

Giving Thanks to God

Psalm 116:12-16

INTRODUCTION:

A. Lesson Text: **Psalm 116:12-16** – “What shall I render to the LORD *for* all His benefits toward me?

13 **I will take up the cup of salvation**, And call upon the name of the LORD.

14 **I will pay my vows to the LORD** Now in the presence of all His people.

16 Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of His saints.

16 O LORD , **truly I am Your servant**; I *am* Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds.

B. The observance of Thanksgiving Day is a distinctively American tradition. Its practice began 390 years ago, in 1621, on American shores, as grateful Pilgrims gave thanks for a modest harvest on a twenty-acre plot that promised to carry them through another hard winter. For over a century our nation has observed this festive day by presidential decree.

1. Thanksgiving Day is a distinctively religious observance. It was set aside as a day of prayer and praise. In 1863 President Lincoln set aside the last Thursday in November “as a day of Thanksgiving and praise for our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”

2. Reinhold Niebuhr expressed concern that our Thanksgiving Day emphasis had departed from this religious purpose. He said, “The Thanksgiving proclamations of the American presidents for the last two decades have increasingly departed from the original rather purely religious spirit of Thanksgiving, and they have increasingly become congratulations to God for having such wonderful children in America.”

C. Thanksgiving Day is not set aside that we might concentrate all our gratitude within the day and take God’s gifts for granted the rest of the year. Someone has suggested that we change Thanksgiving Day into a day of grumbling and complaint and spend the other 364 days of the year in thanksgiving.

1. **ILLUSTRATION:** Benjamin Franklin recalled a childhood experience that brought a sharp rebuke from his father. An old pork barrel was situated near the table from which the father would daily draw meat for the day’s need. Then his father would always pray the prayer, “We thank thee, Father, for the meat thou hast set before us.”

One day young Ben suggested: “Father, why not say one prayer over the whole barrel and get it done with? Then we won’t have to thank the Lord every meal for every piece of meat we eat.” Isn’t this often what we do?

2. We flip a switch on our wall and expect light. We forget the linemen who keep the electricity flowing. We are hardly moved when we read of the electrocution of a worker atop a pole. We turn the faucet in our kitchen and water flows
3. **ILLUSTRATION:** In the book *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, written by a pilot of the French Sahara line during World War II, we read of three Moors from the desert who had never seen a tree, a rose, or a flowing river in their native land. After the War they were guests in Europe. They were shown a waterfall in the French Alps. Now, to them, water was worth its weight in gold. This extravagance was overwhelming.

The guide was ready to move on, but they insisted on waiting. “Why?” he asked. Their amazing reply was, “We are waiting for the falls to come to an end.” It was simply beyond their comprehension that God should so madly supply water. This water had been running ceaselessly for thousands of years. When they returned to their homeland, they said very little about the waterfalls. No one would believe them anyway.

4. Millions are making Thanksgiving Day decisions and choices.
 - a. Where? Whether near or far, some travel may be involved.
 - b. What do you need to gather in and then prepare for the occasion?
 - c. With whom will you celebrate Thanksgiving Day?
5. The psalmist, in a time when his heart sang in praise in an awareness of God’s gracious gifts God’s gracious gifts, asked himself, “What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” (**Psalm 116:12**).
 - a. He answered with three responses.
 - b. May the principles of his responses become ours as well.

1st Response: I WILL TAKE THE CUP OF SALVATION **Psalm 116:13** – “I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the LORD”

- A. This is the first step. The greatest gift of God to humanity is the gift of his Son.
 1. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (**Romans 6:23**).
 2. We cannot sincerely say, “God, we thank you for sending your Son to die for our sins,” and not accept that Son in obedience to Him as our own Savior.
 - a. To reject God’s Son and His claims on our life is to say, “So far as I am concerned, He might as well not have come to the earth.”
 - b. The first response of gratitude is to “take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” What a blessed promise is the declaration, “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (**Romans 10:13**).
- B. What is offered . . . what is given . . . must be accepted and received in order to receive the benefit.

2nd Response: I WILL PAY MY VOWS Psalm 116:14 – “I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people.”

- A. “I will pay them,” the psalmist suggests, “in the presence of all [God’s] people.”
1. These are public vows.
 2. They begin with a public profession of faith in rendering obedience to the gospel and confessing Jesus Christ to be the God’s Son.
 3. We declare our allegiance to Christ and his church. Like the public vows of marriage made by two people deeply in love, the public vows of the Christian put us on record and under obligation to be consistent and faithful to our vows to Christ and his church.
4. Think back today on all the vows you have made since that first one.
- a. Think of the high emotional experience when your baby was born and you held in your arms a life of your own flesh.
 - b. Think of that revival meeting, that gospel meeting, that time of great sorrow or great joy when God was so close and you vowed to love him more devotedly and to follow his will.
 - c. Thanksgiving Day is a wonderful time to pay our vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Matthew 5:16 – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

3rd response: I WILL ASSUME THE ROLE OF THE SERVANT Psalm 116:16 – “O LORD , truly I am Your servant”

- A. When we assume the role of the servant, we are most like our Lord.
1. The word *minister* means “servant.”
 2. The word *deacon* means “servant.” The New Testament declares that all
 3. Christians are called to be “ministers,” “servants,” in the sense that we are to be concerned with ministering to the needs of others rather than being concerned with being served by others.
 4. Jesus said of his coming, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”
 5. Let us follow his example . . .
- B. Let us translate our “thanksgiving” into “thanks-living.”
- C. In His role as a servant Jesus gave thanks. We need to be a servant and we need to give thanks. 1 Peter 2:21 – “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”

CONCLUSION:

A. Three questions:

1. What are you thankful for?
2. Who are you thankful to?
3. How will you express your thanksgiving?

B. When Jesus addressed Peter with the question, “Do you love me?” He followed Peter’s declaration with the words, “Feed my sheep.” In other words, if you love . . . do something about it!

1. Thanksgiving must not be mere words. The Pharisee began his prayer with the words, “God, I thank You,” but followed those words with a bigoted, self-centered eulogy about his own self-righteousness.
2. We have observed three ways to Give Thanks to God:
 - a. **“I will take up the cup of salvation.”** (12)
 - b. **“I will pay my vows.”** (14)
 - c. **“I will assume the role of a servant.”** (16)
3. How does God know we love him? By our doing something about it. This begins with obeying the very commands of God that will deliver us from being lost and place us in a saved relationship with Him.

C. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**