

**Give Thanks & Sing**

**Psalm 92:1-4**

**November 20, 2016**

*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher  
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

Well this week is Thanksgiving week and, so, I want to take a break from our study of Romans for this Sunday and step away and deal with the issue of Thanksgiving. Our heritage, as you know as Christians in America, really traces back to Plymouth, MA and to the Pilgrims. Many of those who settled in the Plymouth Plantation were Calvinistic Puritans, believers like you and me, who fled persecution in Europe and came here to start a new life where they could worship as you and I worship today. I have in my office a Geneva Bible printed in the year 1599. The Geneva Bible was translated under the care and the oversight of John Calvin in Geneva, through the work of men like William Tyndale and others who translated the Scriptures into our language, and notes were added. It was that Bible, the Geneva Bible, that the Puritans brought over with them when they landed in Plymouth. The Plymouth Plantation website writes this: “In the year 1621, when their labors were rewarded with a bountiful harvest after a year of sickness and scarcity, the Pilgrims gave thanks to God and celebrated His bounty. To these people of strong Christian faith, this was not merely a revel. It was a joyous outpouring of gratitude.” James Baker, in his History of the American Holiday of Thanksgiving writes, “The three-day event in Plymouth, in the fall of 1621, was the historical birth of the American Thanksgiving holiday.”

So, understand then that what we will celebrate together with our families this week, had its roots in the Puritan believers of the Plymouth Plantation. But it didn't start there, because their celebration can actually be traced back much farther. It can be traced back to the rich soil of biblical revelation. Why did those early Christians in our country call for a day of Thanksgiving? It's because this has always been the pattern and practice of God's true people?

Now this is clear in so many biblical texts, but this morning I want us to focus briefly on one specific text. And it's my hope that this passage will help us to truly celebrate Thanksgiving this week as believers and not as the pagans will around us. And I trust that will help prepare our hearts for the Lord's table which we will take in a few moments together.

So, turn with me this morning to Psalm 92, Psalm 92. I'm going to read the entire Psalm although we will only focus on a stanza of it in the interest of time. You follow along as I read Psalm 92. Here is the ancient superscription to this Psalm, "A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day".

It is good to give thanks to the LORD  
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;  
To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning  
And Your faithfulness by night,  
With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,  
With resounding music upon the lyre.  
For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done,  
I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.

How great are Your works, O LORD!  
Your thoughts are very deep.  
A senseless man has no knowledge,  
Nor does a stupid man understand this:  
That when the wicked sprouted up like grass  
And all who did iniquity flourished,  
It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.  
But You, O LORD, are on high forever.  
For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,  
For, behold, Your enemies will perish;  
All who do iniquity will be scattered.

But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;  
I have been anointed with fresh oil.  
And my eye has looked exultantly upon my foes,  
My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.  
The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,

He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.  
Planted in the house of the LORD,  
They will flourish in the courts of our God.  
They will still yield fruit in old age;  
They shall be full of sap and very green,  
To declare that the LORD is upright;  
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Notice, first of all, the superscription “A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day”. This is the only Psalm of the 150 that have that notation. The song was written clearly for the corporate worship of God’s people on the weekly Sabbath. The Jewish Talmud tells us that it was sung as the priest sacrificed the first lamb of Shabbat of the Sabbath as a burnt offering. The Psalm celebrates the greatness of God’s work, specifically, His sovereign rule of the moral universe, a rule that manifests itself as we just read in the destruction of the wicked, those who are His enemies and the prosperity and final triumph of the righteous. In other words, this Psalm is really, at its core, a celebration of the works of God in redemptive history.

The entire Psalm deserves to be studied but I want to focus this morning just on the call to worship in verses 1 to 4. The theme of that stanza we just read together is stated clearly in verse 1. Here’s the theme of this first stanza and in a very real sense of the entire Psalm: it is good for the people of God to give thanks and to sing praises to the Lord. Now as he unfolds that theme, the Psalmist teaches us several important lessons about Thanksgiving and that’s why I think it’s good for us to study it this morning as we anticipate the celebration of Thanksgiving this week - several important lessons about true biblical Thanksgiving. Let’s look at them together.

The first lesson we see here is the spiritual value of Thanksgiving. Verse 1: “It is good [it is good] to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High...” *It is good.* The question is, why? Why is it good? Well, he doesn’t really answer that question entirely here, but in other places throughout the Scripture we do learn why it is good to give thanks and to sing praises to God. Let me give you several reasons that it’s good. First of all, that’s good because it glorifies God. Psalm 50:23 God says, “He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving

honors Me...” It glorifies God when we offer Him our thanksgiving and praise. Why? Because it acknowledges that we’re not the source of it, that He is. It’s good because it glorifies God. It is fitting because He is worthy of that honor. He is the only one who deserves our thanks.

Secondly, it is good because it’s commanded. It’s simple obedience. Psalm 30:4: “Sing praise to the LORD [it’s a command, it’s an imperative. Sing praise to the LORD], you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name.” Now I just cited one passage but that represents a multitude of other passages where Scripture commands us to give thanks and praise God in song. And so, to do so, is good. It is morally right because it is a reflection of God’s will for us.

Thirdly, it is good - and this may be one you haven’t thought of before - it is good because it edifies other believers. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you [and then Paul says this], with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Did you hear what he said? Through our worship in music, through our songs combined with our thanksgiving, we teach and admonish one another. When we sing together, there is a vertical dimension to our music and that is we sing us into God. We worship God. But there’s also a horizontal dimension. We teach and admonish one another in our singing and in our thanksgiving. When other people hear your thanksgiving, when they hear you sing the praises of God, it teaches and admonishes them. And so, understand then, it benefits - our singing and our thanksgiving - benefits the people around us, not because of the quality of our voices, thank God, but because of the truths that we affirm when we sing. It edifies other believers.

Number four: it is good because it enriches our own souls. Do you realize that thanksgiving and praise to God actually enriches your soul? Look at verse 4: “For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.” Now, clearly, there’s a sense in which we look at the work of God and we are filled with joy and therefore we praise Him. But there’s a sense in which the other is true as well. I think Derek Kidner, one of the excellent commentators on the Psalms, was absolutely right when he wrote this about verse 4: “We are made glad by the works of God and by His ways [listen to this] in proportion as we give our minds and voices to expressing the wonder of them.” You will only be filled with true

praise and thanksgiving to the extent that you understand the works of God and you return it in praise. If you struggle, if you're struggling being thankful, if you're struggling praising God, then just start giving thanks and praising God because, as you rehearse those realities, it makes your own heart glad. It is good for us to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to our God. For those reasons, there is great spiritual value to thanksgiving.

Now that brings us to a second lesson about thanksgiving, that's here in our text, and that is the primary expressions of thanksgiving. The Psalm here identifies for us two primary ways that we can express our gratitude to God. The first is an obvious one. It is simply to give thanks, that is, to verbally express to God our thanksgiving. Notice verse 1: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord." The Hebrew word that's translated "give thanks" literally means "to confess". It's used three different ways in the Old Testament. On occasion it is used of the confession of sin – confessing in that sense. It's also used of publicly confessing the character and the acts of God. When it's used in that way, it's commonly translated as praise in our Old Testaments. It's to confess who He is to others. And then a third way that this word confess is used is, as it is here, to mean give thanks. You say, how do you get from confess to give thanks? Well, to confess in the sense that you speak about what God has done, what God has accomplished. And not in a cold sterile way, but with a heart of genuine gratitude. To confess in that sense is to give thanks.

Now I think it helps us sometimes to understand what something is by looking at its opposites. So, what is the opposite of thanksgiving? If I said to you, what is the vice that corresponds to the virtue, that is thanksgiving, what would you say? Well, there are several biblical concepts or words that you could supply. One of them might be grumbling and complaining. Another might be discontent with what God has brought and given into your life, discontent in the heart. Another might be the words lust and coveting. In both cases, they are words that say, "*I don't like what God has given me. I want something else.*"

But I think probably the word that best captures the opposite of thanksgiving is the word ingratitude. Ingratitude. Now, if you were to make a list of sins, where on that list of sins, in terms of seriousness, would you place ingratitude? Where you ought to place it is very near the top, as one of the worst of sins because that's where God places it.

Listen to Romans 1:21 - God talking about the ultimate expression of man's sinfulness, of unregenerate man's sinfulness. You know what God says? He says two things. He said, "*Let Me tell you how they responded to Me, their real Creator.*" Two ways. Number one: They did not glorify me as God. They didn't treat Me as God although I am. And, neither were they, what? Thankful! God says, "*When I look at fallen humanity, when I look at the sinfulness of fallen humanity, I see two chief mountain peaks sins that stand out above the rest. One is a refusal to glorify Me as God and the other is a lack of gratitude for all the things that I do to sustain and keep them.*" Ingratitude.

Our Lord talked about this, you remember, in Luke 6:35? He says, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High..." When you do this, He says, you're acting like your Father. So, in other words, this is how God is. Listen carefully! Here's how God is. He loves His enemies. He lavishes them with good. He lends and gives generously expecting nothing in return. And then Jesus finishes it this way: "for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." This is how God describes Himself and His interaction with fallen humanity. "I lavish them with generous gifts. I give them everything they need to enjoy this life and they respond with evil, they break My will, and ingratitude. So, understand then, that ingratitude is a terrible sin against God, and it is a sin that marks all unbelievers. You say, "*Now a wait a minute. We're about to celebrate Thanksgiving across the nation with a lot of unbelievers.*" Yeah, but they won't be thanking God. We'll talk more about that in a moment.

Now the Psalmist says that we who know God are to give thanks. We are, notice verse 1, to give thanks and our thanks is to be addressed to the Lord. The word LORD in all caps is God's personal name, Yahweh. Ultimately, we must offer our thanks to the only true and living God and Yahweh is His name. And our Lord taught us to refer to Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, unless a person's gratitude is being expressed to Yahweh, the one true and living God, it's not gratitude because He's the only one who deserves it.

You hear unbelievers talk about being thankful and grateful. You'll hear that a lot this week. You know, "*I'm thankful for...I'm grateful for...*" But what you will almost never hear is them say to whom. They refuse to say to whom. This week, when you speak to others about the things you're grateful for, don't act like an unbeliever. Be sure to tell them who it is you thank for those good things that have been bestowed upon you. And just don't talk to people about your gratitude. That's okay. Our family, when we celebrate Thanksgiving, we go around the table and share what we're thankful for. That is biblical and okay to do. But also, set aside time to express your gratitude to God. Give thanks to the Lord - in prayer is implied here.

Now a second way that we express our thanksgiving is also in this passage and that is, to sing praises. Not only simply to give thanks in prayer, but to sing praises. Notice verse 1: "It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High." Notice we're to address our songs to Yahweh, to the only living in true God. And the Psalmist then refers to Him by another of His Old Testament names - "O Most High". In Hebrew it's *Elyown*. It refers to God as the Highest One, the Supreme One, the Greatest One, the One beyond whom is no one, above whom is no one. And to the Most High God, notice what he says, we are to "sing praises to Your name". The word translated "sing praises" comes from the word that's usually translated "psalm" in our Old Testament. It's a word that means to sing and usually to sing with accompaniment, to sing with a stringed instrument.

Now, I want you to look again at verse 1 because I want to teach you a lesson about Hebrew poetry. English poetry is characterized primarily by rhyme - not Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry is characterized primarily by parallelism. You see it even in English. And it's wonderful because - think about if our translators had to get rhyme right out of Hebrew and English. They don't have to do that because the nature of Hebrew poetry is simple parallelism. There's one line and then there's a second line that further explains, elucidates, amplifies, develops the thought of the first line. So, then look at verse 1. The phrase "to sing praises to Your name" further develop or amplifies what the Psalmist meant when he said, "give thanks to the LORD". In other words, in this context, he encourages us to give thanks to the Lord *by* singing praises to His name.

Now in the Old Testament, if you were a believer in the Old Testament times, you could give thanks to the Lord in several ways. You could offer a sacrifice. One of the peace offerings in the Old Testament Levitical law was a thank offering. If God had done something extraordinary for you, if you had a recovery from a life-threatening illness, if something really amazing had happened in your life (you had a child that you weren't expecting to have and God in His goodness brought that child to you), you could go to the temple, you could offer one of the peace offerings as a thank offering to God. That's one of the ways Old Testament believers could thank God.

The other ways were very much like the ways we do. You could express thanks to God directly in prayer or praise. You simply thank God in your prayer or in your song. A third way would be to express gratitude for God indirectly to others. You see this in the Psalms. I won't take you there but we understand this. We do this. It's like when I say, "*You know, I am so grateful to the Lord.*" I'm talking to you and I say, "*I am so grateful to the Lord for this blessing or this answer to prayer or His grace in the middle of this trial.*" That is a form of giving thanks to God even though I'm not talking to God at that very moment. Those are all legitimate expressions in the Old Testament.

But the Psalmist, here, adds a fourth way to give thanks to God and that is by singing, either privately or corporately our praise and thanksgiving to God. Look at verse 1: "It is good to give thanks to the LORD and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High." He means to give thanks to the Lord by singing praises to His name. This is why Scripture so often connects these two phrases together. I have in my notes ten different times, and it's just a sampling, of the times in the Old Testament where these two expressions occur together - "give thanks", "sing praises", "give thanks", "sing praises", "give thanks", "sing praises". That occurs throughout the Psalms because music is one of the main ways, we express our thanksgiving to God.

But music in the temple was not confined to singing with the human voice; it was usually accompanied. So, look at verse 3. Verse 3 is not a new idea; it's still talking about singing praises to the Lord - "With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, With resounding music upon the lyre." These three stringed instruments were common in Old Testament Israel - in fact the



lyres, the one that David used to play for Saul. The Psalmist's point here is that one of the primary ways we can express our thanksgiving to God is by declaring and celebrating God's character and His work in song. And in this Psalm, we learned that the people of God are to do this corporately when they come together for worship because this was a song, remember, for the Sabbath day when the people of God came together.

But it's not good enough for us to come together and collectively to sing. Each one of us, who is a believer, is to sing. Look at verse 4: "For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands." Singing praise to God, personally and corporately, is not optional. Get that out of your mind. It is a command. This week I went through, and I'm not going to share them with you, but I went through the Old Testament, and I counted the number of times that Scripture commands us to sing to God from our hearts. Dozens of times we are commanded to do that.

Now let me just say by way of application that on a given Sunday, when we gather here for corporate worship, there may be a legitimate reason for you not to sing, to join us in singing. Maybe you've lost your voice that week or something - I understand that. But if, listen carefully, if as a pattern you gather with the people of God and you refuse to sing with your whole heart and voice to the Lord, you are sinning against God. It is an act of disobedience and rebellion.

Your singing, by the way, is also a wonderful spiritual diagnostic. You want to know your spiritual health? Here's one way. Turn to Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5, familiar verse 18: "And do not get drunk with wine...", that is, don't be under the influence of any substance - alcohol, drugs, whatever. Don't be under the influence of anything "for that dissipation". That's dissipation. Instead, be under the influence of the spirit: "be filled with the Spirit". Now, I don't have time to fully explain that. If you weren't here when we went through Ephesians, go back and listen to the message, but I'll give you the thumbnail version. It doesn't mean get more of the Spirit like, you know, you were only your legs were filled with the Spirit and now He is going to fill you up to the top of your head. No! The Spirit indwells every believer. What he's saying is this. Let the Spirit fill you with His word. Compare it with Colossians 3:16 which is the parallel passage, written at the same time, and that's where you land. Let the Spirit fill you

with His word. Be under the influence of the Spirit. And to be under the influence of the Spirit is to be under the influence of His inspired Word.

Now, what happens when that's true? Well, versus 19 to 21 tell us. When you're under the influence of the Word and the Spirit, here's what happens. Let's start with the third one, verse 21: "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." Paul goes on in the next chapter to explain that and essentially it's this. If you're under the influence of the Spirit, you will submit to the proper human authorities in your life. Let me just say that if you struggle with that, you are not a spiritually minded person. To whatever extent you struggle with that, you are not under the influence of the Spirit. But look at the other two - verse 19. Notice this isn't a new sentence. This is modifying "be filled with the Spirit". Here's a consequence of being under the control of the Spirit: "...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." Where there is a person under the influence of the Word and the Spirit, there will be a love for and a participation in God-centered music. And verse 20, there will be a pattern of thanksgiving: "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father".

Now, as you sit here this morning, you may think of yourself as a deeply spiritual person. But Paul says, if your life is not characterized by submission to proper human authority, by a consistent pattern of thanksgiving, and by a love for and participation in God-centered music, you are not truly under the controlling influence of the Spirit and the Word. But where the Spirit is in control, there will be a love for and participation in God-centered music. So, then, the primary expressions back in Psalm 94 - the primary expressions of thanksgiving are speaking to God directly, either by prayer or by singing. This week, you're going to have the opportunity to do that. Tonight, if you're going to be at the "Thanksgatherings", you're going to do those two things. This week I hope, with your family, you will take an opportunity to express your thanksgiving to God in these two ways.

Now, a third lesson he teaches us about thanksgiving is in the verse I skipped - verse 2. And that is two primary categories for thanksgiving. In this call to worship, here, the Psalmist points to two specific categories in which our thanksgiving should come and both of them are about God's

gracious character. Is that what fills up your thanksgiving - God's character? It's where the Psalmist takes us.

Notice, first of all, the first category for thanksgiving is God's lovingkindness. Verse 2: "To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night." Now, declare is not a new command. It really is part of what we do in our singing. We are to declare these things, verse 1, in our thanksgiving and in our songs. So, what are we to declare? What are we to rehearse? What's to be the focus of our Thanksgiving? First of all, notice, "your lovingkindness". It's not a familiar word to us. Miles Coverdale, William Tyndale's friend, was the first to use the word "lovingkindness", to translate this Hebrew word and subsequent English translations followed his lead. But it's not a word we use very much. I think, in its time, it was effective, but you probably have never used this word in everyday conversation - lovingkindness. So, I want to look at the Hebrew word. The Hebrew word that's translated "lovingkindness", every time it occurs in the Old Testament, is the Hebrew word *hesed*: h-e-s-e-d, *hesed*. It occurs... it's a really important Old Testament word. It occurs more than 250 times in the Old Testament. And most frequently, it refers to the relationship between God and His people.

Now every time you see this word "lovingkindness", forget the word love and kindness and think about the Hebrew word *hesed*. And it has two equal concepts that make it up. There really isn't one English word that captures it. So, there are two concepts. First concept is a profound love that is found only in the deepest of relationships; a profound love that's found only in the deepest of relationships. The second concept, equally important, is a tenacious, stubborn commitment to loving the person in that relationship. So, it is love, a profound love, and it is loyalty or commitment. That's why every time I read this word, when I do it here publicly and I come to the word "lovingkindness", I always substitute "steadfast love" because that's what the word *hesed* means - steadfast, unflinching, immovable love".

This quality is at the very core of God's character. You remember in Exodus 34:6-7, when God proclaims His name to Moses. This is what He said, "Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim, Yahweh God, the strong one, the powerful one, compassionate and gracious, strong to answer... to anger... Let me start over. "...compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and [here it is] abounding in

[*hesed*], lovingkindness and truth [in steadfast love and faithfulness]. And then He says, “who keeps lovingkindness [*hesed*, steadfast love] for thousands...” He doesn’t mean for thousands of people. He keeps it for millions, billions of people. He’s talking about generations. In the same context, He says I visit the iniquity of those who hate me on their children. He doesn’t mean He punishes the children for the parent’s sin. He means He comes, He inspects, He finds the same sins and those who hate Him and they receive the punishment they deserve, to the third and fourth generation. But God says, My *hesed* follows after those who fear Me and whom I know to the thousandth generation. And He says, connected to my *hesed*, My steadfast love, is the forgiveness of iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Now, here’s a key question: to whom does God show steadfast love? Trace it through the Old Testament and you will find that God’s *hesed* is reserved for those whom He has chosen to enter into a relationship with. That means that God’s steadfast love is simply the outworking of His sovereign, redeeming grace. You can see that, by the way, in this very passage. Notice down in verse 7 how He refers to the wicked. He says, “That when the wicked sprouted up like grass and all who did iniquity flourished...” They’re like grass. Don’t think Saint Augustine. This is weeds. They sprout like weeds. They’re obnoxious. They’re trouble. And they’re worse, in our case, we were rebels. The wicked like weeds.

But notice the change. Go down to verse 12: “The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree...” That’s the date palm that, if you’ve visited Israel, you’ve seen. “He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” We used to be weeds. That’s a description of every sinner. The wicked are like weeds - obnoxious. But notice what we have now become. We’re like majestic, beautiful trees. You say, how did that happen? Well, look at verse 13: “Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.” The Hebrew word for planted means to transplant. This is a picture of sovereign grace. A tree doesn’t plant itself. A tree doesn’t transplant itself. It requires the work of someone else. Do you see the story of sovereign love and grace here? God has sovereignly changed the character of those who used to be like weeds, and He has made us into magnificent trees, and He has transplanted us forever into His very presence. This is sovereign, saving love. We should give thanks to God, and we should sing to God for His sovereign, redeeming grace and love, for His steadfast love, for His *hesed*.

By the way, seventeen times in the Old Testament, we read the very same words. Let me give you one example. Psalm 107:1: “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness [*hesed*, His steadfast love] is everlasting.” Give thanks to God because His *hesed* never, never, never quits. In fact, I love the way Psalm 103 puts it. It says His *hesed*, His steadfast love is from everlasting, that is eternity past, to everlasting, eternity future. If we were to take our puny little brains and try to trace back and to think back as far as we can go into eternity past, we can only go so far. And then, if we were to turn and we were to probe our minds and think as far as we could into eternity future, from vanishing point in the past to vanishing point in the future, you will find nothing but God’s unchanging, electing, redeeming, justifying, glorifying love. Give Him thanks for His *hesed*.

A second part of God’s gracious character that should elicit our thanksgiving and praise is His faithfulness. Notice verse 2: “To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness by night.” The Hebrew word translated “faithfulness” means to be firm, to be unmoved, reliable, to always keep your word. This is who God is. This word or a word in the same family was used in that self-revelation back in Exodus 34 - His *hesed* and His faithfulness. God always remains faithful to what He’s promised. Listen, in the gospel, Christian, God has made you a lot of promises. You are part of the new covenant, according to Hebrews, and in that covenant, He has made wonderful promises to you, and He is always faithful to keep them. 2 Timothy 2:13: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny [disown] Himself.” We are to give thanks to the Lord and we’re to sing praises about His faithfulness.

When are we to do this? Look at verse 2: “To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning And Your faithfulness [literally] by night [nights, plural].” In other words, this is to be constant (day and night), not just on the Sabbath like this Psalm is for, but constantly (day and night). It’s like Daniel. Think about Daniel. Here’s a guy snatched out of his home, out of his nation, taken a long way away to Babylon. And it says, three times every day Daniel got down on his knees and he gave thanks to God. It’s like that. We are to give thanks to God. We’re to sing praises to Him constantly. Why? For His steadfast love and His faithfulness. And why should this be the

preoccupation of our lives? Verse 4: “For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.”

What do we learn from these verses? Well, as you think about Thanksgiving this week, there are several lessons here. The first is the priority of corporate worship with God’s people like we’re doing today. This song was for the Sabbath when the people of God came together. Also, we learn here God’s demand for individual participation in corporate worship. It’s not enough for your body to show up here; your heart has to be engaged. You have to be singing to the Lord from your heart, giving Him thanks, worshiping Him. There’s an intentionality. You can’t worship if you just show up. There has to be a decision that I am here to exalt God and a decision to direct your worship and praise to Him. This Psalm shows us the importance of regular thanksgiving to God. In this Psalm it was every Sabbath day with the people of God but Psalm 100:4 says every time you enter His presence, do it with thanksgiving. 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

The other lesson we learn here is that the two primary categories of our thanks and our praises is to be the character of God - His steadfast love and His faithfulness. In other words, His eternal, electing, saving, sanctifying, keeping, glorifying, forever love and His faithfulness. Those realities are what we are to celebrate, and they are what we celebrate in the Lord’s table because there is no greater demonstration of the steadfast love of God than Christ. Romans 5:8: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The center point of God’s *hesed* was at Calvary and it’s what we remember in the Lord’s table.

Take a moment and prepare your hearts as the men come.

O Father, we give You thanks for Your steadfast love, love that You set up on us from everlasting, a love that was demonstrated at the cross, a love You brought to us in time at salvation, and a love that will be ours to everlasting. Father we praise You. Help us to truly give You thanks, to sing Your praises, in a moment as we do so. But Father, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord’s table, we come asking Your forgiveness for our sins and, even in that, we know the foundation, the basis is your *hesed*. It’s your steadfast love. Even this David prayed in

Psalm 51, “Be gracious to me Oh God, according to Your steadfast love.” Father that’s our only plea. Forgive us because You have chosen to love us, because of what our Lord did. And make us able to take of the Lord’s table in a way that pleases You and honors His death. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen!