

Thanksgiving Sermons
A Thanksgiving Textbook
Psalm 100
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It was in 1777 that the Continental Congress proclaimed the first National Day of Thanksgiving. And several of our early presidents followed suit and also declared such a national holiday. But even when they didn't, this holiday from the beginning in our country was still celebrated annually in most states.

After Abraham Lincoln's declaration in 1863, it became the custom every year for the President to declare the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving. And then in 1941, Congress permanently established the Thanksgiving holiday as the fourth Thursday in November. And so, that's why we celebrate this week, but that's not really why we celebrate.

The question I want to begin with this morning is, where did this holiday really originate? James Baker writes in his book, *Thanksgiving, The Biography of an American Holiday*, “Despite disagreements over the details, the three-day event in Plymouth in the fall of 1621 was the historical birth of the American Thanksgiving holiday.”

What do we know about that first Thanksgiving? Well, there are only two surviving records, one of them by William Bradford in his *Of Plymouth Plantation* and a publication by another survivor of the Mayflower, Edward Winslow. What did they write? What was that first Thanksgiving about? Well, in our era of political correctness, it's now been changed, but the *Plymouth Plantation* website used to read like this, “In 1621, when their labors were rewarded with a bountiful harvest after a year of sickness and scarcity, the Pilgrims”—and by the way, they started out with 102 who survived. The first Thanksgiving was celebrated by only 53 who survived that first year—“The Pilgrims gave thanks to God and celebrated His bounty in the harvest home tradition with feasting and recreation. To these people of strong Christian faith, this was not merely a revel, it was a joyous outpouring of gratitude.” That's what the first Thanksgiving was about.

So, what I want you to understand, as you gather with family and friends this week to celebrate, our Thanksgiving holiday traces back to our Puritan forebears who came from Europe on the Mayflower. And they carried with them in their hands the Geneva Bible. It was really the first study Bible. It was produced under the direction and care of John Calvin in Geneva. It was the Bible of the Puritans. It was the Bible that they came with on the Mayflower. It's what shaped their understanding. That means that ultimately our Thanksgiving holiday has its roots not only in the Puritans on the Mayflower, but in the rich soil of biblical revelation.

This morning, I want us to study what I think is the classic biblical text on a God honoring Thanksgiving. It's the psalm we read a moment ago in our Scripture reading, Psalm 100. I invite you to turn there with me this morning. Psalm 100. Notice first of all, the title that's given: A Psalm for, or it could be of, Thanksgiving. Could also be translated from the Hebrew as "A Psalm for Thank Offering." And I'll explain that in a moment.

The psalm titles are ancient, and in Luke 20 verse 42, Jesus cites one of those titles as being accurate and actually uses it to make an important theological point. The titles of the Psalms pass along to us the ancient tradition of how these Psalms were interpreted and how they were used.

This is the only time in 150 Psalms that this title appears: "A Thank Offering." What is that? Well, one of the five sacrifices that God prescribed for individuals in the Old Testament, specifically in the book of Leviticus, the place where most Christians' New Year's resolution to read through the Bible dies, in those five sacrifices, there was one called the peace offering. And the peace offering could be offered for one of three reasons. First of all, it could be offered as a freewill offering, that is, just a general expression of your love and gratitude to God.

The peace offering could also be offered as a vow offering, that is, you found yourself in trouble, in the midst of that trouble, you made a vow to God, God answered your prayer and saved you, delivered you, then you would offer this vow offering as gratitude for the deliverance that God had granted you. The third way a peace offering was offered, or reason it was offered, was as a thank offering, that is, to express thanks for God's blessing. It's also called a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

This expression occurs in Psalm 107. You remember Psalm 107 are these vignettes of people who got themselves in terrible difficulty. They cried out to God to deliver them, and then He did. The one that talks about those who in their rebellion found themselves at the very end of life itself. God saved them, and Psalm 107, verses 21 and 22 say this, “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His steadfast love and for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His works with joyful singing.”

So, this Psalm, Psalm 100 was often used in conjunction with offering a thank offering to God. But its use and its benefit are not restricted to the Old Testament believer and to the sacrificial system. Throughout history, this Psalm has challenged God's people to offer God the sacrifice of our praise, even the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

As you and I think about how to properly celebrate Thanksgiving this Thursday, I want us to study this Psalm together. We read it a moment ago. Let me just make a couple of beginning observations. This brief Psalm is a textbook for how we are to offer our thanksgiving to the Lord. Its structure is very simple. You see there in your English Bible, it's composed of two stanzas: the first is verses 1 to 3; the second is verses 4 and 5. Both stanzas serve the same purpose. Both are a call to thanksgiving. But each stanza points to one main truth about God that should inspire our thanksgiving. The first stanza commands us to offer thanks to God because He is God. Or we could say because “He is great.” The second stanza calls us to offer our thanks because God is good. So, we are to offer thanks to God because He is great and because He's good.

My father-in-law, who taught theology for 50 years, used to say that much of what you needed to know about theology, you learned when you were a child praying that prayer, “God is great, God is good.” There's so much about Him in those two great expressions.

Now both of these stanzas consist of two simple elements. First of all, you have the expressions of thanksgiving, that is how we should offer our thanks. And then you have the reasons for thanksgiving, and that is the “why” we should offer our thanks. So, with that roadmap then, let's consider this magnificent textbook on thanksgiving.

The first stanza reminds us to thank God for His greatness—to thank God for His greatness, verses 1 to 3. And as I said, he begins by detailing the expressions of thanksgiving, that is, how to express our thanks in verses 1 and 2. Now I want you to notice, first of all, that giving thanks to God is not optional. There are seven different expressions of thanks in this psalm. Let me point them out to you: verse 1, “Shout joyfully”; verse 2, “Serve with gladness”; “Come before Him with singing”; verse 3, “Know”; and then verse 4, “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks and bless His name.” Those are the seven expressions of thanksgiving.

Notice each of those is a command, an imperative. It shouldn't surprise us because the New Testament commands us to give thanks to God in a comprehensive way: 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” A lot of Christians live their lives trying to figure out God's will. Let me tell you God's will. It's that you would give thanks to Him for His goodness. That you would give Him thanks.

Now in the first stanza of Psalm 100, we're commanded to express our thanksgiving in four ways. Here's how to express our thanks. Number one, joyfully acknowledge God as king. Verse 1 says, “Shout joyfully to the LORD all the earth.” Now the Hebrew word translated “shout joyfully” is not a general word. It's a very specific word. In fact, this word was often used of the welcome given to a king as he entered his capital and took possession of his throne. It's a royal greeting. So, “shout joyfully to the Lord” means acknowledge “God as your king.” Acknowledge Him as your king.

And notice, Israel's God is no local or ethnic deity. It says, “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.” All the earth is called to recognize and worship Him as their king. If you want to give thanks to God, it starts there. It starts by acknowledging Him as your rightful king.

A second way we're to express our thanksgiving is in verse 2, worship Him with gladness, verse 2 says, “Serve the LORD with gladness.” Now in the Old Testament, that phrase, “serve the LORD,” is used in two ways. It's used, first of all, in a sort of comprehensive sense of being totally committed, of being solely devoted to Him as your God. For example, Deuteronomy 10,

verse 12, “Now Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul?” It's a call to be totally committed to God and God alone, as opposed to other gods.

But in the context of our passage here in verse 2, the context of entering into the temple courts, the word “serve” is used in a different way. It essentially means “to worship.” In this word, there's a reminder that God only accepts worship from those whose lives show a commitment to Him, who are wholly devoted to Him. We are called then to worship our God, to come together as we have this morning and to do so individually throughout the week. You're called to ascribe worth to God, to celebrate who He is and what He's accomplished, to worship.

And notice the psalmist adds that our worship is to be carried out with gladness, with joy, with jubilation. Listen, you are obligated to worship God. And by the way, that doesn't happen just because you show up on a Sunday morning. What you're doing right now may not be worship at all. Worship requires that there is an intentionality in your heart that as you go through the elements of worship, as we sing and as we pray and as we study the Word of God together, there is an intention of your heart to express worship to God, to celebrate who He is and what He's done. And without that, it's not worship. You're just here. We're to do it with gladness.

By the way, gladness, the gladness part really matters to God. For example, in Deuteronomy 28 verse 47, listen to what God said through Moses: “Because you did not serve the LORD your God,”—and here “served” is used in that first sense of a comprehensive devotion to, commitment to God. “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore, you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things.” You see what God is saying? He's saying we are to worship Him with gladness, with joy. Don't think of worship solely as a duty. It is a duty. But think of it as a joy, as a privilege. It's an opportunity to thank the person who rightly deserves all of your praise and gratitude.

A third expression of thanksgiving is to sing to Him with joy. He goes on in verse 2 to say, “Come before Him with joyful singing.” As I've explained to you before, God created music to bring Him glory. Romans 11, Paul ends that great chapter by saying that “from God and through God and to God are all things.” In other words, all things are created, all things that are, all things He accomplishes are to bring about His own glory. And that includes the gift of music.

You realize music actually predates the world. Men didn't invent music. In Job 38, verse 7, we find the angels who were created just before this universe. We find them singing for joy at the creation. Music has always been around God. And in the Old Testament, there were thanksgiving choirs according to Nehemiah 12. It predated the creation. It was always a part of the worship of God.

Music is always an appropriate expression for our thanksgiving. And listen to this. It will always exist as a channel for the praise of God. Read Revelation, and you find those throngs of redeemed saints gathered around the throne of God doing what? Singing to God. So, what does this mean for you and for me? It means you should sing to and about God in both individual and corporate worship. It means you should sing.

You know, I love the fact that our church sings. I love when you sing out, we join our voices together. It's such a great encouragement as we sing to the Lord together. But some of you may be from, may be new at our church, may be from churches where singing was like an audience participation thing, where you just sort of watch the crowd on the stage perform. Listen, that's not biblical worship. Biblical worship is when you sing to the Lord.

And notice you sing joyfully. Scripture, by the way, commands us again and again, Old and New Testament to sing. If you say to me, well, you know, Tom, I just don't like music and I don't really like singing. Well, let me say that that's your problem. And it's a problem you need to fix. Because in Ephesians 5, Paul tells us that one of the very first manifestations of being filled by the Spirit with the Word of God is a love for God-centered music. That's what he says. So, if you don't love God-centered music, if your soul doesn't resonate with that, there's a problem with

your soul. Maybe you don't know the Lord, or maybe you're just not spiritually mature enough to appreciate it, or maybe you've just never been taught, but it matters to God. Sing to him with joy.

A fourth way to express our thanks in this first stanza is to understand and celebrate His Person and works. Understand and celebrate His Person and works. Verse 3, “Know,”—that's a strange command—“Know that the LORD Himself is God. It is He who has made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” The word “know” is not merely an intellectual awareness of facts. It means we're to understand, yes, but we're to acknowledge or confess certain things about God's Person and His work, and we're to confess them because we are thoroughly convinced to the bottom of our souls of their truth.

This is another legitimate form or expression of thanksgiving. We celebrate what we know about God. And that brings us to the second part of this first stanza. What we're called to know, acknowledge, and confess takes us beyond the expression of thanksgiving to the reasons for thanksgiving. And these reasons flow from the greatness or the Godness of God in this first stanza. Notice verse 3. Here are the reasons: “Know that the LORD Himself is God.” Again, “know” here is not merely “to understand,” but “to personally acknowledge or confess from confidence.”

And as we've learned that word “LORD,” when he says know that “the LORD,” and it's on all capital letters, that's not the normal Hebrew word for Lord “Adonai.” Instead, it's God's personal name, Yahweh. As I've explained to you, when God first announced that name to Moses in Genesis, or excuse me, in Exodus chapter 3, He used the first-person form. God said, “I Am.” But in the name “Yahweh,” when we say “Yahweh,” we're saying “He Is.” So, understand then that verse 3 is calling us to, at the very basic level, affirm monotheism, that there's only one God.

But it's more than that. It's to affirm that that one God has revealed Himself as Yahweh, as the One who is. What does that mean? When God says, “I Am,” what does He mean by that? He means that He's the only being in the universe whose existence depends entirely on Himself. Think about that for a moment. God doesn't need anything or anyone to sustain his existence.

He's the only being like that in the universe. You depend on God for everything, so do I. But God depends on nothing and no one. He is simply the One Who Is. He's self-existent.

There's no greater way to express the Godness or the greatness of God than that. But notice God powerfully demonstrates His Godness or His greatness in verse 3, in three great acts. First of all, His creation of His people, verse 3 says, "It is He who has made us and not we ourselves." We're to thank God for His great creation, including His creation of us.

Secondly, we're to thank Him for His care for His people, verse 3 says, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." In that last phrase, there's a tender picture. It's that of a Shepherd who takes responsibility to feed and to provide for and to tend and to heal and to protect His sheep. One of the Puritans wrote, "He is our bountiful benefactor. We are not only His sheep whom He's entitled to, but the sheep of His pasture whom He takes care of. He that made us maintains us and gives us all good things richly to enjoy." Friends, all of the ways that God providentially cares for you and for me, those should be the focus of our thanksgiving this week.

But there's a third great act here in verse 3, and that is His redemption of His people. His redemption of His people. And although God's creation and His care of us as sheep are both implied in verse 3, neither of those is the main point. Listen carefully. What the psalmist is saying to God's chosen people in verse 3 is this: It is God who made us to be His people. It is God who made us to be His sheep, not ourselves. Or perhaps the alternate reading you see there in the margin in your Bible: It is God who made us to be His people, and we are His.

But regardless, in verse 3, there's this sense of shock, of amazement on the part of the psalmist. It's like he's saying, "Imagine this, we of all people. We are His people. Not by our own efforts, but by His doing." The psalmist is rehearsing the reality that Israel is God's people because God made it so. It's a profound statement of God's electing love. Isaiah 43:1, "Thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; and you are Mine!'"

Now, this isn't just true of the physical descendants of Abraham. It's true of them, true believers in Israel, but it's also true for the spiritual descendants of Abraham, as Paul calls all believers in the book of Galatians. It's for anyone who comes to God and acknowledges Him alone as their God and King, verse 1. Or in the words of the New Testament, Paul says in Romans 10, "Those who confess Jesus as Lord and believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead." This is an invitation for everybody, verse 1, "Shout joyfully to the LORD all the earth." This psalm concerns not only true believers from Israel, but true believers including us. We too are to thank God, not only for creating us, and not only for His providential care for us, but also that in sovereign grace, He chose us in eternity past to be His people. And in time, He made us His people. He made us His people. Reminds me of 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, where Paul says, "By His doing, you are in Christ Jesus." That's how you became one of His people, by His doing.

Turn over to 2 Thessalonians. Look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Paul celebrates this reason for thanksgiving here in the 2nd chapter of 2 Thessalonians. Look at verse 13. Paul says, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord." There's so much in this verse, so much rich theology. But notice the reason we should give thanks, he says. Give thanks because, here's the reason, "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." There's a reason for thanksgiving, Christian. You sit here today as a follower of Jesus Christ, it's because God chose you from the beginning for salvation. He made you His people, one of His people.

How did he do that? What means did He use? "Through sanctification by the Spirit." That's not talking about progressively being made more like Jesus Christ. Here, it means to be set apart at the moment of salvation by the Spirit as belonging to God. And the other thing that happened at that moment is He gave you faith to believe in the truth.

"It was for this He called you through our gospel." There's the effectual call. When you heard the gospel that day you were saved, God drew you to Himself through that message. It was for this—here's the reason He called you through our gospel: "that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." That verse has the full range of your story. It starts in eternity past when God set His love upon you. You're beloved by the Lord. He chose you to adopt you as a son or a

daughter. And then in time, through the work of Jesus Christ, a moment in your life, He set you apart by the Spirit. He gave you faith to believe the gospel message. He called you to Himself. To what end? That you may gain one day glorification, “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

So, in Thanksgiving, then, we joyfully acknowledge God as our King. We worship Him with gladness. We sing to Him with joy. We understand and celebrate the greatness of God's Person that He alone is God. And we know and celebrate the greatness of His works, His creation, His care for us, but especially His sovereign grace in redeeming us from our sins. And making us His own. So, this first stanza thanks God for His greatness.

But let's hurry on to look at the second stanza in verses 4 and 5. The second stanza reminds us to thank God for His goodness. To thank God for His goodness. And again, he begins in verse 4 with the expressions of thanksgiving. In verse 4, we learn three more ways how to express our thanksgiving. Number one, approach Him with gratitude and praise. Verse 4 says, “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.”

A picture here is clear. As the Old Testament believer entered into the temple and as he approached the throne room of God, which is really what the Holy of Holies was. Of course, no Old Testament believer could enter into the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies, but he or she could come to the courts, the appropriate courts surrounding that building.

And that building represented the presence of God among His people, the very throne room of the King of Israel. And as the worshipper entered the temple, approached God, he was to come overflowing with gratitude and praise. Same is true for us. When we come before God's throne in prayer, we must come giving thanks. Colossians 4:2, “Devote yourselves to prayer.” And then he adds this, “Keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” Every time we approach God, we should approach Him like this.

There's also a wonderful invitation in verse 4. Notice everyone is invited to come before Him.

All who are willing to bow before Him as King can enter His gates and enter His courts. If you're here this morning and you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, there's an invitation here to you: Come before God.

How do you do that? Well, it's unfolded so beautifully on the pages of the New Testament. You have to repent of your sins. You have to be willing to turn from your sin and rebellion against God, your Creator. You have to acknowledge it. You have to be sorry for that sin. You have to be willing to turn from it. And then, you put your faith entirely in the finished work of Jesus Christ, in His perfect life, lived for those who would believe in Him, in His substitutionary death, in which He satisfied the justice of God on behalf of all who would believe in Him, and then His glorious resurrection by which the Father put His stamp of approval on His sacrifice and said, "I accept it." You have to turn from your sin and put your faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you do so, you can enter into His presence spiritually today, and someday physically into His presence.

There's a second way to express thanksgiving here in the second stanza, and that is, express thanks to Him for all things. Verse 4 says, "Give thanks to Him." The Hebrew verb "give thanks" is never used of thanking a fellow human being. This verb is only used for thanking God, and the basic meaning of it is "to confess." When it's used of confessing who God is and what He's done for us, it's usually rendered as it is here, thanks. But what does it mean to give thanks? It means you tell God specifically what you're thankful for and you thank Him for those things. That's what it means to give thanks.

You see, it's not enough to feel thankful. This week, our nation will be filled with people who will say to all their family and friends, "I'm thankful." That's not thanksgiving. Thanksgiving requires giving thanks to the One who deserves that thanks. It means that you articulate to God what you're thankful for, and you actually thank Him for it. That's thanksgiving.

Let me ask you, when's the last time, and I want you to answer this in your own soul, when is the last time you truly, intentionally set aside time to articulate the things in your life you're thankful for and express thanks to God? That's thanksgiving. Anything short of that isn't.

There are many things that we do here in this life that we won't do in heaven. You won't evangelize in heaven. But giving thanks isn't one of those things. You will give thanks forever. Read again the Book of Revelation. Read what happens around the throne of God. And you will find again and again the people there, the redeemed people there are giving God thanks.

A third expression of thanks is to rehearse His character with gratitude. Rehearse His character with gratitude. Verse 4 ends by saying, “bless His name.” “Bless” is one of the Hebrew words for praise. It means “to declare God to be the source of the good that you enjoy.”

You know, we talk about God blessing us, and so it feels a little awkward to say, “God, I bless You.” But the psalmist does that all the time. He doesn't mean I'm giving You something like You've given to me. It means I'm ascribing to You as the source of the blessings that I have. To bless the Lord is to acknowledge all that makes life rich and meaningful for us as a gift from God. We are called to declare God to be the source of all of the good that we enjoy.

And here specifically, it's found, notice, in His name, “bless His name.” In biblical terms, God's name is His character. It's all that distinguishes Him from everything and everyone else. We are called then to rehearse God's name, His character, thanking Him, praising Him, acknowledging that His character is the source of all good that we enjoy. Do you recognize that? It is the character of God that is the source of every good thing you have ever enjoyed or ever will enjoy.

So, the psalmist then has told us how to give thanks again, but in verse 5, he cycles back to tell us why, the reasons for thanksgiving. And in the second stanza, the psalmist adds three more reasons. Number one, His goodness. Verse five says, “For the LORD is good.” This, of course, is a common reason to thank God in the Old Testament: Psalm 106:1, 107:1, 118:1, 136:1. All of those psalms begin, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is”—what? Good.

What is the goodness of God? What do we mean when we say, “He's good”? Louis Berkoff explains that by the goodness of God, we mean, “That perfection of God which prompts Him to deal bountifully and kindly with all His creatures.” You understand that in the Person of God,

there is a perfection that finds joy and delight in dealing bountifully, generously, with all of His creation. That's true, by the way, of all mankind, believers and unbelievers. You see, biblically, the goodness of God means that He is genuinely concerned about the well-being of His creatures, and He acts to promote that whether they love Him and serve Him or not. Acts 14:17, Paul talks to a bunch of unbelievers. He's preaching a sermon to a bunch of pagans, and he says to them, God “did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Our God is good even to his enemies.

But He's good to us. In fact, everything good in your life comes from Him. James 1:17, “Every good thing given”—Listen to that—“Every good thing given, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”

By the way, the context of that statement is about temptation. You recognize that every time you're tempted, and I'm tempted, and we give in to that temptation, we believe Satan's lie about God, that there's something good outside of God. But it's not true. “Every good thing given, every perfect gift is from above.” And for God's amazing goodness, we owe Him our gratitude. Why aren't we more thankful? I think A. W. Pink is right when he writes this.

Gratitude is the return justly required from the objects of God's beneficence, [His generosity] yet is it often withheld from our great Benefactor simply because His goodness is so constant and so abundant. It is lightly esteemed because it is exercised toward us in the common course of events. It is not felt because we daily experience it.

That's the reality. That's why we aren't thankful as we ought to be, is because God just lavishes His goodness on us.

A second reason for our thanksgiving in verse 5 is His steadfast love. “His lovingkindness is everlasting.” As I've told you often, no single English word really fully captures the Hebrew word translated “lovingkindness.” But it speaks of God covenant love, His loving loyalty.

And so, we speak of His steadfast love or his unfailing love. And His steadfast love is everlasting. I love the way David puts it in Psalm 23:6, when he says, “Surely”—certainly—“His goodness and His steadfast love will follow me.”

That's not a great translation of that Hebrew word, because it's a stronger word. It literally means, “shall pursue me like a predator pursues its prey.” God's steadfast love will chase me down, will hunt me down every day of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 103:17 says, “The steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.” I like the way Derek Kidner explains that. He says, you know, “Our minds can't comprehend eternity, past or future.” He said, “But think your way back as far as our puny brains will allow us to go to the vanishing point in the past. And then turn around and face forward and think as far as our puny brains will take us to the vanishing point of eternity future. And from everlasting to everlasting is the steadfast love of the Lord.”

In this stanza, there's a third reason for our thanksgiving, and that is His faithfulness, verse 5 ends, “and His faithfulness to all generations.” “Faithfulness” is a rich Old Testament word that means “steady” or “firm.” God is firm in the sense that He's totally dependable. He's utterly reliable. He's trustworthy.

You know, we talk about trusting God. Why should you trust God? Because He's trustworthy. He's worthy of your trust. And His faithfulness is to all generations. There will never be a generation when He will fail to be faithful to His own character, meaning to act consistent with who He is. There's never going to be a generation when He will fail to be faithful in His Words, what He said. And there will never be a generation when He fails to be faithful to His relationships. That's just the reality of our God.

He'll be faithful to you, Christian, all your life here. And when you're in His presence, He'll be faithful to you then and forever. And he will also continue to be faithful to the generations that

follow you here. His steadfast love and His faithfulness, we're told, are to a thousand generations of those who fear Him and love Him. What a God we serve.

Now look again at the Psalm. I want you to notice that most of the reasons for thanksgiving in this Psalm have nothing to do with our circumstances. I don't know how you came this morning. I don't know if you're in the middle of one of those high moments in life when everything's sailing along wonderfully and you're rejoicing in God's goodness and excited about the future.

Or perhaps you came completely under the load of trials and difficulties in your life. But what I want you to see is it doesn't really matter. Because the reasons for thanksgiving in this Psalm are not tied to your circumstances. They're tied to your God. You can give Him thanks.

If you had lived in Old Testament times, you would have offered sacrifices of thanksgiving or thank offerings. What did that look like? Well, you would have chosen an ox or a lamb or a goat, depending on your wealth. You would have brought that animal to the temple. You would have laid your hands on the head of that animal, confessing your sins and acknowledging it now to stand in your place. And then the priest would have handed you the knife. And you personally would have slit the throat of that animal. All the fatty portions and entrails of the animal would have been burned on the altar to the Lord.

But the peace offering, the thank offering was unique. It was the only one in which the worshipper ate some of the sacrificed animal. So, on that day that you offered the thank offering, you would have cook “the rest of the animal, excuse me, and you would have eaten it that day in a fellowship meal with the priest.

But it wasn't just about you and the priest enjoying a meal together. Listen carefully, the real significance of that act was to picture in your mind the reality that it was as if you were enjoying a meal with God. If you understand that, thanksgiving takes on a whole new richness. Brothers and sisters, let your thanksgiving this week be more than family and food and football. Now enjoy those. Those are good gifts. All good gifts come to us from God. So, enjoy them.

But don't let it be solely about those things. Make it a sacrifice of thanksgiving, a thank offering to God. You say, Tom, how can I do that? Well, let me real quickly give you five practical ways from Psalm 100. Here's how you can do it. Number one, eat your meal as if you're having a thanksgiving meal with God. I mean, really have that in your mind. That's what a thank offering was like in the Old Testament. To help my family picture this on occasion, we've set an extra place setting at the table. Kind of creeps my kids out, but the point is clearly made. It's like we're celebrating thanksgiving with God, the One who's given us all these things.

Number two, rehearse to one another what you're thankful for. You know, often the psalmist tells others what he's thankful for. In our family, we just keep going around the table, taking turns again and again, sharing what we're grateful for from the everyday temporal blessings of this life to God Himself and His spiritual blessings to us in Christ. Number three, sing together to and about God.

Number four, pray and give thanks directly to God. Don't just say you're thankful, tell Him. And number five, focus your thanksgiving on God, that is on Him, on what He's done, His creation, his care, His sovereign grace in saving you, and who He is, His goodness, His steadfast love, and His faithfulness.

For us as believers, the primary focus of our thanksgiving this week ought to be the reality that God has made us His own people. We're His. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, through Christ then, "let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." Our thanksgiving celebrations this week, and our entire lives, should be a thank offering to our great God. Let's pray together.

Our Father, You are the source of everything good. We acknowledge that, and yet, Lord, even as we acknowledge it, we confess to You that we are often unthankful people. Lord, this week, don't let us be like the people around us, who talk about thanks but never give it to You.

Father, make our thanksgiving as those who know and love You different. May we truly express thanksgiving in the ways we've learned in this magnificent psalm. And Lord, I pray for those

who are here who don't know You, that this week would be a week when You would draw them to truly know You through the gospel that they've heard and sung in our service this morning, that You would make them Your own, that they could say, "He has made me one of His people."

I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.