

## + Psalm 65:1-8 + Praise That Fits + Thanksgiving Eve + 26 November 2014 +

What's fitting for Thanksgiving? It's not trying to squeeze into your pants after the big meal tomorrow. So what is fitting or proper for Thanksgiving? Certain things uniquely fit the holiday, don't they? Perhaps you start out the day watching the Macy's Parade on TV. Perhaps there's football in the afternoon or some other family tradition, but one thing that's pretty unique to Thanksgiving is the feast. You have the golden-brown turkey and all the fixings—the stuffing, the potatoes, the sweet dishes and savory salads, the pies and this and that. For a feast like this, family or friends get together and out comes the nice china, the good silver and a fancy tablecloth. All of it uniquely fits the Thanksgiving holiday.

There are some things that aren't so fitting for Thanksgiving. It would be strange to see someone pull fireworks out for the evening's festivities or get the kids ready for trick or treating or an egg hunt. Tonight, however, we pause to consider all the wonderful blessings that our God has given and we ask, "What is fitting for God this Thanksgiving?"

On Thanksgiving, it's easy to say, "Thank You, Lord," when your table groans under the weight of all the food or when your stomach is so full you have to loosen your belt. How quickly we forget to give thanks when the weekend is over and you're back to the busyness of work or school.

On Thanksgiving, it's easy to stand in awe of God's wonders and recognize God's daily care in good times and bad. How quickly we forget when we hear about the instability of the stock market or the doldrums of the economy or the rising costs of everything from groceries to health care. How quickly we take those blessings for granted when my focus late on Thanksgiving or the next day is to be a better shopper than my neighbor.

On Thanksgiving, it's easy to loudly sing, "**Now thank we all our God**" (*Christian Worship* 610), recognizing how great God's blessings really are, yet how quickly we start to again offer lifeless praise as we go through the motions of worship without thinking. So what is fitting for our God this Thanksgiving? Tonight King David helps us find a **PRAISE THAT FITS**. He sings in **Psalm 65**...

**Fitting praise remembers God's mercy.** David writes in verse 3, "**When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.**" We don't know when he wrote this psalm, but when you look at his life, you quickly realize that David was an expert on sin and forgiveness.

Maybe you remember the story. David stayed back in Jerusalem one spring, while his army went out to fight. One night as he walked on his roof, he spotted a bathing beauty named Bathsheba. His lust kicked in and David acted on that lust, even after he was told she was married to a member of his elite special forces. Soon after, David found out she was pregnant. He tried to cover up his sin by bringing Bathsheba's husband back from war, but his attempts were foiled by the soldier's dedication and honesty. So David schemed to have Uriah intentionally placed where the enemy would kill him. When that happened, David took Bathsheba as his wife.

Nine months later, God sent the prophet Nathan to point out David's sin and lead him to repentance. David realized the immense burden of his sin and it crushed him. So much had taken place by his own hand—lust, adultery, lies, murder—that it overwhelmed him. He cried out to Nathan, "**I have sinned against the Lord.**" Nathan immediately responded, "**The Lord has taken away your sin.**" (2 Samuel 12:13) Although David had to deal with the consequences of his sin for the rest of his life, he received freedom because God had wiped his sins away. He gave thanks for God's mercy.

Now our giving thanks would be awfully shallow if not for God's mercy. We would have nothing to celebrate if not for God's mercy. St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2(:4), "**But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.**" Our praise remembers God's mercy and those precious blessings that that mercy has given us through Christ. Jesus took the guilt off of our shoulders and placed it on his own on the cross. He took the full brunt of the punishment we deserved from God. He took our place and now that burden of sin is gone. So **fitting praise remembers God's mercy!**

Because of his mercy, God brings us into his presence. "**Blessed are those you... bring near to live in your courts.**" We can go to our Lord in prayer as David sings, "**O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come.**" Our Savior promises to answer that prayer and he does it with amazing deeds as David continues, "**You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.**" As we seek praise that fits, we realize **fitting praise stands in awe of God's power.**

Maybe the Lord allowed David to envision a region like our own when he wrote this psalm. He writes, ***“O God our Savior...who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength, who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves...”*** Maybe you’ve traveled through the Adirondacks or the Southern Tier or New England to gaze at the richness of God’s creation as the leaves change from green to yellows and reds or as water crashes down one of the many waterfalls of our region. Maybe you’ve walked along the shores of Lake Ontario or the Atlantic Ocean amazed by the awesome power of the waves.

As we enjoy these natural wonders, we also realize the awesome power of the One who created them. We see that power in the tremendous snow storms that come off the lakes or come in the form of a Nor’easter. We see that power in the hurricanes of the South and the thunderstorms of the West. We stand in awe of the One, who ***“stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves”*** with the simple words, ***“Be still!”*** (Mark 4:39)

**Fitting praise stands in awe of God’s power.** That power formed those mighty mountains and the surging seas. That power calms the storms of the earth and the storms of the nations. We’ve become all too familiar with what David means by ***“the turmoil of nations.”*** Just this year we’ve seen the world become a more dangerous place. We’ve seen ISIS overrun parts of the Middle East, Russia march into Ukraine, and Islamic terrorists kill and kidnap countless Christians in West Africa. We’ve seen the rioting and racial issues of places like Ferguson, MO. We’ve seen government devolve into constant attacks on one another rather than serving the greater good. We’ve seen Ebola and renewed conflicts and natural disasters.

Yet in all this, our Lord is the One who ***“stills the turmoil of the nations.”*** When nations grow too proud, God puts them in their place. Look at all the empires that have risen and fallen over the centuries—Egypt, Babylon, Rome. Who knows what the Lord has planned for America? Still God keeps these nations in their place to carry out his will.

He keeps them under control, so the message of the awesome deeds of Christ can spread to every tribe, nation and people on earth. As once was said about the British Empire, the sun never sets on the Gospel. David sings, ***“Those living far away fear your wonders; where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth songs of joy.”*** Jesus gives us opportunities to share his message here in central New York, throughout the United States, and around the world. Our Savior rules this world. We don’t put our hope in the strength of mountains, seas, princes, or nations, but in the One who is our solid rock. **Fitting praise stands in awe of God’s power** on our behalf

David reminds us also that **fitting praise recognizes God’s daily care.** In the verses after our text, David rejoices as God cares for every step of a farmer’s crops from planting to harvesting.

We, too, can rejoice as God cares for every step of our lives. The God, who formed the mountains and stilled the seas, isn’t too great to provide the relatively little things. Thank God for the little things! We have clothes to wear. Our cupboards and fridges have food to eat. We have roofs over our heads, possessions to enjoy, and loving family and friends. The Lord provides employment so we have money to spend on more than just the necessities. He gives us life and bodies that can do countless actions from pushing buttons to designing complex machines. He gives us clean air to breathe and gravity to hold us down. He gives us warmth from the sun and shade to cool us. He gives us a place to worship and study his Word—and the opportunity to expand it for further ministry work. He gives us everything we possibly need for our daily lives and much more.

Above all, our Lord gives us what we need most—salvation. He grants us forgiveness in Christ through that seemingly “little” blessing of his Word, through the simple waters of Holy Baptism connected with that Word, and through his body and blood given with bread and wine in His Supper. We rejoice as David does, ***“Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.”*** All these blessings seem so small in comparison to our great God, but he provides all that through the daily working of his gracious love. **Fitting praise certainly recognizes God’s daily care!**

So before you enjoy your Thanksgiving feast, be sure to offer praise that fits our gracious God. Don’t let Thanksgiving be the only time you offer such praise, but each day remember God’s mercy in Christ. Jesus has brought you into his presence because of that mercy. Stand in awe of God’s power as you enjoy his creation and recognize his daily care as you go through each busy day until you enjoy the eternal Thanksgiving feast in heaven. In all things, then, let us offer fitting praise to our gracious God! Amen.