



Title: Harvest Festival of Thanksgiving
Theme: Biblical Expressions of Thanksgiving to God

Psalm 100:1-5 says, “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.” (Psalm 100:1-5)

The Lord God is worthy of a harvest festival of thanksgiving

Psalm 100 is the grand finale of that cluster of psalms that begin in Psalm 94. The psalmist calls on all the earth to come to God and shout for joy. Nations are to recognize who the Lord is and ascribe to Him the glory due His Name. (Psalm 96:7) At different times in this cluster of hymns all those who know the Lord are given an invitation to submit expressions of thanksgiving out of a heart response of joy and gratitude for His covenant promises. (The Expositors Bible Commentary, Thru the Bible)

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I would propose to you that the Lord God is worthy of a harvest festival of thanksgiving. It has been pointed out by many that “Thanksgiving” is the offering of thanks and it is not complete until there is giving. If you are a Christian, God has called you to Christ. Jesus paid the ultimate price for your salvation and reconciliation to God, and the Holy Spirit is the one person who is working in your sanctification process.

Just what are four Biblical expressions of thanksgiving that can be offered to the Triune God?

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving

Our first outward expression is singing. Psalm 147:7 says, “Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp.” (Psalm 147:7) Ephesians 5:19 says, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord...” (Ephesians 5:19)

“Sing” (*anah*) here is an answer of response to the goodness of God. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament; The Treasury of David) It can be done to music because it helps prepare the spiritual heart to grow and mature in its relationship with the Lord.

Singing is a sure way of becoming aware of God’s presence. This singing must begin in the heart by listening to and learning the songs of praise that the Holy Spirit has and is inspiring music ministers to write. Therefore, it is necessary that you make time to listen to Christian music on a regular basis.

Some say that I can’t sing. That may be true. However, all Christians can appreciate music to the Lord and they must allow the Holy Spirit to place that melody and the words sung deep within their heart. People who are joyful in the Lord are Christians who enjoy Christian music and participate in Christian singing. There is a melody within their heart and it is lived out for all to see.

Christianity is a singing faith and according to Rick Warren, throughout history there are more songs written about Jesus than anything else. Thus Christians have a wide selection of music to select from.

Because of all the problems and wrong attitudes surrounding the song service, many church attendees are not participating as they should. Singing unto the Lord is a very good way of getting Christians minds off of themselves, and laying all their present life situations and problems aside so they can focus on Jesus. Singing unto the God and about His great works renews their strength, recharges their spiritual hearts and restores those moments of intimacy with the Lord. When Christ becomes the heart focus, then faith arises and the peace of God is allowed to replace non-belief, bitterness and self-reliance.

Pastor Ron Cox knew the power of singing unto the Lord. His wife suffered for seventeen years with a crippling illness. He had seen God bring healing upon healing in the church he oversees for the Lord Jesus. Yet, his wife suffered. He would go to the rest home early every morning to spend time with her. He would drive to his office drained.

June Creel, his long term secretary of 20 plus years told me how Pastor Cox would spend hours listening to Christian music and prayerfully reading the Word of God. It was during these times the Holy Spirit of God would come and reassure him of God’s love, provision and protection. Pastor Ron would come out of those times of listening to and singing along with those music tapes restored, strengthened and recharged for the day’s labor.

Pastor Rick Warren tells of a Christian psychologist who would counsel people who battled depression. The first question the psychologist would ask his patients was, "Have you listened to and sung along with Christian music today?" Then he would ask, "Have you been to church this week and in a right heart, participated in singing praises to God?"

Matthew Henry wrote it well, "When God in His providence gives us a mixture of mercy and judgment it is our duty to sing, and sing unto Him both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to the Lord for both."

Over fifty different passages of Scripture command Christians to sing because it is the vocabulary of praise to God. This is clearly seen in the Old and New Testaments. The beloved John envisions the redeemed singing in the presence of God. Therefore, the children of God today should want to sing praises to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving

Singing is the best way to enter into the presence of God and the whole Body of Christ should make a common practice of it. The second way of expressing thankfulness is to pray.

Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7) This is a command.

Christians can give the Lord their worries. "Anxious" (*merimnao*) means not to be drawn into different directions. Christians are not to worry over anything whatsoever. "Anything" (*meden*) literally means not one thing. It is sin to do so. (Word Meanings in the New Testament; The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible) It means not even to take thought or rather be troubled in thought. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament)

The great news is that Christians do not need to be troubled about anything that comes their way. The Lord is fully able to oversee their health, provision and give direction in their lives. Christians can be thankful, for the Lord cares about every single thing in their lives. He hears and will answer according to His good purposes.

The statement "Unanswered Prayers" is an unbiblical term in my opinion. The Lord answers all prayers. If the answer is "wait until His timing" then Christians are to pray until they get a clear answer and direction. If the answer is "no" then they are to thank Him for not giving them what is contrary to His will. If the answer is "yes" they are to thank Him for His continued provision and intercession in their lives. The Lord cares and knows about every part of the child of God's life. He knows their need even before they ask it of Him. (Matthew 6:8) It is a blessing to Him when His children express true faith by being thankful that they have a loving Father who is able and willing to intervene in every single part of their lives.

One of our great Christian mystics of the middle ages had Holy Spirit revelation and illumination of what it means to live a life that expresses thanksgiving in prayer to the Lord.

He wrote, "Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains to a dear trusted friend. Tell the Lord your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may [rejoice over] them; tell Him your longings, that He may [purify your heart aright]; tell Him your dislikes, that He will help you conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved taste for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself as to others.

If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, and troubles, there will be no lack of what to say to the Lord. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never need to find subjects for conversations... they talk out of the abundance of the heart without consideration, just what they think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with [the Lord]." (Fenelon; The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart)

Adoniram Judson was one man of God who knew what a life of thanksgiving in prayer to God is. He knew great success in ministry as well as imprisonment for the sake of the gospel. He wrote, "Be resolute in prayer. Make any sacrifice to maintain it. Consider that time is short and that business and company must not be allowed to rob you of that time with the Lord."

Giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you

Christians who do not allow the pleasure of the flesh, the temptations of the world and the lies of the devil to rob the Lord of the thanksgiving in prayer that He deserves please God. They also express thanks by giving unto His work.

Deuteronomy 16:10 says, “Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you.” (Deuteronomy 6:10)

The “Feast of Weeks” is called the “Feast of Harvest” in Exodus 23:16. This harvest festival stood head of the sacred seasons. (The New International Dictionary of the Bible) This harvest festival celebrates the wheat harvest (Exodus 34:26; Leviticus 23:10-14; Numbers 28:26-31) and is what in the New Testament became the day of Pentecost which was fifty days after the Passover Sabbath. (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-12; The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) Pentecost is the birth of the modern day church in which the Holy Spirit indwells the children of God and marks a time that the Lord is calling a harvest out of the Gentiles for His kingdom. The book of Acts recording the events of the Day of Pentecost” says clearly, “Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

The children of God who are enjoying the abundant harvest of eternal life and provision of God are to give a free will offering in portion to the blessings that God gives them. Exodus 23:16 tells Christians to what portion to give, “...with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field.” (Exodus 23:16) With whatever means Christians use to obtain wealth, they are to give the firstfruits received from their labors. Pastor Rick Warren once saw a bumper sticker with this message, “Love Jesus, tithe. Any fool can honk.”

Malachi 3:10 holds a wonderful promise to those who tithe unto the Lord’s work, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (Malachi 3:10)

Christians who give in true thanksgiving to the Lord are careful to give for the right reason. Christians who give to get will not be a blessing to the Lord’s work or to Him. They must have the heart of king David of whom God said was a “...man after my own heart.” (Acts 13:22) We read of David’s heart in regards to giving to God’s work in 1 Chronicles 29:1-20.

1 Chronicles 29 records the history of the inauguration of Solomon, David's son. (The Expositors Bible Commentary; 1 Chronicles 29:22) This is the king's last message to the people he was leading for the Lord God. (Thru the Bible) David had in his heart to build a temple for the Lord. God had revealed to him that he was not to be the one, (1 Chronicles 28:2-3) however, David provided for the temple to be built through all the resources that God had given; means gained as a king and through personal sacrificial giving as well. (1 Chronicles 29:2-3)

David said, "With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God..." (1 Chronicles 29:2) The Bible says that before his death David made extensive preparations. (1 Chronicles 22:5) King David said, "I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the Lord..." (1 Chronicles 22:14) David also said, "Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures..." (1 Chronicles 29:3)

The temple speaks of that which is spiritual, from a right relationship with the Lord. (Thru the Bible) It represents the place that God will meet with His people and it must be remembered that the child of God is the temple that God cares about today. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17) It is the kingdom of God that Christians are striving for and their "Commission" is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thus, Christians who have a heart after God, will out of thanksgiving to Him, make it their business to give to the work of the Lord. They will use their resources to make sure that the "Great Commission" continues on. Even before their death, they make the proper arrangements, making certain that a specific amount of their resources and their personal treasures are used for the gospel of Jesus Christ. (1 Chronicles 22:1,6; 28: 8; 29:16)

King David's life and heart had a positive effect on others as well. In 1 Chronicles 29:6-7 and in verse 9 we read, "Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. ⁷ They gave toward the work on the temple of God... The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD." (1 Chronicles 29:6-7,9)

Walter B. Knight wrote about a layman who fully understood Deuteronomy 8:18, "But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth..." (Deuteronomy 8:18)

This man of God had an extensive business that was doing very well. He had a relative pass away leaving him with a great deal of money. He was now rich and young and could do whatever most people only dream of. He thought, "Should I retire from business or continue to exercise the gift of administration the Lord had given me." After he had prayerfully considered, he continued to run the business for the Lord. He said, "I will trust in Him to help me make

more for the work of the Lord.” And that he did. All the profits from the business went to furthering the kingdom of God.

He later wrote, “I was amazed at the great joy which comes from overseeing a business totally for the Lord’s work. I use my gift totally to make money for the Lord’s work.”

The thankful child of God knows that all he has, his talents and abilities to make money come from the Lord and they prayerfully consider what to do with all that the Lord has given them.

Make known among the nations what He has done

Thankful Christians give unto the Lord’s work and they share about His wonderful works.

Isaiah 12:4 says, “Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done...” (Isaiah 12:4) Deuteronomy 4:9 says, “Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.” (Deuteronomy 4:9)

In writing about learning from Israel’s history the Apostle Paul wrote, “For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us...” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4,6,11)

We give thanks to the Lord by sharing with others about the entire work of God in dealing with nations, people and the children of God; about His chastisements for disobedience and His blessings for obedience which are promised to nations, the wicked and the children of God.

Christians are to share with their children their life before Christ and especially their life after Jesus came into their lives. This reminds them of how God forgave them and is keeping them in His fellowship. It also offers hope to their children, friends, family members and co-workers as they tell about the love and grace of God.

You are the only real authority on your life. Nobody can give your testimony like you can. All you need to say is, “This is what I was and what I am now because of Jesus Christ and this is God’s promise to me, ‘...He who began a good work in [me] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’” (Philippians 1:6)

The most powerful tool in a court of law outside of DNA testing is the power of an eye witness testimony. It stirs the heart of its listener, brings hope or fear to those who are exposed to their captivating words and a truthful testimony sets the record straight to the confused.

The Christian life that expresses “Amazing Grace... I was blind but now I see” and “...he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) gives hope to those bound by the flesh, the world and the lies of the devil.

Harvest time is to enjoy all that God has given you. Thanks means nothing until your give back to God the gratitude due to Him. Offer thanks by singing to and about Him, praying to Him, giving all you have to Him including your talents, abilities, possessions and opportunities. Be sure to share testimony about His great work of salvation and restoration of your life in Christ.

Let us pray!

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