

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Nov. 19, 2017
Psalm 103:1-5

In Christ Jesus, our Savior, for whom we give thanks to God the Father, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our Gospel reading last Sunday we heard of 10 lepers crying out to Jesus, “**Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!**” Jesus miraculously healed them as they were walking to the priest’s residence. And then we heard that only one of them came back to thank Jesus for this great gift of healing. Jesus asked, **Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?**

That reading reminds us of the many times we accept God’s gifts but forget to thank Him for them. But even when we do remember to thank God, what do we thank Him for? Over the years I have asked my confirmation children to write down a whole list of things for which to give thanks to God. The lists are quite interesting. Most of them do list Jesus, or forgiveness of sins, heaven, and everlasting life. But not all of them had that placed at the top of their list. Some, in fact many had other things listed there. What would your list look like? What would be at the top?

Well in this morning’s sermon text we see David encourage us to remember the most important things God has done for us and the first and foremost things for which we are to give thanks to God.

We see that---

DAVID OFFERS UP THANKS TO GOD
I: FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS
II: FOR THE REDEMPTION OF OUR SOULS
III: FOR THE GOOD THINGS IN OUR LIFE.

Many people will be giving thanks this coming Thursday, but some of those thanksgivings will be useless and empty. If you do not list Jesus as Lord and Savior as one of the things for which you give thanks, in other words, if you do not believe in Jesus, your thanks to God is empty, and is not even heard. It would be like Cain’s offering to God which was not accepted because it did not come from a heart of faith. Or like the Pharisee’s prayer in the temple which was not acceptable to God because it did not come from a believer who acknowledged his sins.

David is really writing this Psalm to himself. He knows that there is nothing the soul of man is apt to forget more than to give thanks, especially give thanks to God. Giving thanks is not a natural function of people. Because of our natural sinful selfishness it must be learned and then aroused and prompted. When we were little how often didn’t our parents have to say to us, “What do you say?” after we received something. They taught us to say “please” and “thank you.” And then after much coaching and urging we learned that to show appreciation for something we should say “thank you.”

The same goes for giving thanks to God. We indeed believe that God is gracious and merciful. He has given us blessings beyond our comprehension and yet it is still not a natural, everyday occurrence for us to thank and praise Him. Giving thanks to God should be as natural and done as often as breathing, eating and sleeping, but again because of our sinful, selfish, self-centered flesh and heart it isn’t that way.

So David writes to himself and reminds himself to **BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL; AND ALL THAT IS WITHIN ME, BLESS HIS HOLY NAME! BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL, AND FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS:**

To “bless” means “to invoke great praise, celebration, and adoration to God with bended knee.” And David use the word “bless” three times. He is reminding himself that all of his being---mind, body, soul, heart, hands, voice, and all of his faculties needs to bow before God in adoration and praise for all of His benefits and blessings. The word “benefits” means “actions, deeds, works, all that has been done for us.”

Now that David has reminded himself to bless the Lord he enumerates for himself what it is that he should bless the Lord for. And he very properly sets forth first the forgiveness of sins. He writes: **WHO FORGIVES ALL YOUR INIQUITIES, WHO HEALS ALL YOUR DISEASES.**

This is the greatest blessing to mankind and this blessing is unlike any other blessing, for it lasts forever and it is given to everyone. That cannot be said of any other blessing. The blessing of life is

given to all people born but it does not last forever. The blessing of sight, speech, hearing is given to most, but not all people. But this blessing of forgiveness of sins is for an eternity and is given to all. For God out of love sent His Son of die for the sins of every person ever to be conceived in this world and this forgiveness was accomplished once to last forever.

That is why David rightfully lists this blessing first. The second half of verse 3 is almost a repetition of the first half as is customary in many Psalms---**WHO HEALS ALL YOUR DISEASES.** To heal here means to “mend, restore, make perfect.” Therefore the Lord through forgiveness looks upon us as perfect and sinless in Christ. Our blackened, sinful heart, because of Christ’s red blood is now seen as a pure white heart. This is called justification. God as a Judge sees what Christ has done for us, that He has taken all of our sins upon Himself, paid for their punishment in full, so that God declares us “not guilty, innocent, righteous.”

Imagine that! We sinful, corrupt, rebellious people are declared not guilty and righteous. It is almost too good to be true, but it is true! Because of our sins we were headed to the gallows of eternal death in hell, but now we have been pardoned, forgiven, because Christ has taken our place. A lifetime of continuous praise and thanksgiving could not repay such great love of God toward us.

II: FOR THE REDEMPTION OF OUR SOULS

David continues in verse 4: **WHO REDEEMS YOUR LIFE FROM DESTRUCTION.** David gives thanks for the redemption of our souls. Because of sin we were captured and under the control of the Devil. He owned us completely even as he still owns and rules the unbelievers of this world. But Jesus came into this world to set us free. He paid the price of our freedom with His own death. Now this payment was not given to the Devil. Jesus didn’t die to satisfy Satan. No, Jesus died to God and paid the atoning sacrifice, the price of justice. He paid the ultimate sacrifice price—His holy, precious blood. He redeemed us, bought us back with a ransom above and beyond all ransoms---His very life, His shed blood!

Indeed this should cause rejoicing, joy and thanksgiving to abound in our hearts.

Christ, the Life of all the living, Christ, the death of death, our foe,
Who Thyself for me once giving To the darkest depths of woe,
Thro’ Thy suffering, death, and merit I eternal life inherit;
Thousand, thousand, thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

III: FOR THE GOOD THINGS IN OUR LIFE.

David now states the third reason for blessing and giving thanks to God: **WHO CROWNS YOU WITH LOVINGKINDNESS AND TENDER MERCIES, WHO SATISFIES YOUR MOUTH WITH GOOD THINGS, SO THAT YOUR YOUTH IS RENEWED LIKE THE EAGLE'S.**

Two striking pictures from David are seen here. He likens our innumerable blessings to having crowns upon our heads and the filling up of our mouths with good food. Like kings we receive all these blessings and even as we are content and satisfied when well fed, so also that is how our life has been blessed. We have been continually satisfied with good things.

James says, **EVERY GOOD GIFT AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE, AND COMES DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS.** These earthly blessings are given to all people, even the wicked and heathen prosper here on earth. In Matt. Jesus says, **FOR HE MAKES HIS SUN RISE ON THE EVIL AND ON THE GOOD, AND SENDS RAIN ON THE JUST AND ON THE UNJUST.** In Psalm 145 David writes, **THE EYES OF ALL LOOK EXPECTANTLY TO YOU, AND YOU GIVE THEM THEIR FOOD IN DUE SEASON. YOU OPEN YOUR HAND AND SATISFY THE DESIRE OF EVERY LIVING THING.**

God has provided bountifully for our bodily welfare and we have the Lord’s assurance that it will continue to be that way until the end of time. In Genesis God promises: **WHILE THE EARTH REMAINS, SEEDTIME AND HARVEST, COLD AND HEAT, WINTER AND SUMMER, AND DAY AND NIGHT SHALL NOT CEASE.**

Finally David compares the renewing of our good gifts day after day from God with the annual molting of the eagle. After a year the wings and feathers of an eagle are old, dirty and worn. Then like a miracle the eagle molts and his wings are renewed and he once again has a new covering with which to soar into the skies. We too are continually renewed and refreshed with God’s mercies, blessings and grace.

This has been a month of thanksgiving, but let us strive to make the rest of this year and the new year ahead, yes, our whole life one in which we are aware of and thankful for the many, many blessings of God toward us. Realizing that the greatest gift we have ever received is that of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who through His perfect life, suffering, death and resurrection has removed our sins, redeemed us and given us eternal life and salvation.

Let us never tire of giving thanks to God for He never tires of giving us blessing, after blessing, after blessing. So we close this morning with a familiar prayer of thanks

**“O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GOOD,
FOR HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER.”**

Amen.