

IT IS GOOD TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

Psalm 92

Introduction:

Read Psalm 92 - I would like to begin this morning with a story that was told in a 2001 newsletter from Wycliffe Bible Translators:

Bruce and Jan Benson are Bible translators, serving in Peru. Several years ago, they were driving down an Andean road with their 14 year-old son when they came around a switchback and came bumper to bumper with a truckload of people. Suddenly, these people brandished rifles at the Bensons, who realized that they had encountered the brutal terrorist organization, Shining Path. Jan thought, "This is it! This is the end of our lives!"

The terrorists forced them out of their car and transported them to a nearby town. On the way, fearful and bewildered, Jan felt the need to pray and even to sing praises to God. Jan described it,

It began as a trickle. A presence that said, "The Lord inhabits the praises of His people." "But Lord, I don't know how to praise you right now." "Sing," came the thought. "At least you can sing." The words were there as I needed them: "You are my hiding place. You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance. Whenever I am afraid I will trust in you... Trust and obey... Jesus, name above all names... Emmanuel, God is with us..."

Suddenly I felt as though I was the only person alive on earth, just me and God. The others were simply part of an unreal puppet play, dangling from the strings of the Enemy... I felt an all-encompassing love. God reassured me that He was in control, that nothing could remove me from His loving presence—not even death itself.

That night the terrorists unexpectedly released the Bensons—but not without first confiscating their car, their portable projection equipment and film reels of the "New Media Bible," which is based on the book of Luke (the same film material that makes up the "Jesus" film).

One year passed. The Bensons had moved to the capital for safety and to take on administrative roles. Jan received a phone call. One of their captors had become a Christian and wanted to meet with them. Face-to-face he told them he was an experienced killer, and that he and the others had planned on killing them all. But, for some reason they just could not do it and instead released them.

He told Bruce and Jan that soon after arriving at their base, the rebels set up the projector and watched the film, eventually many times. At one viewing, several hundred terrorist rebels were watching! The Word of God in the film, understood in their own language, reached into the men's hardened hearts. Many were so moved that they wanted to lay down their arms right there and leave "The Shining Path." Now, standing before them as a fellow believer, their former enemy asked

forgiveness for what he had done to them that day. Eventually, Bruce and Jan were able to go back into the mountains to do a final "read through" of the entire New Testament in the Huamalies Quechua language, the last key step before it went to press (told by Roy Peterson, Wycliffe Bible Translators newsletter, 11/27/2001).

Sometimes it is very difficult to praise the Lord. Sometimes you just don't feel like it. I doubt that any of us have ever been in the kind of frightening, life-threatening situation the Bensons were in. But even in the most difficult of situations, the psalmist would still tell us "It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High." The psalmist here gives us three reasons why it is good to give thanks to the Lord: ***because of His Name; because He will triumph over the wicked; and, because He causes the righteous to flourish.***

This psalm addresses the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. But rather than being troubled by it (as was the author of Ps. 73), the psalmist confidently portrays the wicked as growing up like grass, flourishing briefly, and then being destroyed forever. But the righteous will flourish into old age to declare God's praise.

So let's look closer at these reasons the Psalmist gives us to give thanks to the Lord.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord because of His Name (92:1-5).

As we look at these verses, we see a number of significant truths regarding the giving of thanks to God:

A. It is good to give thanks to the Lord because of who He is.

"...to sing praises to your Name, O Most High..." The name of God that is used here and throughout the OT is "Yahweh" – Jehovah, who is the covenant-keeping Lord. In your Bibles it is written as LORD (all caps). This name, Yahweh, is used seven times in this psalm. He is also referred to as the Most High, which is in Hebrew, *Elo Elyon*, a name frequently attributed to God. The psalmist proclaimed in Ps. 97:9, "For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods."

This leads to the question we all need to ask ourselves, "Is the Lord God *your* Most High?" Is He the highest, most important, most central

and controlling Being in your life? He is the one who spoke the universe into existence. It all belongs to Him. He is over every created thing. If we fail to thank and praise Him as Lord Most High, then we are guilty of terrible ingratitude! He alone rightly deserves all praise and glory because of His Name. He is the Lord Most High. Then we also see that...

B. It is good to give thanks to the Lord at all times.

Read v. 2 – That is a poetic way of saying that it is good to declare God's praise at all times. John Calvin said that we never lack matter for praising God, unless we're too lazy to see it, because His goodness and faithfulness are incessant. We ought to begin our day by declaring God's love to us as the thought to govern our day. And then we should end our day by thanking Him for His faithfulness to us throughout the day.

C. It is good to give thanks to the Lord with music.

Twice in these verses we find reference to singing in praise to the Lord – vv. 1, 4. In verse three we find three different musical instruments commanded to be used in lifting up praise to God. Many times throughout the Psalms we find the use of voice and instruments joined together in musical praise to the Lord. Psalm 150 pulls out all the stops and commands praising God with every imaginable instrument! But while musical instruments lead us in worship, above all else we need words which express the truth about God's greatness and love.

D. It is good to give thanks to the Lord because of his great works.

One more truth... Read vv. 4-5 – Note three things:

- **His works are very great.** When we look through the psalms there are a number of recurring themes that reference the mighty works of God. These include creation, salvation and deliverance from sin and destruction, provision and providence in the daily needs of life. See Ps. 103 – read verses 1-5. The writer then goes on to speak of righteousness, justice, mercy, patience, steadfast love, forgiveness, compassion... Then there is Ps. 19 – "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."

The truth is we can never fathom the greatness of his works.

- **His thoughts are very deep.** The fact that God, the all-majestic, all powerful creator of the universe cares about me and has me on his

mind is, in itself, mind-boggling. Look at what David says in Ps. 139:17-18 – discuss the context and read the verses.

- **His works fill us with gladness and joy.** This is really the bottom line. When we consider His works, the greatness of all that he does, and the depth of his thoughts toward us, it fills us with gladness and causes us to sing for joy.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord because He will triumph over the wicked (92:6-9).

Read vv. 6-9 – There are a couple of important things to note in these verses:

A. The wicked do not understand God's ways (92:6-7).

Although the wicked often seem to flourish, we need to keep the eternal perspective. They flourish for a brief moment, but their misery will be forever. The destruction of the wicked does not mean that they will be annihilated and cease to exist. Jesus makes it clear that they will go into eternal punishment, whereas the righteous go into eternal life (Matt. 25:46). He uses the same word to describe both states. If eternal life is eternal, then so is eternal punishment. One writer says, "It is senseless and stupid to forget eternity and live in rebellion against God for a few fleeting years of pleasure in sin!"

B. God on high is not threatened in any way by the wicked (92:8).

Verse 8 is a single line but so important: "But You, O Lord, are on high forever." God is the Most High. He is on high, and he is not worried about the schemes of the wicked.

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." (Psalms 2:1-6 ESV)

King Nebuchadnezzar, after he had been humbled by God declares,

"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Daniel 4:35 ESV)

So, it is good to give thanks to the Lord because of his Name, which signifies who He is and what He has done. It is good to give thanks to the Lord because He will triumph over the wicked. Finally...

It is good to give thanks to the Lord because He causes the righteous to flourish (92:10-15).

The theme of these final verses is that God will cause the righteous to flourish, not for a short time like the wicked, but for many years. Note two key thoughts in these verses:

A. The righteous are exalted over the wicked (92:10-11).

Read vv. 10-11 - The horn was a symbol of strength. It was also used as a container to pour out the oil of anointing. This anointing oil was used to consecrate the priests for service and to anoint the king to office. It was also a picture of soothing refreshment and joy (Ps. 23:5). If you know the Lord as your Shepherd, then you have experienced His strength and renewal when you have been weary and oppressed.

The writer also says, however, that in being lifted up he has seen the downfall, the destruction of those who have been his enemies and the enemies of God. As believers in Christ, we are not guaranteed a peaceful existence in the sense of not having to fight against the evil forces of darkness. But, we are promised victory in the battle as we put on God's armor and trust in Him.

B. The righteous are promised stability and fruitfulness (vv. 12-15)

Read vv. 12-15 – what a contrast to the destiny of the wicked, who seem to flourish, but it is only for a moment. There are several thoughts in the picture we have here: stability, growth, fruitfulness, endurance...

The overall picture in these verses is that God causes the righteous to flourish, even into old age. I praise the Lord for those older "palm trees and cedars" here in our congregation, who have been planted in the courts of the Lord's house and are still bearing fruit for Him.

I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 4:16 – "...Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day."

The purpose in all of this is... read v. 15 again.

Quote - "The testimony of God's being upright, with no unrighteousness in Him, is in light of the momentary flourishing of the wicked. They do not detract from God's absolute righteousness, in that they will show forth His perfect justice in their damnation. Those who have walked with God for years will declare that He is their rock, the firm foundation that has enabled them to stand firm through many trials."

Conclusion

I conclude with another story. This one comes from an old copy of Our Daily Bread.

Illust. - Years ago, there was a Scottish Presbyterian minister who was orthodox in his theology, but very reserved in the pulpit. God blessed him with one woman in his congregation who was exceptionally warmhearted and full of love for the Savior. She was in the habit of exclaiming, "praise the Lord," or "hallelujah," when she was blessed by something in his sermon.

This bothered the pastor, so one New Year's Day he went to her and said, "Betty, I'll make you a promise. If you will stop saying "praise the Lord" and "hallelujah" during my sermons this year, I'll give you the two woolen blankets that I hear you've been wanting." Betty was poor and the offer sounded so good she promised to try. Sunday after Sunday she kept quiet.

But one Sunday the pastor had a guest preacher fill in. This man was bubbling over with enthusiasm for the Lord. As he spoke on the forgiveness of sins and the blessings of salvation, Betty's joy grew brighter and brighter and her vision of the blankets began to fade. At last she could stand it no longer. She leaped to her feet and cried, "Blankets or no blankets, Hallelujah!" (From "Our Daily Bread," 10/77.)

On this Thanksgiving Day, the psalmist wants us to know (92:1), "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Your name, O Most High." It is good because of who God is and what He has done. It is good because He will triumph over the wicked. And, it is good because He causes the righteous to flourish in His courts.