

A Life of Thanksgiving – Col 2:6-7, Psalm 100

Introduction – Thanksgiving is one of the best civil holidays we have. It is far more important than we realize for it is vital for a nation to abound in thanksgiving to God. It is a good thing that public officials call the nation to a day of Thanksgiving, pathetic as the call has become for lack of directing us to Whom we are to give thanks. But brothers and sisters in Christ: we do know. For the Christian, thanksgiving is the chief characteristic and response to who we are, what we believe, and what God has done.

Why Should I Give Thanks? – The first and solely sufficient answer is: because God said so. We are to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and be thankful to Him (Psalm 100:4). We are to do so in whatever we are doing (Col 3:17). Our prayer is to be vigilant with thanksgiving (Col 4:2). We are to give thanks *in* everything (1 Thess 5:18) and *for* all things (Eph 5:20). But in His mercy, God gives us many other reasons to spur us on to a life of thanksgiving.

Abounding with Thanksgiving (Col 2:6-7) – Paul says that as we received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we are to walk in Him, *"abounding in it with thanksgiving."* We have been delivered from bondage to sin, from slavery to the devil, from death and condemnation; in Christ Jesus, we have been utterly saved. We have been restored to the gift of life and to a life of gift-receiving (James 1:16f). This is a return to the Garden where the whole world was given to Adam for his holy labor and the enjoyment of the fruit of that labor. Having fallen from that gift, God promised that He would send One Who would crush the head of the enemy. Thanksgiving is rooted in the Creation, the Fall and Redemption. Thanksgiving is a celebration of deliverance, as Noah did being brought through the flood to the new world. As such, days of thanksgiving have often been called to celebrate God's deliverance, grace, and renewal.

An Overflow of Thanksgiving from Psalm 100 – A shout filled with joy should go up to God, and all the world must join in for it to be loud enough to get near to the joy that must be shouted (v1). We are to render thanks to Him (v4) for these reasons:

Because God is God – In the Hebrew, *"Know that Yahweh, He is God"* (v3). He is the true, living God who has exposed the lies and emptiness of all idols. He has entered into a covenant with us, bestowing the great privilege of being near Him – near the Father, "in Christ," by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because He Made Us – He is our Creator (v3). We only exist due to His good pleasure and we are not the product of an arbitrary, impersonal, evolutionary process. Having made us, He is the reason we remain in existence and stay alive; He sustains us, *"upholding all things by the word of His power"* (Heb 1:3). Imagine all the things that are going on right now to keep you alive.

Because He Owns Us – His is our rightful owner (v3). This is so true as our Creator and Sustainer, and even more so now as our Redeemer (1 Cor 6:20). It is arrogant to think for a minute that you could, or are allowed to, be self-reliant. Graciously, He shows us how to live, and how to live well. We cannot contradict His Word, but we also are free from the fear and superstition of false teachers and false gods.

Because He is our Shepherd – A shepherd owns his sheep, but this metaphor emphasizes His care for His sheep (Psalm 23). He notices us. He leads us. He feeds us. He protects us. He disciplines us. He hears our voice and responds.

Because He is Good – And when it appears that He is not responding, not answering, not providing, we give thanks *"for He is good"* (v5). If everything else is true, then it is impossible for anything to occur to us out of an arbitrary or capricious attitude (Rom 8:28).

Because His Mercy is Everlasting – Like manna from heaven, His mercies are new every morning (Lam 3:22-24). Grace is fresh every day and so His mercy is everlasting. And that grace is always sufficient (2 Cor 12:9-10).

Because His Truth is Enduring – And none of this changes. He Who is the Truth is the Alpha and the Omega, He who is and was and is to come (Rev 1:8). In Christ, all of the promises of God are "Yes" and "Amen" (2 Cor 1:20), and so everything about your promised conformity to the image of Christ, your comfort in death, your hope for heaven and the final resurrection, your eternal life with God in His kingdom – none of it changes and nothing will ever thwart it (Rom 8:37-39).

Thanksgiving is the Environment of our Worship – We no longer offer up the various ceremonial sacrifices, but we are called upon to continually offer up *"the sacrifice of praise...giving thanks to His name"* (Heb 13:15) which would bring to mind the thanksgiving offering of Lev 7:12-15. This is where we get the title Eucharist. But the whole worship service is a Eucharist of sorts. Because of Christ, we may boldly come before the throne of grace, renew our covenant, be washed of our sins, offer up our petitions and be shaped by His Word.

Thanksgiving is the Environment of our Lives – "As you worship, so you live." All of our celebrations are thanksgivings. Think of the church calendar, many of our civil holidays, personal birthdays, anniversaries, and even funerals. These punctuate daily lives of thankfulness.

Thanksgiving is the Environment of our Protection – We are not true human beings if we are not giving thanks. Thanksgiving promotes humility, reminding us that we are never self-sufficient (1 Cor 4:7). Therefore, our tithes are acts of thanksgiving and protection. With regard to mammon, giving thanks protects us from making an idol of the gift/stuff and sanctifies all of the stuff to be enjoyed (1 Tim 4:4-5).