

+ Psalm 100 + The Lord Is Good! + Thanksgiving Eve + 21 November 2012 +

What are you giving thanks for this Thanksgiving? For many, it's a break from school or a break from work. For others, it's a tummy-stretching feast of succulent delights followed by an afternoon of football or time spent with loved ones. Of course, there are many other things for which you give thanks—food on the table, a roof over your head, clothes on your back, an income, health, family and friends, nice weather, a working vehicle, an education, a free country, your church, toys and games, and much more. Families often go around the table right before they dig into the turkey and all the fixings to share something for which each person is thankful.

There are so many wonderful blessings that you and I enjoy that sometimes you and I can forget to give thanks to the One who provided all those blessings. Like children who have to be reminded by their parents to say "Thank you", you and I need to be reminded to say "Thank you" to the Lord. He provides all those blessings, even in times of need or loss or sorrow or trouble, and he does so in such an abundant way on a daily basis that we take them for granted or even forget that they are blessings. This evening the Psalmist takes on the task of reminding us who we are to thank for all these abundant blessings. He tells us, **THE LORD IS GOOD.**

It's easy to come up with a list of things for which you give thanks. Teachers have their students make their own list in the days leading up to Thanksgiving alongside their construction paper turkeys. I know of a number of people who use social media like Facebook and Twitter who are sharing something for which they are thankful every day this month, and it varies widely. Who knew someone had a reason to give thanks for cyclone fences, kitchen appliances, store clerks, and funny expressions?

With such an endless list of blessings, you could easily come up with a list of reasons why you give thanks, but do you? Often you and I aren't as quick to come up with reasons why we give thanks as we are coming up with an endless list of the blessings we have. Perhaps it's because deep down we really haven't changed since we were children. I'm glad to get something and maybe if my parents (or my spouse) reminds me, I'll say thank you, because I'm so happy to get something else or have someone do something for me. Even more so, the reason we fail to consider why we give thanks is because deep down we're self-centered sinners focused on me, myself, and I. You and I love to receive more, all the while forgetting to give thanks. In fact, even when it comes to God's blessings like forgiveness and eternal life, we can be ungrateful and thankless, like we somehow deserve such gifts, even though we don't. We actually deserve God's wrath for our sinful disobedience, our selfishness, and our ungrateful hearts.

So why do you give thanks? It's not just because you have so many great blessings. No, you and I give thanks because all those blessings come from the undeserved, merciful love that the Lord shows us day after day. ***"For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."***

What does it mean that ***"his love endures forever"***? Perhaps I could put it another way—God's mercy is endless. The Lord demonstrates that love in his daily care for your simple physical needs. After all, he is the One who created you. ***"Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his..."*** Think about that. You didn't make yourself. None of us is self-made. No, God made each and every one of us. Your life and mine would not even exist if not for the wisdom and grace of God. Your Creator caused your life to begin at conception. He helped you to grow and develop into the person you are today. Plus he provides you with everything you have—from the air you breathe to the clothes you wear to the income you receive to the family and church of which you are a part. He has given you everything you have including life itself, and continues to give you everything without end.

God's mercy is endless in your physical life and also endless in your spiritual life. The Psalmist sings, ***"It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."*** God has personally made you part of his flock, his special, chosen people. Again, that's not something you've done for yourself, but something he accomplished through the saving acts of your Savior Jesus Christ. That Good Shepherd left his home on high to come down and rescue foolish, wandering sheep like you and me. He loves you and cares for you, but even more importantly, he laid down his life for you so you could enjoy his endless mercy and everlasting love.

That endless mercy provides peace for your soul through the salvation won for you by Jesus. Day after day the Good Shepherd refreshes you with the life-giving waters of his Word and the healing balm of his forgiveness, yet there's even more reason to give thanks. You and I live in a world that lacks integrity and proves time and again that no one is able to keep their promises. So how can you be sure that God's mercy and love are really endless?

Consider these words of the Psalmist, ***“His faithfulness continues through all generations.”*** You know what that means? It means that our God never goes back on his Word. Our God never breaks a promise. Our God never fails to come through and never proves to be a sham. Our God is exactly what you and I and everyone else need most—someone who is actually true, firm, steadfast, and faithful. That’s a rock-solid reality that can never be shaken, because God proved himself to be most faithful and steadfast in the greatest possible way. He gave himself to save you and continues to do so as he cares for you. It’s true! ***“...The LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”***

I think it’s pretty clear why we give thanks to our good Lord. You could spend eternity considering the ways he has shown his boundless love, but until you enjoy eternity with your Savior, how can you show your thanks? Now this time of year people like you and me give thanks on Thanksgiving Day, especially as the great feast is spread out on the table. We all hope it would last, but isn’t it true that our Thanksgiving thanks rarely gets past the first midnight sales on Black Friday, which are immediately followed by the hectic weeks leading up to Christmas? Next thing you know you’re barreling through Christmas and the New Year. So how do you stretch out your thanks from one day to a whole lifetime? The Psalmist doesn’t let us down here. ***“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs...Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”*** Since the Lord’s love endures forever, now let your thanks endure forever.

It all starts with a shout. ***“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.”*** In view of the endless mercy of God, we put our everything into how we respond to his saving acts. He doesn’t want us to mumble our praise. No, he wants you to join the whole world in thundering with joyful praise to our gracious God. What God accomplished should cause our whole planet to sing!

...But that tune doesn’t end. No, in fact, it continues throughout your life of faithful service to him. ***“Serve the LORD with gladness.”*** We owe our everything to our merciful God. Not only does he provide for our physical needs, but he has taken care of all our spiritual needs too. So we serve him, not as slaves crushed under the burden of some tyrannical overseer, but joyfully. After all, the Master did become a slave and carried out the most awful service ever performed by a human being. No one else could do it, yet for that reason, your service to the Lord becomes a joy. Your whole life, every part of it, becomes one great act of faithful service, of worship of your Servant-Savior as Paul once wrote to the Romans (12:1), ***“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”***

That worship, that service, that giving thanks continues when you come to God’s house to be fed by his Word and Sacrament and then respond with thanks and praise, gladness and ringing cries of joy. The thanks we offer here in God’s house with our brothers and sisters in Christ is a foretaste of the grand symphony of thanks we’ll get to enjoy in the glories of heaven.

So let your thanks endure forever because God’s love endures forever. The Lord is good. Why wait for Thanksgiving to say thank you to the Lord whose mercy is endless? Let’s start today and make every day Thanksgiving Day! Amen.