

# I Chronicles 16:4-7 “Why Thanksgiving?”

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Preacher: Will Spink

[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

For those of you who are worried, a Thanksgiving message is shorter than a sermon. But one of the things I've been thankful for lately is a privilege to be in John 17 for a few weeks and hear Jesus praying for me, praying for us.

To marvel that he wants us to be with him now and forever. That special relationship, I'm so thankful for that. But that wasn't a new idea with Jesus.

He's, of course, showing us what God has always been like. Being committed to being with us. All the way back to the Old Testament, the time of King David.

The sign of God's presence with his covenant people was the Ark of the Covenant. It had been gone from God's city under King Saul.

[ 1 : 08 ] But now King David has brought it back to Jerusalem. They have a Thanksgiving service. Kind of like this one. I'm going to read a few verses from 1 Chronicles 16.

But not all the names. Even though they are important people. Thank you for understanding. 1 Chronicles 16 at verse 4.

Then David appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the Ark of the Lord. To invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel.

Asaph was the chief and second to him were several others. They played harps and lyres. Asaph was to sound the cymbals.

And Benaiah and Jehaziel, the priests, were to blow trumpets regularly before the Ark of the Covenant of God. Then on that day, David first appointed that Thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brothers.

[ 2 : 10 ] The context here of this celebration and Thanksgiving as the Ark returns is God's people being really discouraged about their situation in life.

Feeling weak and thus struggling to see Yahweh coming through on his promises. They're going to be a great nation, right? And it doesn't feel like it. Doubting God's presence with them as his special people.

Some of you have shared that you've felt some of that lately or this year. I have. Earlier this week. Weak. Insignificant.

Discouraged. I was already feeling some of those things that no one wants to hear what I have to say. What am I even doing? It's not making any difference. When I attended a presbytery committee meeting.

Very exciting. I was actually pretty passionate about the issue we were discussing. What I really thought we needed to do. And I prepared a motion about what we should do.

[ 3 : 17 ] And I threw it out there and said, how about this? Crickets. Nobody in the room even gave my motion a second so that we could talk about it.

Now that may not sound awful to you. But it is the Presbyterian version of being with your buddies one night.

And you say, hey, I've got this great idea. Y'all want to hear my great idea for tonight? Nope. All of them at the same time. Nope. Or you want to see how I look in this dress?

Or how cool this new video game is? Nope. But you haven't even heard? Nope. Nope. So you combine that with already feeling personally, professionally, spiritually discouraged.

I felt weak, insignificant. Certainly not thankful. Until the next day I started to sit down and let God show me my heart.

[ 4 : 18 ] I started to remember that even though the circumstances weren't improving from my viewpoint, God was with me. He was committed to his church. Jesus was praying for me.

My heavenly father still wanted to be with me and to work faithfully for his glory and for my good. And as I started to realize that, I realized I didn't have to control the outcomes.

Make the meeting go the way I wanted it to. Because he did. I didn't have to fear failure or insignificance because he was with me regardless.

And as I contemplated that, hope started coming back and peace and joy in him and thanksgiving because he's with me.

Oh my, how much we have to be thankful for because of that, right? Because he's with us. That's what's happening for God's people here. The ark is a sign of God's special relationship with his chosen people.

[ 5 : 20 ] Of his covenant promises that will not go unfulfilled. So when it shows up, God's people start giving thanks. They're not immediately more numerous.

They're not immediately more successful, more impressive. But something they're realizing afresh. Yahweh, their God, is with them.

And so what does David do? He organizes the first Thanksgiving worship service. And here we are today. Verse 7. On that day, David first appointed that Thanksgiving be sung to the Lord.

It's not that God's people have never given thanks to him. That's not true. But now it is intentional, regular, corporate, and ongoing. A special song's composed.

It shows up in three different psalms. There's musicians gathered. Asaph and other priests are appointed expressly for giving thanks, aren't they?

[ 6 : 19 ] Did you notice that? What a job, by the way. Thanksgiving. Anybody want to be the thanksgiver for your family? You can be the designated thanksgiver this year. In Yahweh's family, that is job secure.

Right? There are endless things to be giving thanks for. Notice again after the song, verse 41. The presence of God visibly back with his people is something for which priests are delegated to give thanks in perpetuity.

The rest of those chosen and expressly named to give thanks to the Lord. Because no matter what else, his steadfast love endures forever.

It's the first thanksgiving. Why? Why thanksgiving? Because God is with us. And this God is so great.

His love is steadfast. He keeps his covenants. His love lasts forever. If you read the whole song, it's what you'll see. I'd encourage you to do that this afternoon or this week for thanksgiving. It's focused on the nature of Yahweh.

[ 7 : 24 ] How there's nothing else in all the world so worthy of thanksgiving as he is. And that he's with us. Give thanks to him. Call upon him. Announce his greatness.

Sing to him. Glory in his utter uniqueness. Rejoice in him. Seek after him. In fact, seek his presence continually. All the time.

That's what you're looking for. God's presence in your life. And if that's really the longing of your heart, if that becomes your greatest delight, then you have reason for thanksgiving because God is always with you.

No matter how you feel, you seek his presence. You find his presence. Maybe you're in one of those discouraged places right now that I was in this week.

You hear people talking this week about counting your blessings. And you think, I can do that without taking off my shoes. Just not that much.

[ 8 : 26 ] I want to turn your heart back to God's promised presence. Because what's your role now? We are priests in God's house. His representatives indwelt by his spirit who have been told to give thanks in all circumstances because God is with us.

The ark here in 1 Chronicles is a sign. Right? It's a sign of that promised presence. It's encompassing all of God's promises, assuring that special relationship is his children.

That's what the ark points to. Likewise, this table set before us this morning is a sign of the presence of a faithful God with us today and always.

Accomplishing our redemption. Finalizing our adoption. Assuring our special relationship in his love. So if they should give thanks, how much more should we?

Always give thanks for God's presence with it. No matter what else is true in your life today, God's presence with you, for you, is true.

[ 9 : 38 ] And so we give thanks. But as beautiful and wonderful and worth celebrating as this table is, the table is a sign of God's presence.

Explain it this way before we come to the table. Some of you have kids home from college this week. And that's pretty exciting. Maybe you came home one day and after many weeks away, you noticed a car in your driveway that hadn't been there and your heart may have skipped a beat.

Sign number one of their presence. You come inside, there's a pile of dirty laundry blocking the doorway. Sign number two, their home. Then you walk past the pantry.

The door is open. The food is gone. But you're starting to sing inside. Sign number three, right? You rejoice at each of those signs because you know what it's pointing to.

But you don't stop there. You keep following the path that they're pointing you down to find your child. To throw your arms around them to celebrate their presence with you, right?

[ 10 : 52 ] That's what you do. I want this table, this Thanksgiving feast, if you will, to be a sign to you this week. Start giving thanks here joyfully. It can start welling up because here you're reminded that God came to be with you.

That by his death in our place, he's conquered sin and the grave. And he's made us victorious forever. No matter how overwhelmed we feel, he's with us, fighting for us, working to bring us with him to glory.

But don't let the Thanksgiving stop here. Let it point you to Jesus, the one who came as Emmanuel to be God with us.

The one who sent his spirit so that we would never be orphans again. But we'd know the presence of his Father, the triune God with us forever. Throw your arms around Jesus today and this week and every day, especially the days you feel weak and discouraged and insignificant.

And celebrate that even there and especially there, he is with you. He gave this gift to us as a reminder to give him thanks for his presence with us on the night he was betrayed.

[ 12 : 11 ] Jesus took bread and he broke it and he gave it to his disciples and said, take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And in the same way, after supper, he took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink from it, all of you.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you give thanks to the one who's given his body and his blood for you.

So if that's what you see in this table, that it's one of thanksgiving for what God has done for you that you could never do for yourself, then whether you're a member of this church or any other church that preaches salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, come and celebrate that he is with you and will be with you forever.

If that's not what you've done, if you haven't entrusted yourself fully and forever to Jesus, then I'd encourage you not to come and take these elements this morning, not to do something that says outwardly you believe something that inwardly you don't.

[ 13 : 27 ] We wouldn't want for you to do that and God tells you not to. But we are so glad you're here and would love for you to come and observe, to stay where you are and reflect on the offer of Jesus, the gift for which you could be eternally thankful, his presence with you.

You'll have never failing reason for giving thanks. Jesus, let's pray and we'll come to this table together. Jesus, your people rejoice in your love.

You've heard the words of our thanksgiving and now you're here inviting us to sit and eat with you and what more could we want?

What could be better than to be with you? And so we thank you for your life and death and resurrection that gives us hope and for the welcome into your family.

We give you thanks in your name. Amen. Our host team members are going to usher us to tables both at the front and at the back as we celebrate together.

[ 14 : 40 ] James and Nelda and Sarah and Christine.

It's the body and blood of Jesus. He's with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. And he will never stop loving you. He meets us as you've reminded us in our darkest places to bring his light and hope.

Take, eat and rejoice in his love. Hey girls, we do this to remember how much Jesus loves us, that he gave his life for us. Isn't that awesome? That's something to put on your thankful list, what you're thankful for this week, isn't it?

That Jesus loves you. I'm thankful for that. Let's see if we can get Brian and Doreen up here with you.

Brian, Doreen, Pete, so good to see you. Colin, this is the body and blood of Jesus, your Savior. He loves you. He's with you.

[ 15 : 54 ] And he will never leave you. You've experienced that. You've shared of that joy. Celebrate that he's with you. Take and eat his body and blood given for you so you'll be with him forever.

Good morning.

Janice, Leonard, DJ, Angela, Alex. This bread and wine represents to us the body and blood of Jesus and reminds us how much he loves us, that he gave his life for us, and that he is with us right now.

He promises never to leave us and that he'll be with us forever. So take and eat and celebrate how much he loves you. All right. All right. All right. All right.

All right. All right. Sally, Rob, Landa, the body and blood of Jesus, he's with you.

[ 17 : 08 ] He's been faithful to you through many different things, and he will never leave you. His body and blood to remind you of that, that he's bringing you home with him forever. Take, eat, celebrate his love.

All right. I love that. Cash's and Morris's and other friends that we love.

This is the body and blood of Jesus, because he wants you to know how much he loves you, that he's with you now, and that he will never leave you, that he's bringing you to be with him forever.

I know y'all have loved ones who feel a long way away, but Jesus is there with them, and he's here with us.

So how much more will he bring us to heaven forever? Take, eat, celebrate love like that beyond what we know. But he loves you. Thank you.

[ 18 : 08 ] So sorry. Perfect. That's it. Thank you. Thank you. Sorry, Luke.

Gracie, Adriana, Lindsay, David, this is the body and blood of Jesus, because he wants you to know that he's with you right now. No matter what is going on, he's with you.

He's taking care of you this week. He will never leave you or forsake you. He's bringing you home with him forever. He loves you so much. Take and eat. And can you, you got one?

Thank you. Take and eat and remember how much Jesus loves you. Thank you. It's catchy, isn't it?

Ben and Danielle, this is the body and blood of Jesus. He's with you. He loves you. He's bringing you home with him forever. That is something to be thankful for.

[ 19 : 21 ] Take, eat, celebrate his love. And we remember that Jesus loves us so much that he gave his life for us, didn't he? When you make a list of things you're thankful for this week, remember to put Jesus and how much he loves you on there, okay?

All right. Hey, DeeDee, Ted, this is the body and blood of Jesus, who loves you so much that he gave himself for you, and he's with you now and will be with you forever.

Take, eat, and rejoice in his great love for you. Sandy, Suzanne, Ken, the body and blood of Jesus, who's with you now.

He loves you. He never will leave you. You'll be with him forever. He wants you to taste this and remember how much he loves you. Take, eat, and celebrate that today.

Same to y'all. Hey, friends. Yes, absolutely. I'm Will. Isaac. Isaac and Emily.

[ 20 : 34 ] So glad y'all are here. The body and blood of Jesus. He loves you so much that he gave his life for you. Take, eat, and rejoice that he's with you now and will be with you forever. Hey, Ferguson's the body and blood of Jesus, who loves you so much that he gave his life for you so that you would be with him forever.

We celebrate this because Jesus loves us so much that he gave his life for us. When you make a list of things you're thankful for this week, don't forget Jesus, okay? He loves you, and he's with you.

Amen. Father, as you take this bread and this wine, may I remind you of what is true.

The Lord is your shepherd. You have life without lack. As you eat and drink, give thanks to our Father because his steadfast love for you enters forever.

