalem packed full of people.

And as Jesus takes his throne in this great shout of celebration, that's what it's referring to here. Have you ever been in a situation that had such a celebratory shout?

I've been in a number of situations like that. If you're a sports fan, hopefully you have been. Hopefully you don't just like Charlotte sports. You probably haven't had much of that. But if you're a sports fan, maybe you've experienced this.

A few years ago, as you are well aware of at this point in the life of our church, I'm a big New York Yankees fan, New York Yankees baseball fan. And my brother and I have, and Julie has been with me several times as well.

[7 : 26] We've gone to New York to watch the Yankees play several times. And a couple of years ago, Jonathan and I, my brother, we were visiting our friend who pastors a church in the Bronx.

And while we were there, we decided we were gonna go to a Yankees game. I don't remember who they were playing, but the reason we wanted to go that particular night was because it was Bernie Williams night. Bernie Williams was a Yankee legend.

And when I was growing up as a kid, he was still on the team and he was awesome. He won world championships with the Yankees and it was fantastic. And the papers locally had written that in the ceremony that night before the game, honoring Bernie Williams, there were gonna be a number of players that they brought back to be a part of that celebration.

And so we wanted to go. It was a sold out night. We had nosebleed seats in left field as high up as you could possibly be. We had to pretty much watch everything on the big TV screen because we were so far away, we couldn't really see what was going on on the field.

And I remember one by one as they brought Bernie Williams out and they kind of had a seat for him. And then one by one, they brought out these Yankee legends that I remember watching as a kid. Jorge Posada would come out.

[8 : 33] And then Andy Pettit and Roger Clemens. And they brought Joe Torre, the manager, all those years out. And Don Mattingly. They brought all these guys out. And it was just awesome. And probably 20 or so former players they brought out onto the field.

And the last one that they brought out was my favorite pitcher for the Yankees growing up, Mariano Rivera. He was the legend closer all of those years. And they brought him out at the end and just the place went nuts.

I mean, it was awesome. It was exciting. It was full of celebration. Everybody was excited. Nobody cared about Bernie Williams at that point. They all cared about Mariano Rivera. And, of course, all those people, the papers had said, would be there.

And then just before they carried on through the ceremony, they said that there was one more person that they were going to bring out. And, of course, Ken and Jonathan and I are sitting there.

We're trying to figure out there's only one person who would elicit a larger reaction than Mariano Rivera. And, sure enough, they called Derek Jeter, the legendary captain of the Yankees.

[9 : 37] He had been retired at this point. This was his first time back at Yankee Stadium since all of those years that he played, 20 years probably that he played for the Yankees. And nobody knew he was going to be there.

That was the thing. And when they called Derek Jeter's name, number two, and he comes out of the dugout onto the field, I have never been in a place that was so loud as that stadium was in that moment.

I mean, people were pumped. 50,000 people packed into this stadium all at one time on their feet. Again, nobody cared about Bernie Williams anymore.

Nobody cared about Mariano Rivera anymore. All eyes were on Derek Jeter, and that place was going absolutely insane. It was exciting, and we were caught up in that excitement. Now, imagine with me what this celebration will be like in the coming kingdom of our Lord when Jesus takes the throne among his people, and death and sin and sorrow and despair has finally been abolished for all of eternity, and Jesus comes into the new Jerusalem, and he sits upon his throne, and the great shout that we will experience, not by 50,000 people, but by millions and millions and millions and millions of people that will collectively shout in celebration to the Lord in that moment.

That's what the psalmist is saying our spirit of thanksgiving should be, that in that same spirit, we should give a celebratory shout to the Lord that when we reflect on his goodness now, we are to foreshadow what that celebration will be like in eternity, and it ought to be a spirit of joyful thanksgiving and of celebration.

[11 : 24] So we see we're to shout. The second imperative here is serve. Serve. Look with me again. Verse 2. Serve the Lord with gladness.

That's interesting. These imperatives, they not only refer to our spirit of worship, but they drive us to spiritual action. In the first imperative, we're commanded to worship with a shout of joy for our king, but in the second imperative, we're instructed to faithfully serve that king.

And how are we to serve him? With gladness of heart. We're immediately reminded here that the Lord is not our servant. We are his.

We are to serve him with our lives. And what we will do in his kingdom is serve him with tremendous gladness out of a heart of thanksgiving. And again, this is exactly how we are to foreshadow that time now, by serving our Lord with gladness of heart and with great thanksgiving.

The truth is that glad service to the Lord comes naturally and automatically from those who worship him with gratitude of heart.

[12 : 40] And so we see the word to shout. We see that we're to serve. And then thirdly, we see that we are to sing. Come before his presence with singing.

Come before his presence is an interesting phrase here. It literally means to come before his face or to stand before his face. It reflects the intimacy of relationship that exists between God and his people.

And there will come a day in his kingdom when physically we will stand before him face to face. But we do so now in a spiritual sense, in our worship, corporately, privately.

He meets with us. The Holy Spirit indwells us. And the command here is that as we come before his presence, we do so with singing.

The Bible has a lot to say about our singing. I love music. Not everybody does. But the Bible commands us to sing. In fact, God's people have always been and always will be a singing people.

[13 : 46] It's important. It's important as we come together Sunday by Sunday that we lift our voices in joyful celebration, singing unto the Lord. And while the Bible has a lot to say about that, the emphasis of what the psalmist means here is not so much the actual act of singing as it is the spirit with which we come before the Lord.

It's with a joyful heart. A heart that sings is really what the psalmist is saying. What is the true spirit of thanksgiving? It is to joyfully shout.

It is to serve with gladness. And it is to worship him with singing. So we see the spirit of our thanksgiving in the first two verses. Number two, we see the object of our thanksgiving.

The object of our thanksgiving in verse three. Look at it with me. 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. Know that the Lord, he is God. That's where the psalmist takes us now.

[14 : 58] Now, I've always viewed this verse as a form of motivation for offering thanksgiving to the Lord. And it certainly gives us reason to do that as it just turns our focus to the Lord.

One of the things that struck me in particular this week in studying through this psalm is the fact that the psalmist isn't actually offering an explanation in verse three, nor is he providing for us an instruction or, excuse me, a motivation in verse three.

What he's actually doing is providing an instruction. And he uses this word know right at the beginning of the verse, which is another imperative. It's an imperative that we are to obey.

Know that the Lord, he is God. He's not only stating that Yahweh is God, he's actually instructing us to continually bring this truth to mind, to continually, purposefully, intentionally bring to the forefront of our minds, to the forefront of our hearts, the fact that God is God, that Jehovah, Yahweh is God.

He is Lord. But why would he do this? Why is this necessary for him? Why would we think differently? Then that. David Dixon was a 17th century pastor in Scotland.

[16 : 21] And he said this about this verse. From the reasons of this exhortation, learn that such is our natural atheism, that we have need again and again to be instructed that the Lord is God, of whom and through him and for whom are all things.

What does Dixon mean by that? He wasn't saying that we all structure with an intellectual atheism. He was saying we all battle a practical atheism.

What does that mean? Sinful people. It's our very nature to be consumed with self and disregard the presence and authority of God in our daily lives.

We often lack a true spirit of thanksgiving because we haven't stopped to consider day by day what God has done for us to produce such gratitude.

Intellectually, we may be orthodox in our belief, but practically, we often go about life as if God isn't there at all. So the psalmist writes and he says in this thanksgiving, shout, sing, serve, but know every day, day by day, bring to mind, remind yourself that there is a God, that he does rule the earth, and that you are accountable to him.

[17 : 53] And here he brings in this dynamic and principle of ownership. Now, I thought about giving a Lion King illustration here, but I'm gonna skip that for you today.

When I was a kid, anytime we went somewhere, like on a youth trip or just to a friend's house, whatever it was, my dad said the same thing every time.

He said, Jared, remember who you are and remember whose you are. Did anybody else's parents say that to them? Now, here's what dad meant by that. Don't embarrass me.

That's what he meant. Don't do something stupid while you're at wherever you are. Remember who you belong to. And he didn't mean Christ at that point. He meant him. And then it was often followed up by, don't forget that your heart belongs to Christ, but the rest of you belongs to me.

And that was a subtle threat of what would happen if I did embarrass him. Remember whose you are. There's a sense here in which that's what the psalmist is saying. Continually bring to mind that Yahweh is God and remember whose you are.

[19 : 06] Remember who you belong to. Our kids are learning this. This is the first question in the catechism that they learn, right, kids? What is our only hope in life and death?

What is it? Great job. That we are not our own. We're not our own. Now, let's think about that for a minute, if you'll just allow me to sidetrack.

We are not our own. That goes against everything that we are told in our culture and society that we're supposed to think and believe. This is my life.

I'll live it the way I want. It's my body. I'll do with it what I want. We bring it into the church. It's my church. We'll do things the way I want.

And so on and so forth. Everything about our lives is consumed with self. It's all about this belongs to me. These are my rights. This is what I will do. But the Bible presents a very different dynamic of life. It's not that we belong to ourselves.

[20 : 08] We belong to God. And that is not only an instruction for us to remember, but it is a hope that we carry. It's a hope that we carry for eternity. And here in this verse, the psalmist gives us three principles of ownership as we relate to the Lord.

First, he is our creator. He's our creator. He writes, it is he who has made us, not we ourselves or we are his.

It is he who has made us. That's the first thing that should produce thanksgiving in the hearts of men and women. The fact that we are his in creation. He has given us life, real life on this earth.

Acknowledging that God as a creator means that there is a great purpose. In his creation. And the Bible makes clear that our purpose in creation is to glorify him.

And that means that we exist to bring him honor. And how do we do that? By acknowledging first his immeasurable love for us in creation. Think about how David reflected on this in Psalm 8.

[21 : 23] He said, when I look at your heavens, the creation, when I look at your heavens and the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you had set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?

And the son of man that you care for him. Ashlyn and I, Monday night, walked out into our backyard. And it was just one of those nights that was really clear. There's no clouds in the sky.

And the stars were just abundantly bright for whatever reason earlier in this week. And maybe there's a scientific reason for that. I don't know. But it was just really bright. And you can see stars everywhere. And so we turned the lights off in the backyard.

And Ashlyn and I went and stood in the backyard. Harper came along with us, I think. And we went to Psalm 8. And we read that. And you think about David, all of those days on the side of the hills as he's watching his sheep.

All of those nights as he considered the sun and the moon and the stars that God had set in place. And what that did for him is it said, who am I that you care about me? What is man that you are mindful of him?

[22 : 20] What did it produce in his life? Thanksgiving. And what was that produced by? An acknowledgement of God's creation and his care in creation. So he's our creator. Secondly, he's our redeemer.

He's our redeemer. It is he who has made us, not we ourselves. We are his people. Now this is the primary emphasis of this verse.

We can't understand the principle without acknowledging the doctrine of creation. But the real drive of the psalmist here is to proclaim that God has redeemed a particular people for himself.

What a thanksgiving producing statement that is. Not only has he made you, but if you're a believer today, he has set you apart. He has made you a part of a chosen people for himself.

And what is that to do to us? It is to produce thanksgiving in our hearts. Not only has he provided physical life, he's chosen a people for which he gives eternal life.

[23 : 27] And who are those people? All who come to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith will receive this eternal, glorious life.

We are his people. But what makes that truth so incredibly impactful is that it is totally based on the grace of God and his choice.

We are his people. We are his people. He has made us his own. Andrew Bonner was another 19th century Scottish pastor.

He said this, He made us what we are, a people to himself. It was not we that made ourselves his. He made us his people and the flock whom he feeds.

Peter noted this in his first epistle, 1 Peter chapter 2. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[24 : 43] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy, Peter said. What does that mean? What is the psalmist getting at? Not only are we his in creation, we are his in redemption.

He has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. We are his. So thank him. He has made you his own.

Thirdly, he's our shepherd. He's our shepherd. We are the sheep of his pasture, the psalmist says.

We see this theme all throughout the scriptures. What does a shepherd do? Shepherd leads. A shepherd feeds. A shepherd protects.

A shepherd guides. A shepherd disciplines. A shepherd cares. What is this telling us about our Savior? He is our great shepherd.

[25 : 44] And again, back to David's writing, Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Mr. Quo, a couple of weeks ago, gave me a picture that he had written in Chinese, Psalm 23 and verse one.

And as I was using the app on my phone to try to translate it, he wouldn't tell me what it was. He made me have to figure it out on my own. And I was trying to figure it out. And it said, Psalm 23, one, the Lord is my shepherd.

And the way it translated on my app into English was, I lack nothing. Oh man, I love that phrase. I was confused as a kid. I would read this and I would say, the Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. And I thought, but I do want him. I thought it was saying that it was, he didn't want the shepherd, but that's not what he's saying. The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. I lack nothing.

You say, well, my bills aren't getting paid. But I got this, I got this irritation that plagues me day in and day out physically or in my health.

[26 : 41] Hey, the Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. What do you mean I lack nothing? You are his. You are his. It doesn't mean that everything in your life is great and grand, but it means that he is in control.

He is caring for you and even the times that he's taking you through hardship, he is your great shepherd and he is bringing you through that for a purpose. So thank him. Why? Because you belong to him. He's the object of our thanksgiving.

Thirdly, we must hurry. The practice of our thanksgiving. The practice of our thanksgiving. Look with me at verse four. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.

Be thankful to him. Bless his name. Enter his courts with thanksgiving or his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. This is the portion of this psalm that actually reflects the authorial intent expressed in the title.

And he wants this used as a moment of giving thanks. And it's not only a command to thank the Lord. It's an invitation to enter into his presence with our worship.

[27 : 53] Did you pick up on that? It's another imperative. Enter his gates. Enter his courts. It's an invitation. A divine invitation.

Now we think that this was probably used, as I mentioned before, in conjunction with the thanksgiving offerings. Now I want you to picture yourself as if you are in ancient Israel and you are coming to Jerusalem in order to give such an offering.

You can only do this from a distance. You couldn't actually come into the gates in the court of the Lord. It's not what you could do. Just the average Israelite, the average Jew, he could get access perhaps to the outer court.

And once he got access to the outer court, there was the altar that was there, a continual reminder of his need for cleansing and his need for sacrifice and for atonement. And that's as far as you could go, unless you were a priest.

If you're a priest, you could go a little farther. You could go into the holy place. That is the main structural part of the temple. And there were things that you could enjoy, things that you could carry out as your duty as a priest in Israel.

[28 : 53] But that's as far as you could go, unless you're a high priest. And if you're a high priest, only you could go into the very presence of God and the holy of holies.

And you could only do it once a year. And you had to go through this ritual, vigorous ritual cleansing in that moment. That's what these people were doing as they sing this psalm of thanksgiving, as they offer this offering of thanksgiving.

Now, here's what's so great about me telling you that. What Jesus has done for us on the cross did away with all of that. All of it. We no longer worship him at a distance.

We literally are invited into his presence. In fact, the Bible tells us something physical happened at the death of Christ. As soon as he breathed his last breath, it says that the veil in the temple rent, that is the dividing point between the holy of holies and the rest of the temple.

It tore into, what was that symbolic of? It was symbolic of we now have access directly to the Father. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.

[29 : 56] Enter his courts with praise. Not because you've done everything that you need to do, but because he has invited you there. Enter into his gates. Enter into his courts.

The atonement made by Jesus has changed it all. Not only do we have access to the very presence of God, but he invites us into that presence. And because of Jesus, there's no more a barrier between God and man.

All who come to Jesus Christ have total access to the throne of heaven. Enter his gates is an invitation that acknowledges that God has made it possible through his son to know him and to actually do what this psalm is commanding for us to do.

The story has been told, perhaps you've heard it, of the boy that went to London. I was hoping to see Bob here today so I could talk about London and the queen and all that kind of stuff.

We'll say it was Bob. Bob is a boy. Went to London. And he went out to the gates. And the reason he went to the gates of Buckingham Palace is because he wanted to see the king.

[31 : 09] And he expected once he got there to get into the gates in order that he might get to the king. But he realized once he got there, that was not an easy task. There were a series of guards for the boy or for Bob in this case.

There was a series of guards there. And they would not let him pass through. They wouldn't open the gates for him to come in in order that he might see the king. And their job, after all, is not to let people in.

It's to keep people out. And so that's exactly what they were doing. The boy couldn't get in. And there was a commotion as he was arguing. He wanted to see the king. And there was a man passing by that inquired as to what all of the commotion was about.

And the boy said, I just want to see the king. And he said, well, just come with me. And he took his hand. And to the boy's surprise, the guards stood at attention.

No one stopped him from entering. The man opened the gate, walked into the palace, Buckingham Palace. And he had direct access to the king. As it turns out, the man who had grabbed his hand that day was the Prince of Wales, the king's own son.

[32 : 15] As long as he was begging at the gate, he couldn't get in. The guards could not give him access to the king. Only the son could do that. God has thrown open the gates of his kingdom.

But you can only go in if you enter with his son. And it's the son that has the authority to grant access. And Jesus has promised that all who will go through him alone will dwell in the palace of the king for all of eternity.

Now, if we enter into these gates with thanksgiving, what is it that we're actually supposed to do once we get there? He tells us. Give thanks. The psalmist says we're to enter with thanksgiving and praise.

But what does that actually mean? What does it mean? C.S. Lewis struggled with this in his life, especially early on. And he was an atheist for years, and as an adult, he came to know Christ through his friendship with J.R. Tolkien.

They were writers together. And he came to know Christ after the fact. And early on in his Christian life, he struggled with this demanding of praise that God continually gives in the scriptures.

[33 : 31] He was put off by it, actually. All he could think about was that annoying person at the party that constantly wanted to show off what was good in their life and constantly wanted the recognition of what was in their life.

And he had a hard time understanding why would God act in this way? And he realized later, as he began to discern more about the character of God in the Christian life, that his perspective of praise was skewed.

He considered praise and thanksgiving as merely offering a compliment to someone else. But he realized that's not actually what praise is. It's not just offering up a compliment.

We all praise every day. We praise the things we love the most. The things that we enjoy in life are the things we praise. The sports fan praises his favorite team that he enjoys.

The musician praises his favorite band that he enjoys. The loving husband praises the wife that he enjoys. And what C.S. Lewis came to understand, that praise is not a matter of giving a compliment to the Lord.

[34 : 36] Praise is a matter of overflowing joy in the Lord. That the more you enjoy him, the more you enjoy fellowship with him, the overflowing action of that is thanksgiving and praise.

The first question in the Westminster Catechism says that man's purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. So the invitation in Psalm 100 for us to enter the presence of God is also an invitation for us to enjoy this wonderfully loving and powerful creator to which we belong.

What then is thanksgiving? It's not merely noticing the blessings of life. It's the overflow of enjoying a personal relationship with God. This is what marks a true believer from an imposter.

The overflow of joy in Christ. Not religious formality. Not all of the things that we do in order to be good little Christians.

It's the overflow of personally walking with God and enjoying him. So we've seen now the spirit of thanksgiving. We've seen the object of thanksgiving.

[35 : 59] We've seen the practice of it. And then finally, we see the reason for thanksgiving in verse five. The reason. With me. Verse five.

For the Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting. And his truth endures to all generations. The first four verses are full of imperatives.

They're instructions. Shout. Serve. Sing. Know. Enter. Come. Give.

Bless. They're all imperatives. They're instructions. But when we get to verse number five, we actually find the motivations. Why is it that we should care about doing this? Three features of God are listed.

Number one, God's essential goodness. God's essential goodness. What does it say? The Lord is good.

[36 : 58] And indeed, he is good. And he has demonstrated that goodness to each one of us. That doesn't mean that everything in our life is good.

That doesn't mean that everything that he orchestrates and allows and even causes in our lives to us seems like a good thing. Of course, we understand that.

He takes us through seasons of hardship intentionally. He takes us through seasons of trial. He disciplines us. And discipline, according to the scripture, is always grievous. None of us enjoy that.

So how can the psalmist so emphatically say that God is good? When we talk about the goodness of God, we mean that he is right.

He's righteous. That everything that he does may not seem good to us, but it is always for our good. He is always doing the right thing.

[37 : 58] It's difficult for us to see and acknowledge his goodness when life is hard. But when we understand that everything he does and that everything that he takes us through is for our ultimate good, according to his purpose and plan and will, we can learn to be thankful.

Remember Romans 8, verse 28. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose.

That means he has a very specific purpose in your life. And every day he is working out that purpose. And that purpose is always good, even though that purpose may often be hard.

Because he's always right. Shall not the judge of all the earth do that which is right, Abraham said. He's perfect. The psalmist said, as for this God, his way is perfect.

He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. He is good. Secondly, God's everlasting mercy. His everlasting mercy.

[39 : 09] For the Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting. And what a great consolation this is to the Christian. That the mercy that he gives us in salvation is an eternal mercy.

This should prod our thanksgiving in seasons of hardship. Think about Jeremiah as he's writing in Lamentations chapter 3. The whole book is a lament.

Several laments, actually. And right in the middle of these laments, this despair, this destruction of God's people. Here's what Jeremiah said. Lamentations 3.

This is what I call to mind. And therefore, I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting. Thirdly, God's enduring faithfulness.

[40 : 08] God's enduring faithfulness. His truth endures to all generations. This is a reference to God's faithfulness through all of history.

We can thank him because he's never failed us, and he never will. Spurgeon said, No fickle being is he promising and forgetting. He has entered into covenant with his people, and he will never revoke it, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips.

As our fathers found him faithful, so will our sons and their seed forever. Is the thought of genuine thanksgiving somewhat of a struggle for you this week?

Maybe you really are tired of the wishes of happy thanksgiving. Maybe you're not very happy. It's okay not to be happy.

Maybe you don't feel like there's much to be thankful for. I mean, think about everything we've gone through this year and are still enduring. Worldwide pandemic.

[41 : 15] Serious pandemic. It's getting worse, it seems like. Contentious election. Divisive nation. Destructive hurricanes.

Failing economy. Faltering educational system for our kids. Murder hornets. It's been a rough year. Perhaps what's helped you throughout this year is maybe family and friends.

Church family. But even as you look ahead at this week, what you anticipated to be, a reunion, a time for rest with family. You could kind of block everything else off.

Perhaps for you, it's actually been frustrated because regulations aren't going to allow you to do it. Even our family has that. A family that we won't be able to visit now.

It's been a tough year, hasn't it? It's hard to find reasons to be thankful. How could we be? At the end of the service today for our benediction, we're going to sing a song that was written in 1561.

[42 : 24] It's referred to mostly, the melody at least, as the Old Hundredth. You probably know it. All people that on earth do dwell is what we often refer it to, or the doxology is a part of it.

We're going to sing it, but I want you to know a little bit about how it came to be written. It was written by a Bible translator from Scotland named William Key. He lived in the 1500s.

He was a close friend of John Knox, who was the founder of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. He lived during the time of Mary Tudor's reign in England.

She was a devout Roman Catholic. You probably remember her from your history books. Protestants came to know her as Bloody Mary because she had such a severe persecution, murdering, burning at the stake, so many faithful preachers and theologians and Bible translators.

So many Christians, Protestant Christians in England during that time had to flee the country. William Key, along with many others, made their way to Switzerland. And while he was there, running for his life, wondering if he'd ever get to go back home, when his friends and his colleagues and his companions are being burned at the stake back in London, he writes this psalm based on Psalm 100.

[43 : 45] The first verse reads, All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, Him serve with fear, His praise foretell, come ye before Him and rejoice.

It's amazing. How could he write that? How could he write that? Psalm 100 is the answer. Notice the focus of the psalm.

Nothing here says, give thanks for your circumstance. The psalmist continually turns our focus and our eyes to the Lord.

When our minds and our hearts are consumed with our own circumstance, we'll never give true worship and thanksgiving, because our circumstance will never be what we want it to be. Even when things are good, we just want them to be better.

And even when it gets better, we just want it to be different. If the foundation of your thanksgiving and praise is your circumstance, you'll never actually give it, not truly.

[44 : 52] But when our focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will sing with hearts of joy in every circumstance, because He is true and faithful.

He is good. His mercy is everlasting. And His faithfulness endures from generation to generation. So the question for us this morning is what actually is getting our focus this week?

Is it only our family and the gatherings that we are thankful for? No. No. We are thankful to the Lord. Why? For who He is. Because He had dealt bountifully with us.

Even in the midst of the seasons when, like David, we're crying out, how long, Lord? Thank you for listening to this sermon made available by Lakeside Bible Church. Feel free to share it wherever you'd like.

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[45 : 58] If you live in the Charlotte or Lake Norman area, we'd love for you to attend one of our worship services. We meet every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. We'd love to meet you.