

Thanksgiving 2011

Psalm 100

GIVE THANKS ALL THE TIME

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all you lands.

Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Know you that the LORD he is God: it is he that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful to him, and bless his name.

For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endures to all generations.

Friends,

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness...you are more blessed than the six million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend any kind of church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death...you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of the people in this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthiest people.

Our hallowed "Declaration of Independence" begins with these words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are empowered by their creator with certain unalienable rights....." And it

ends with these words, “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” A little more than 10 years later, after the Declaration of Independence was written, President Washington made this public proclamation, “Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor, and whereas both houses of Congress (BOTH) have by their joint committee requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God...” “ Therefore I assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these United States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be...” So read the first proclamation of Thanksgiving by a president. Today is that day and we as a nation give thanks to God and no other!

The 100th psalm is a great thanksgiving psalm. It was written for the people of Israel but it is also a good one for us, we who are the new Israel today. God said to them, “Now when you come into the Promised Land, and you settle down in your warm comfortable homes and you have plenty to eat, don’t forget me. I was the one that led you out of the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey.” You see it doesn’t take very long to forget.....It’s really a shame that only 3 countries have a Thanksgiving Day. Only Canada, the Philippines, and America have a thanksgiving day...that’s it. I wonder how our world would change if every nation came together one day a year to give thanks to God. There is something that happens when people gather together to give thanks, barriers break down and theirs just more unity, much like that which occurred at the berlin wall some years ago when the wall was taken down piece by piece.

Sometimes we give thanks only on the basis of how much we have. Did I make a lot of money this year? Am I healthy? This is what determines how thankful we are, what our financial bottom line is, or how healthy we are. The psalmist reminds us that these things change, the stuff that happens to us in this world is in a constant state of flux. The only sure thing in life is a relationship with God

and for that we are surely thankful. "Enter his gates with thanksgiving" the psalmist cry's out.

Alex Haley the author of roots had an unusual picture hanging on the wall in his office. It was a picture of a turtle on top of a fence post. When asked, "Why in the world do you have a picture like that in your office?" his answer was, "That picture reminds me that every time I write something significant, every time I read my words and think how wonderful they are and I begin to feel proud of myself, I look at that turtle on top of that fence post and remember that that turtle did not get there on its own, he had help." That my friend is the basis for our thankfulness to remember that we did not get where we are on our own but only by the grace of God, with his help!

This is why we shout for joy, this is why we serve the Lord with gladness; this is why we come before him with joyful songs. Look at the people around you; do the people around you look happy? Or are they sitting there with scowls on their faces? The psalmist says, "Come before him and serve him and sing his praise with joy in your heart." " 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."

We are thankful because God does not treat us as our sins deserve and GOD does not repay us according to our iniquities. The Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness last to all generations! "God has redeemed your life from the pit; he has forgiven all your sins through Jesus Christ! The lord God has brought us his righteousness through the death of his own sacrificial lamb. Alleluia! Rejoice and be thankful.

(Lutheran Hour-Norman Vincent Peale ILLUS) A middle aged man was suffering from depression and was asked when the last time he had thanked anyone? He couldn't really remember the last time so he was told to write a thank you note to someone who had impacted his life. He thought of a teacher he had had years ago and wrote the teacher a thank you note specifically to tell the teacher how much she as his teacher had changed his life. The teacher wrote back and said that she had never received a letter like this from a student and that the letter had arrived during a very difficult year of teaching and as she was writing

this letter to him tears of joy were pouring from her eyes! She wrote that she had put his letter on her night stand and she read it every night because the letter was so encouraging. Upon hearing this from his teacher he decided to write more letters and with each letter of thankfulness his depression became more and more manageable until he had been basically cured because he began to live his life for the first time with an attitude of thanksgiving. He had written almost 500 thank you letters over a period of several months! It amazing what an attitude of thankfulness will do in a person's life.

It's like what Paul said to the Church at Thessalonica, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." A-MEN