

Enter His Courts with Thanksgiving

by Chris Famisaran

Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with great joyful songs. 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 enter his gates with thanksgiving. In his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

God, as we gather today, Lord, to close out November, be with us and guide us. Thank you Lord, for the God that you are. Lead and guide us in Jesus name. Amen.

Now that is Psalm 100. Today we are going to look at a couple Psalms 103 in particular. And then also we will look at a bit later if we have time. First Chronicles chapter 16. But the Lord is good and his love endures forever. How many of you believe that most days? Some days, hopefully we believe it in every day because God is good. All the time.

Would you be grateful of me praising God if you had fleas back in the 1940s? Unfortunately, how many of you know who Betsy and Corrie Ten Boom were? Two Christians who had taken the risky decision to be able to help people, their Jewish neighbors, from being taken away to concentration camps. Unfortunately, those who know their story, they were caught and they were taken to Ravensbruck, where it was totally overcrowded and it was infested with fleas. Now, those you who have dogs, make sure they don't have fleas or cats, any of your animals, because if they've got it, you could potentially get it. And it's not a pleasant experience. However, somehow. Somehow they had managed to be able to smuggle a Bible into the camp. And in that Bible that they were able to read and give thanks to God and that God could hopefully use them for good. Now, Betsy decided that this was good enough to be able to thank Jesus. However, Corey. No, she could not do such a thing in her mind. But Betsy insisted. And Corey, despite her hesitancy, gave in. And she prayed and thanked God even for the tiny little fleas.

Now, over the next several months, a wonderful but curious thing happened. They found out the guards never entered their barracks. What did this mean? It means they weren't going to be assaulted by anybody. It didn't mean they were going to be harassed by anybody. It meant they were able to do the, as somebody once wrote, unthinkable. They were able to have Bible studies and prayer means in the middle of a Nazi concentration camp. And because of this, a number of women gave their Lives to Christ. And only at the end did they discover why the guards left them alone and would not enter their barracks. Why? Because of the flees.

Now we think such a minor inconvenience. But if you think about and imagine what did it mean to live in the barracks? What did it mean to live in the concentration camp? Those of you, perhaps, who have seen Schindler's List. Have a vivid amount, not vivid, but a vivid portrayal of what life could have been like. Or at the end of Band of Brothers when they find the men who were starved, basically lumping each other on top of beds because there was nowhere to sleep, starve, emaciated. Life was not easy. And in today's age, when your car doesn't turn on, you think the world has ended.

Give thanks for God, for every good and perfect gift. As James 1:17 says, perspective, perspective. You know, I have to keep in mind some things that I realized. You know, I'm so grateful for everything that God has given me, truly. But there are some days where I get a little selfish. And I realize maybe it could be just a little bit better right now. There are some things, though, that I keep in mind, some points that I have to remind myself.

And I have to remind myself that, number one, I don't own anything. I really don't. Okay, we don't own anything. The clothes that we are wearing right now, yes, you purchased them, but where did you get that money? Yes, you worked for it. Yes. But did God give you means to get that money? Did you work for that money? Was it God's blessing that you were able to have a job, or somebody was giving you money and you could then buy those clothes? The car you drive, the house that you live in, everything you own, quote, do you really own it? Or if you truly believe, does God give everything to you because it is a good gift? Amen.

Now, those of you, maybe, perhaps, who have children, okay, moms and dads, as you saw them, come into the world and grow up, especially in the toddler phase, do you know what the toddler rules of ownership are? Mine, mine, mine, mine. Or like in Finding Nemo, the seagull, mine, mine, mine. If I like it, for instance, number one, the toddler rules of ownership.

If I like it, it's mine.

If it's in my hand, then it's mine. This is my remote, okay?

If I can take it from you, it's mine.

If I had it a little while ago, it's still mine.

If it's mine. If it is mine, it must not appear to be yours in any way, especially if you have multiple kids.

If it looks just like mine, then it's mine.

And if I think it's mine, it's mine.

And if it's yours and I feel it, guess what? It is now mine.

Now, a little bit of exaggeration, right? But it is so easy to think that what we truly have, we think is ours. But guess what, everybody. Everything comes as a blessing and a gift from God. Psalm 24:1 says, the earth is the Lord's, and what? Everything. The drums, this building, the grass, the sky, the clouds, the mountains. Everything in it, the world and all who live in it. Colossians 1:16, 17 also says, for by him all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible thrones. Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things were created by him, and for him, he is before all things, and in him all things. That's also Colossians 1:16 and 17. I'm sorry I didn't get those written down for you, but just if you're watching, maybe pause and scroll back a little bit, or those of you here, you can go back to our YouTube feed and you can get that.

Okay, so Psalm 24:1 and also Colossians 1:16 and 17. What I've also discovered recently is that less is more. Less is more. Sometimes too much of a good thing can end up being what a bad thing, right? How many of you ate pumpkin pie this last Thursday? And was it delicious and glorious? Yes, it was. Right? But if you only eat pumpkin pie, is that a good thing? Not necessarily. Right. Those of you who indulged in maybe some turkey. How many of you had that little chemical thing? I forgot what it's called. It's trophin, or trofim. And all of a sudden you want her to go sleepy, Sleep. Tryptophan. Thank you. I knew it

started with "T". Oh, the tryptophan hit me hard, but it was good. How many of you?

Let's see, what other. Imagine just all of the delicious foods that you possibly could have eaten this past week are all tasting good. But if you only eat that every single meal. Oh, that's going to have some good gout, Right? Our blood pressure could increase. I'm not saying these things are bad, but too much of it. Oh, now less is more. All this stuff that I have. I was going through my garage and I noticed there's just a shelf. A shelf, a shelf of just stuff. And I realized 75% of what that on that shelf was I either have not used in over a year or more. It's just sitting there. And two, it's taking up space. Space that I need to be able to store stuff, more stuff, right? And I realized a lot of this stuff wasn't like old, it could still be used. And some of it I was able to give to the Salvation army. And that actually felt kind of good. I'm not trying to put myself on a pedestal, but allowing other people to be able to use something that was still in good use. And then just the trash I had to throw away so that I could have more space. And is it amazing when you clean something up, you just feel so much better. It's like, I have peace now. It's not cluttered, right? So I do two cleanings. I do my spring cleaning and my fall cleaning. And as I was going through my stuff, I realized I just have so much stuff that I really don't need. And how many of you maybe growing up, you thought, when I get older and I have a job, I'm going to have this, I'm going to have that, I'm going to have a 10,000 square foot house. Mercy. That brings me anxiety, you know, why? Who's going to clean it? All right, you think bigger is better, right? But when you realize, oh, then I have to hire somebody to clean it, I don't have time to do this. We pay people so we can have more convenience. But if you haven't used something, let's say even within the last six or seven months, do you really, really need it? My wife asks me, why do you have so many surfboards and guitars? They all have a specific purpose. That's my argument, right? But I had to really think about it. If I haven't used it in six or seven months, I've only surfed a couple times. Maybe once or twice this last year. The thought goes, do I really, really need it?

Sometimes we have to ask ourselves, do what we have, do we need it? And really, who owns it? Do I own it? Or do they also own me? This little thing right here too, it's a portal to all kinds of goodness. It's also a portal to all kinds of madness. And as I was thinking about it, who owns this? You ever lost your

phone for a day or you didn't have a phone for the day? And then you start going through the withdrawal process. What if somebody needs to connect with me? What if my kids need to get ahold of me? What if my best friend needs to get ahold of me. What if there is an emergency or your car is in the shop and it can't be fixed within a day? It's a couple of days and you are stuck at home and you cannot go anywhere. To me, that feels like prison. I have to be able to go around and be mobile, right? That's just me. The worst thing you can do is lock me in a house. Doesn't mean I necessarily want to go see everybody. I just want to be around and about. Right. I love people, don't get me wrong. But sometimes I just need to be able to drive or go for a ride.

Do you allow the things to own you or do you own your stuff? And while stuff is good, it's not inherently wrong to own a nice car, a nice house, but the money that you're spending to keep it up or to store it. I know of an individual who has four storage units with stuff. And some of it may be valuable, but some of it may just. It's just stuff they want to hold on that they cannot let go. So do you own your stuff or does your stuff own you?

The last thing sometimes that we are troubled. We think we deserve a blessing. What do you mean by that, Pastor? God wants to give us blessings. Yes. Well, let us say, for instance, you hear some bad news or something happens to you and you wonder, what did I do to deserve this? Last two months, essentially, we have gone through the book of Job, right? Many times Job had to have asked, what did I do to deserve this? And sometimes, unfortunately, sometimes I have to ask myself, did what happened? Is that because of a bad decision that I made or choices that I made that now has caused this hardship in my life at this point? Right? And then there are some times, like in Job's case, where he didn't do anything wrong and life affected him.

Unfortunately, we live in a broken world. Amen. And sometimes, as we learned, other people's choices can also affect us. But even then, whenever I trying to figure out, well, okay, why is this happening? Did I do something? Yeah. I mean, if I don't change my brakes, if I don't change the oil in my car, if I don't rotate my tires, then my steering is going to feel a little off, right? If I don't

replace the filter in my AC unit at home, I may get allergies. And in spite of all the hardship that we may experience, I want to remind ourselves too.

Philippians 4:4-7. Those of you know this passage, know well Philippians 4:4-7, rejoice in the Lord. How long? Always. I will say it again. Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Don't be anxious about anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Okay, pull out your Bibles. I want to go to Psalm 103. It's another Psalm that I'd like to just take some time to reflect on. And I want you to go through it again later today. Psalm 103. And in it we find. I feel like it's a gift that keeps on giving. It's only 22 verses. You could read it in a couple minutes, but you could spend days pondering on this Psalm 103, starting at verse 1. Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Other versions may say, bless the Lord, O my soul. But praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name, Praise the Lord, my soul. And forget not all his benefits. Who forgives how much of your sin, all of your sins and heals all of your diseases? Who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. It's here we see that the psalmist David is writing. Don't just praise the Lord with your lips. May everything you exude, your life, your mind, everything. Praise God and don't forget what God has done you, okay? Just don't forget what all God has done for you, but also forgives all of your sins, heals all of your diseases and redeems your life. Imagine if Jesus didn't come into this world. The bad train wreck waiting to happen, right? Redeems you and in verse five says, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

When our minds are on Christ and we choose to live a life in Christ, there's so much to gain from there. When we think we don't need Christ, what do we get? Anxiety, stress, Uncertainty. But in Christ we have salvation, we have confidence.

Verse 6. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all of the oppressed. God works on your behalf. Verse 7. He says he made known his ways to Moses, one of the patriarchs, his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is

compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Is our God not patient. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger. For how long? Forever. He doesn't treat us as our what? As our sins deserve how many of you, when you think of the stack of things that you've done in your life, you realize, oh, long laundry list, there's a big payment. And yet, as he says, he does not repay us for our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great his love for those who fear him, God's love is more immeasurable than we could ever imagine.

Verse 12. As far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgressions from us, basically from one point to the other, all things are covered by God. And here's where I really love this part of the Psalm.

Verse 13. As the Father has what on his children? Compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. Because he knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust. Did God not create humanity? Did God not know? Does God not know where we come from? Because we are God's. We are God's children. God has compassion for his children.

Verse 15. The life of mortals is like grass. They flourish like a flower of the field. The wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. Does grass last forever? No, it only has a finite time. Especially if there's a lack of water. You've drove in by a golf course that hasn't been watered right. All of a sudden, what was lush? Luscious. Is now just brown. Especially when it's been abandoned. You just see these greens, or what were greens. Gone. Barren. It breaks my heart because there was beauty there.

Verse 17. But from everlasting to everlasting. The Lord's love is with those who fear him in his righteousness for their children's children, with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all. God rules over all. Not just a portion, but all. Praise the Lord, you His angels, you mighty his ones who do his bidding and obey his word. Praise the Lord all you heavenly hosts, you his servants, who do his will. Praise the Lord all His works and everything in his dominion. Praise you the Lord. Not only his angels. He recognizes that there are those who work on our behalf. Praise the Lord, my soul.

There is a lot we can unpack, but we just frankly don't have enough time. But know that God is compassionate, is slow to anger, is loving, and works on our behalf. So as we go forth, as we close out November, know this. There is Much to be thankful for. When is the last time you reflected on God's blessings in your life? When challenges come, how do you respond?

I watched a video recently of an individual who he mentions, you know, even perhaps when you don't get the job promotion, when you don't make the team, he says, good time to get better, times more time to improve so that when you do get that position, you will be able to better succeed. When didn't get the funding. Okay, how can we improve? How can we grow? Didn't get what you wanted for Christmas? Good. Be grateful for what you have. You are breathing, my friends. You are here. It is good. You're not six feet below. And even though you may have hardship, even though you may have challenges, you are alive. And know that you are loved by God, not just by God, because we are a family here. We love and care for one another. Know that you are loved. And whatever trials and challenges you are facing, you can go forth with confidence. Because God is not just a God of this planet or a portion, but all of the universe.

So, reflection. What are you most thankful for? Perhaps maybe this last Thanksgiving you sat down and you shared some things. But I want you to reflect. What are you truly thankful for?

And over the next 25 days, Okay, I'm giving you a very specific challenge. For the next 25 days, I want you to write down something that you are thankful for that God has blessed you with. And the bonus is that on Christmas, I want you to read back everything that you have written. And I hope and pray that you will be blessed as you reflect on what you wrote down. That sound fair? Okay, so write down what are you thankful for every day the next 25 days.

Let's Pray. God, you are good and your mercy endures forever. Be with us, Lord, as we go forth. Give us courage, give us strength, give us compassion, give us empathy. Help us, Lord, to know your love and also reciprocate that love to others. And God, as 1st Chronicles 16:34 says, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good and his love endures forever. We know, Lord, that you are a God who is a good God, who is compassionate and understands where we are at.

And though, Lord, we don't understand why things work out the way they always do, we know that again, you are good and you will help us to overcome. But help us to do that also, not just individually, but also together as a church family. Be with us until we meet again next time. In Jesus name. Amen.

Next week we start a new series called Holy the Special points parts of Jesus early life that stand out. I look forward to seeing you all. And also I'm going to be going Friday night's journey to Bethlehem. If you want to join me, then I'd love to, happy to walk with you then.

Take care, grace and peace.