

Introduction

Earlier in the service, I asked you to share one thing for which you are thankful. But suppose I were to ask you to do this instead. List on a piece of paper all the things for which you have, at one time or another, expressly thanked God. I have two questions in that regard. How many things would be on your list and what would they be? Would your toothbrush or eyeglasses be on it for example? The answers to those two questions assist you in determining something – how thankful and thankful you are, and that's what I'm going to preach about today from Psalm 92:1-4, being thankful and thankful people. Turn there in your Bibles please.

God's Goodness

Look at verse 2, which mentions God's "**lovingkindness**" and "**faithfulness**" and verse 4, which mentions "**what You have done**" and "**the work of Your hands.**" In our *Awesome God* ministry last year, we learned that God has 18 qualities or traits. The Psalmist is rejoicing over one of those here. It's His goodness. That's the subject of verses 1-4.

Stop for a moment and consider the word "good." We use it to describe a wide variety of things. I tell people, for instance, how "good" my wife's mashed potatoes are. Or I overheard one woman tell another how "good" her new sweeper is. What do we mean when we use the word "good" to describe those things? We mean that the mashed potatoes please our palate and the sweeper makes our work easier to do. Those things are good, in other words, because they bestow benefits, blessings, on us. They add value to our lives.

That helps us understand what it means that God is good. It means that He is always disposed to bestow blessings on everyone and everything. A.W. Tozer defined it more specifically this way: "**The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. By His nature He is**

inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people.” God is good, in other words, and constantly gives us blessings because He is. That’s the bottom line.

Those blessings of course are both spiritual and material, ranging all the way from forgiveness of sins and divine guidance to the enjoyment of a Little Debbie cupcake.

Give Thanks

Now, the psalmist tells us how we should respond to God’s goodness. Verse 1 – **“give thanks”** and **“sing praises.”** Verse 2 – **“declare Your lovingkindness and faithfulness.”** And verse 4 – **“sing for joy.”**

Those statements reveal what we should do. Thank God for His blessings.

Not long ago, I saw a grandfather in the lobby of a restaurant give his little grandson two quarters for the gumball and prize machines. The grandson’s father almost instantly asked him, **“What do you say?”** To which he replied, **“Thank you Paw Paw.”**

Good parents try to instill common courtesy in their children. One of the first things they do in that regard is teach them to say **“Please”** and **“Thank you.”** They teach them that it’s appropriate to say **“Thank you”** when someone gives them something or does something for them and inappropriate not to.

It’s the same with God. Ultimately, all blessings come from Him, which makes it appropriate to thank Him for them and inappropriate not to. So, we actually do that. We express to Him mentally or verbally how appreciative, how grateful, we are for something He has given or done. Inherent in that thanksgiving of ours is its regularity. It’s something we routinely do.

Thursday is Thanksgiving and almost all of us will do two things. We’ll “say grace” and then overeat. We use the word “grace” because we believe the food we’re about to eat is a gift of God’s grace. It’s appropriate, therefore, to thank Him for it.

But my question is this. Why do we restrict “saying grace” to meal

times? The fact is that God fills all of our days with innumerable good things that are just as much gifts of His grace as food is. I think of hot showers that revive us, floss and toothpaste that keep our teeth clean, glasses that make things look sharp and clear, television sets that give us the privilege of watching the Yankees play, computers that give us immediate access to information we need, and furnaces that keep us warm when it's cold. Those are only a few of the thousands of good things God gives or does for us. Why is it any less appropriate or even less necessary to "say grace" for those things than it is for our food? The answer is, "**It isn't.**" So, let's regularly say grace for those things as we're able. Let's mentally or verbally express to God how deeply appreciative we are of them.

I believe that's part of what Paul had in mind when he admonishes us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "**in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**" Doing that, in fact, is one of the ways that we "practice God's presence." When I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is put on my eyeglasses. The transformation is amazing when I do. Everything in the room that's fuzzy and blurred suddenly becomes crystal clear. What a blessing that is and so I often "say grace." I often thank God out loud for it.

My point is this. Everyday should be a Thanksgiving Day for us. We should thank our way through every day. We should say grace for all God's blessings as regularly as we do for our meals.

Thoughtfulness

But as always, what we are determines what we do. Only those who are thankful on the inside, therefore, will give thanks on the outside.

The problem is that many people aren't thankful, not as much as they should be at least. There are several reasons for that, the primary of which is probably this. Familiarity breeds apathy. That's part of our psychological makeup isn't it. The pull of our personality is toward indifference. No matter how extraordinary something is, it becomes

ordinary to us as we experience it over time. And the more ordinary it becomes to us, the less we grasp the value it adds to our lives. That in turn makes us less thankful for it. Compare, for example, the joy we had the first time we drove our car with the joy we have now. For most of us, the joy we have now is far less. Familiarity truly does breed apathy.

You and I need to overcome the pull of our personality toward indifference. We need to purposely cultivate an attitude of gratitude. We'll just naturally express that gratitude by thanking God if we do.

The best way I know of to cultivate an attitude of gratitude is to think. An acclaimed 19th century Jewish philanthropist named Moses Montefiore was well known for a motto he developed for his family. That motto was this, "**Think and thank.**" Those two things (thinking and thanking), he taught, are inseparable. Similarly, in the old Anglo Saxon language, the word "thankfulness" means "thinkfulness." The point is clear. We must think to thank. Thinking puts the blessings God gives us in perspective and awakens us to their value. That makes us thankful for them, which in turn compels us to give Him thanks.

You can develop your own methodologies for thinking but here are two I use. Doing these two things has profoundly impacted the way I've experienced the blessings God has given me.

First, I contemplate what my life would be like without them.

Take one of God's greatest gifts to us – the ability to see colors. Not long ago, Jill and I watched a few minutes of the Andy Griffith show. It was an old episode that was televised in black and white. I imagined as I watched it what my life would be like if I saw everything that way, in black and white.

Or take the Microsoft word program and photocopier I use to produce the sermon manuscripts many of you get. I sometimes imagine what my life would be like if I were using an old manual typewriter, carbon paper, and mimeograph machine to produce them instead.

The quality of my life would be greatly diminished in both of those cases.

Thinking that way gives me perspective on things, awakens me to their value. That makes me thankful, which in turn compels me to actually thank God for them. I frequently say grace for the ability to see colors – also for Microsoft Word and photocopiers. I frequently thank God verbally for them.

I've developed a second methodology for thinking, one that I preached about years ago. I keep in mind that there's a last time for everything I experience or do.

Many of us seem to operate under the false assumption that the blessings we have are going to last forever. We act as if there will always be a next hug to give, a next step to walk, a next meal to eat, a next vacation to go on, a next sunset to see, a next movie to watch, a next drive to take, and so on.

But that isn't the case. As a result of either sudden events out of the blue or the sheer passing of time, there will be a last time for literally everything that we experience and do on earth.

Now, imagine that you are experiencing or doing something for the last time and you know that – it's the last time. Imagine that you're eating the last meal you will ever eat, or taking the last jog you will ever take, or going on the last vacation you will ever go on, or taking the last drive in your car you will ever take. Knowing that we'd never experience or do them again, most of us would cherish that meal, jog, vacation, or drive.

Keeping in mind that there is a last time for everything helps us capture part of the dynamics of that and value things. One of my favorite experiences is going out for lunch with my wife on my day off. We have a good time talking and just being with each other – with no dishes to wash afterward. I often consider that my opportunities to do that are limited. There will be a last time that I have lunch with my wife, which makes me value and thank God for each one.

Those are the methodologies I use. You can develop your own. However you do it though, you need to do it. Think so you can thank.

Good to Give Thanks

It's worth it when we do. Notice the opening line of verse 1, "**It is good to give thanks to the LORD.**" That's true. It is good.

First, it's good for God. As all of us know, certain words are emotive, meaning stir up feelings in those who hear them. That's as true with God as it is with people. Certain words, sincerely spoken, are emotive to Him, including "**Thank you.**" When you and I are thankful and thank Him for something, it delights Him, brings Him great joy. That is without doubt the highest of all - a finite creature actually delighting His infinite Creator.

But giving thanks isn't just good for God. It's good for us as well. Verse 4 reveals how it is. It makes us glad. There is inherent joy in experiencing the blessings God gives us. But that joy needs to be expressed to complete it. C.S. Lewis explained it well. The incompleteness of not expressing the joy something gives us is like the incompleteness of being tone deaf or colorblind. So we need to complete our joy by expressing it.

We express it in two ways. One is that we praise the thing that gives us joy. We tell others how good it is. The other is that we give thanks. We tell the God who gave it how good it is and thank him for it. That's why an atheist, agnostic, or even deist can never enjoy a bowl of chili or anything else as much we who know God can. They have no one to thank for it but we do, which completes our enjoyment of it.

Conclusion

I close with a little note I wrote in my Bible beside verse 4. I took it from Derek Kidner's wonderful *Commentary on the Psalms*. It says this: "**We are made glad in proportion to the degree that we ponder and express God's works.**" He's right. So let's ponder and express thanks for the blessings God has given us. Think and thank, in others words. We'll be "glad" if we do.