

A Psalm of Thanksgiving

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving thanks to God, worshiping Him, and sharing His work with others, highlighting the key elements of Psalm 136.

Duration: 41:44

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, 1 Chronicles 16:7, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 22:37-39, John 3:16, Revelation 21:3-4

Topics: "Thanksgiving"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the innate human desire to worship something. He mentions how in ancient religions, people worshipped the stars, constellations, and planets. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of knowing and understanding God through His revelation in the Bible. He encourages the audience to read and study the entire Bible to truly know God. The speaker also emphasizes the power of personal testimony in sharing the transformation that Jesus has brought into one's life.

Transcript

Now let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 136. This is an interesting psalm in that it was intended to be a responsive type of a psalm, but rather than responsive in the whole verse, responsive in the half verse. The men would say, O give thanks unto the Lord, and the women would respond, For his mercy endureth forever.

The men would declare, O give thanks to the God of gods, the women would respond, For his mercy endureth forever. And on through the psalm. So let's do it like they would do it in the times of David.

The men take the first part of the verse and read it together, and then the women respond in the after, For his mercy endureth forever. I'll lead the men, Brian will lead the women. Shall we stand? O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.

For his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks to the God of gods. For his mercy endureth forever.

O give thanks to the Lord of lords. For his mercy endureth forever. To him who alone doeth great wonders.

For his mercy endureth forever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens. For his mercy endureth forever.

To him that stretched out the earth above the waters. For his mercy endureth forever. To him that made great lights.

For his mercy endureth forever. The sun to rule by day. For his mercy endureth forever.

The moon and the stars to rule by night. For his mercy endureth forever. To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn.

For his mercy endureth forever. And brought out Israel from among them. For his mercy endureth forever.

With a strong hand and with stretched out arm. For his mercy endureth forever. To him which divided the red sea into parts.

For his mercy endureth forever. And made Israel to pass through in the midst of it. For his mercy endureth forever.

But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the red sea. For his mercy endureth forever. To him which led his people through the wilderness.

For his mercy endureth forever. To him which smote great kings. For his mercy endureth forever.

And slew famous kings. For his mercy endureth forever. Sihon king of the Amorites.

For his mercy endureth forever. And Og the king of Bashan. For his mercy endureth forever.

And gave their land for an heritage. For his mercy endureth forever. Even an heritage unto Israel his servant.

For his mercy endureth forever. Who remembered us in our lowest state. For his mercy endureth forever.

And has redeemed us from our enemies. For his mercy endureth forever. Who giveth food to all flesh.

For his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven. For his mercy endureth forever.

What did you learn from that song? His mercy endureth forever. Let's pray. Lord we do give thanks unto you this day.

Thank you Lord for your mercy. That it does endure forever. Thank you Lord that you have not dealt with us according to our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

But as high as the heavens are above the earth. So high is your mercy toward us who fear thee. Lord as we have gathered together today and we look around and we see all of the blessings that you've bestowed upon us.

We thank you Lord. And we praise you. For your gifts of love.

For your mercy and for your grace. Bless now we pray Lord the study of the word. Open our hearts that we might receive Lord from you this day.

In Jesus name. Amen. And you may be seated.

As Joey announced tonight we will be studying 1st Chronicles 16 through 18. As we continue our journey through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Knowing the word of God.

Knowing the whole counsel of God. Going through the whole Bible. And we encourage you to go through the Bible with us.

It is God's revelation of himself. We do not really know God nor can we know God apart from his own revelation of himself to us. And so to know and to understand God.

We need to go through the word of God together. And we would invite you to keep up with us each week with the reading. So that you will be able to go through the entire Bible with us tonight.

1st Chronicles 16 through 18. This morning 1st Chronicles chapter 16 beginning with verse 7. We find then on that day David delivered this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brothers. David has become king over Israel.

One of his first desires was to return the nation of Israel back to its consciousness that it was God's nation. They were God's people. During the reign of Saul they sort of had forsaken the Lord.

The priests were not really ministering at the tabernacle on a regular basis. The nation wasn't gathering to worship God in the major festivals or the feasts that God had ordained. They were a people that had more or less become alienated from that real commitment unto God.

David is desiring to renew their relationship to God and to again allow them to realize that the nation was really dependent upon God and needed to be so. So having now established his throne in Jerusalem one of the first things that David wants to do is to bring the Ark of the Covenant and to place it there in Jerusalem that they might have a worship center for the nation. So David had them construct a tabernacle.

And then he went with the people to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem to set it there in the tabernacle in order that they might again recognize that God is ruler over the nation. That God is at the center of their national life. And so with great celebration David and the people brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem and they set it there in the tabernacle.

There was great rejoicing. There were great festivities. And now the people are returning home rejoicing in their renewed relationship with God.

David is now going to reinstitute the ministry of the priest. They had pretty much gone home to their various cities and were taking care of their own affairs. But David is now going to be bringing many of them back to be employed there at the tabernacle in the daily worship of God.

He appointed certain of them to be in the choir. To sing there in the tabernacle daily all day long the praises unto God. He appointed those to play instruments so that there was always this worship music going forth to God daily at the temple.

He again appointed those that were to do the sacrificing and of the various animals and he was reinstituting the worship there at the tabernacle on a daily basis as God might be honored as the God of Israel. Now that everything is in order, the choir has been formed, the orchestra has been formed, David now wrote a psalm or a song for this occasion. And he delivered the song unto Asaph who was head over the musicians that they might sing this psalm unto the Lord.

And so as we get into verse 8 we read the words of the psalm that David wrote for this special occasion to begin again the worship there in the temple. Give thanks unto the Lord. Call upon his name.

Make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him. Sing psalms unto him.

Talk ye of all of his wondrous works. Glory in his holy name. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.

Seek the Lord in his strength. Seek his face continually. Remember his marvelous works that he has done.

His wonders and his judgments in his mouth. O ye seed of Israel, his servants. Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

He is Jehovah our God. His judgments are in all the earth. Be mindful always of his covenant.

The word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Give thanks to the Lord. One of the first things that my mother taught me as a child was to say thank you when anyone had ever done some kindness to me or given me a gift or a bit of candy or whatever.

I was taught from just a little child to say thank you. And I think that most children have been taught this by their mothers. It's just a part of being gracious.

It's just it's just an important thing to show gratitude, to show appreciation and to say thank you for nice things that are done for you. She taught me that that was just good manners and that it was the proper thing to do. Give thanks to the Lord.

You know, we have so much to be thankful for. I'm actually thankful for the drug problem that I had when I was a child. My mother drug me to Sunday school every Sunday morning.

She drug me to church every Sunday night. She drug me to prayer meetings on Wednesday night. She drug me to daily vacation Bible school and she drug me to the woodshed when I needed it.

I'm still under the influence of those drugs to the present day, but I'm grateful for them. I can remember as a child in church singing, count your blessings. Name them one by one.

Count your blessings. See what God has done. Count your blessings.

Name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. And one of the greatest blessings of my life is the godly mother that he gave to me and the godly wife that he blessed me with, who is the godly mother for my children. And it goes from one generation to the next.

We remember in the New Testament, there was that story of 10 leprous men who came to Jesus to be healed. And Jesus said to them, go show yourself to the priest. Now this was the first step for a person who had leprosy to be restored to the family and to the community.

When a person had leprosy, they were ostracized. They could not live with their family. They could not live in the city, but they were ostracized from society.

But if they were cleansed of their leprosy, the first step of restoration was to show yourself to the priest who would examine you, determine that the leprosy was gone and you would begin then the process of

cleansing and sacrifices to be able to return to communal life. As these 10 men were on their way to show themselves to the priest, as they were going, they noticed that suddenly their skin was clean. The leprosy was gone.

And upon that discovery, one of them left the others, returned to Jesus to give thanks to Jesus for his healing. Jesus said to him, were there not 10 who were cleansed? And he said, yes, Lord, there were 10. And Jesus said, where are the nine? You know, I think that we need to be very careful that we are not among the nine.

That we take the blessings of God, we take the gifts from God, and yet we don't stop to give thanks to God for the things that he has done. This is a command, it's an exhortive psalm, give thanks unto the Lord. We're told in Romans that one of the reasons why the wrath of God is going to be poured out upon this earth was that people were not thankful.

Too often like King Belshazzar, we are giving glory to the vessels of gold and silver, but not giving glory to God. For you remember the story when he was having this big party for his lords, and he ordered in his drunken state that they would bring in the gold and silver vessels that his grandfather had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, that they might drink their wine from them. And as they were drinking their wine from these golden vessels and silver vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, and as he was praising the gods of gold and silver, suddenly there came that sobering moment with the handwriting on the wall.

And when Daniel was brought in to interpret it, he told him that you have praised the gods of gold and silver, but the God in whose hand your very breath is, you've not glorified. And how often that is true of us, we take from God our breath, we take from God so many things, and we never pause to give thanks unto God. God had done wonderful things for David and for the people.

The place of worship has been established again there in Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant is once again sitting in the tabernacle. The priesthood has been established, and the great congregation of the people have returned to their homes rejoicing.

And so David now delivers this psalm to be sung before the Lord by the priest, give thanks to the Lord. The second exhortation is, call upon his name. In the hundred and sixteenth psalm, David asked a very thought-provoking question, which is probably the most important question of life, any of us.

It is a question that should be paramount in each of our minds. The question is, what shall I render unto the Lord for all of his benefits unto me? Thinking of all that God has done for me, thinking of all the blessings that God has bestowed upon me, what can I render unto the Lord for all of his benefits unto me? First of all, I recognize that I can't give a thing to God that he needs. God doesn't need anything from me.

If God needed anything, he could create it. And thus, I can't give God something that he needs. Therefore, I must ask, what can I give to God that he wants? And God wants my love.

God wants my devotion. God wants my worship. And that I can give to him.

David, in asking the question, what shall I render unto the Lord for all of his benefits unto me, answered his question by saying, I will call upon the name of the Lord. That is, I will commune with him. I will spend time with him in prayer.

And I think that we have the wrong concept of prayer, because we usually think of prayer as asking God for something, rather than just time spent with God, fellowshiping, communing, worshipping, just letting him know how much we love him. And how much we appreciate all that he has done for us. We sing the chorus, one thing is needful, oh, my father, one thing is needful, oh, my Lord, that I sit at thy feet and pour out my heart.

This thing is needful, oh, my God. And how necessary it is for me to spend that quality time just worshipping, just loving him. God wants my worship.

He created me, not only with the capacity, but the necessity of worshipping. It's part of my very nature. Everybody has that built-in necessity to worship something.

God put it there so that we would worship him. But unfortunately, so many times we take this God-given drive to worship and we use it to worship something other than God. And we look at the various objects of worship that people have today.

You look at these things in Hollywood, the premiere of the movies or the Oscars or whatever, and you see how the people worship, as they come up in the limos and the stars step out and everybody is beginning to scream. And you see the worship. That worship drive was put there by God, but not to worship these people, but to worship God.

But unfortunately, so often times we divert what should be going to God as far as worship is concerned and we worship, say, great athletes. We watch the basketball games and the football games and we see them as they are performing so skillfully and we worship them and you see how people scream and yell and you see how they are so devoted. The TV cameras screen the crowd and you see guys making up their faces with all weird kinds of colors and dressing in a certain way to show their devotion and their adulation for their team or for their heroes.

But you see, I have to worship something. God said in Deuteronomy, when you go out and you look up and you see the stars and you are driven to worship them. It's a part of our very beings.

It's interesting, isn't it, how in the early religions, Rome, Greece and so forth, how that they did worship the stars. They worship the constellations. They worship the planets.

They make gods out of Venus and out of Jupiter and the various planets. They worship the moon and the sun. They were driven to worship because you've got to worship something.

And if you don't worship the true and the living God, you will worship something much less than God. The Bible tells us an interesting story of two sisters named Mary and Martha. And Jesus loved these girls.

And whenever he would visit Jerusalem, he would stay in their home in Bethany. And on one of these occasions when Jesus was staying with them in Bethany, Martha was interested in providing Jesus with food. And so she was busy working in the kitchen.

But Mary was just sitting at the feet of Jesus, worshipping him, communing with him. Martha became upset. She said, Master, tell Mary to get in here and help me.

She's left me to do this alone while she's just sitting there with you. And Jesus said, Oh Martha, Martha, you're troubled with so many things. You're such a busy, busy person.

But Mary has chosen the better part and it shall not be taken from her. Better than trying to give God something of a material nature, how much better that we just give God worship. That we just spend time communing with him, loving him.

And so we find that so often we ourselves are busying about trying to make things in a physical way for God when all he really wants is just that beautiful, quiet time of communion, worshiping. The Lord wants us to call upon him. And so David is exhorting that we pray, call upon him.

I wonder how long has it been since you spent quality time just worshiping the Lord? Then David said, make known his deeds among the people. Give a witness to others of what God has done for you. One of the strongest and most irrefutable testimonies that you can offer to a person is the testimony of God's work in your life.

A lot of people are reluctant to witness to others because they say, I just don't know how to lay out the plan of salvation. I don't know where to start or how to tell someone about God's plan of salvation. The origin of sin and the sacrifices and how God sent his son.

I just can't really verbalize that. Well, the most important thing you can verbalize probably to someone else is what God has done in your life. As Paul the Apostle gave a witness to the people, his witness was always of his conversion.

That which he was before he met Jesus Christ, the dramatic change that took place by meeting Jesus Christ, and now what a wonder it is to serve Jesus Christ. The transformed life is often the most powerful witness that we can give to anybody. Just sharing with others your own personal testimony of what Jesus means to you and of what Jesus has done in your life.

They might try to argue with you if you try to go into some theological explanation, but there is no argument with the personal witness. This is what I was, this is what Jesus did, and this is what I am today as the result of what Jesus did in my life. What a powerful witness.

Make known his deeds among the people, that which God has done in your own heart and in your own life. Many of you have very powerful testimonies of tremendous transformations. Others like myself, you grew up in a Christian environment.

The only drug problem I have is the one that I shared with you earlier. And I can't talk about, you know, being transformed, delivered from heroin or things of that nature, but I can surely share how God has blessed, what God has done, how he has answered prayer through the years and all of the wonderful works of God in my life. And it is a glorious testimony of the faithfulness of God to keep through the years.

David went on to say, sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, and talk of all of his wondrous works. And so he exhorts us to sing to the Lord. Christianity is one of the few religions that expresses its praise and love to the Lord in singing psalms in the major keys.

Most of the religions worship in a minor key, but in Christianity it's worship in a major key. And worshiping in a major key, it's the key of rejoicing, it's the key of life. Where the minors are more or less the key of somberness and death, actually.

It's a minor key. But when we sing, we sing in the major keys because of the rejoicing and the joy that we have in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and

spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

When I have to drive any distance and I'm by myself, I love to just sing to the Lord. Sing songs of worship and praise and express to him my love in my singing. You know, I have seen, you know, I pull up to a stop sign and you see somebody, you know, they're in there just singing and they're rocking and all, and you only wonder what they're singing.

But if they're wondering what I'm singing about, I'm just singing praises to the Lord as I speak to myself and as I sing the songs of love and praise unto the Lord. Sometimes I just whistle. Whistle the choruses and as I whistle, of course, the words go through your mind and making melody in my heart unto the Lord.

Writing to the Colossians, Paul said, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Teaching. And how many of you mothers have taught your children to sing, Jesus loves me, this I know.

And I love it. So often they'll bring their little children to me. And they will encourage them to sing for me and to hear them singing in those beautiful little voices, Jesus loves me, this I know, or one of the other choruses.

And, you know, God has perfected praise in the mouth of babies. And so teaching. And the psalms were one of the biblical ways of teaching the children.

And they are still an excellent way of instruction. As you sing the psalms, the words are instructive for us. I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in thee, Lord. The humble shall hear thereof and be glad.

Oh, magnify the Lord. They're just good ways of memorizing the psalms. And as we teach one another in psalms and hymns, spiritual songs.

And then he tells us to talk of all of his wondrous works. Several years ago, as I was driving up to the summer camp with my granddaughter, as we were riding along together in the car, she said, Grandpa, let's talk about God. I love to talk about God.

And what a blessing and what a joy to just talk about God. To talk of all of his wondrous works, to talk about his love, to talk about his plan of salvation for us. Malachi said, they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.

And the Lord hearkened unto them. And he made a book of remembrance before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.

You that talk about the Lord. You that love to talk about the Lord with each other. You know, the Lord eavesdrops.

And he makes a record of it. And God looks at you as his gems, his jewels. How valuable you are to him.

Paul, in praying for the Ephesian church, said, I pray that God will give to you the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God. And one of the things that he was praying is that you might know what is the exceeding riches of his inheritance in the saints. Not your inheritance, but his inheritance.

In other words, that you might know just how much God treasures you. You don't realize how much God treasures you. His inheritance in the saints.

Finally, Paul exhorts them, seek the Lord and his strength. I'm to seek the strength of the Lord. In another psalm, David wrote, the Lord is the strength of my life.

Of whom shall I be afraid? And seek the strength of the Lord. Now, all of these are exhortations. They're just not lyrics to be sung without thought.

The value isn't in the lyric content. The value is in doing these things. He is exhorting us to give thanks to the Lord.

So, when we sing, give thanks to the Lord, we should then do that. We should give thanks to the Lord. When we sing, call upon his name, we should call upon the name of the Lord.

We should pray, we should be calling upon him. When the song tells us, make known his deeds among the people, we should be witnessing to others of what God is and what God has done for us. When we sing, sing unto him, then we should sing unto him.

Now, you may not have the greatest singing voice in the world. You may be tone deaf. We had one wife who kept nudging her husband every time he tried to sing and say, honey, your gift to the church is not singing.

Because he would always sing off-key and get people around him, you know, off-key. But in the shower, it doesn't make any difference. When you're all by yourself, you can sing out of tune, off-key or whatever.

God loves it. Just to have you singing unto him. And then to seek him, to seek guidance and direction and strength and help from the Lord.

And as we do these things, we will find that our lives are blessed. That they're enriched. That each day becomes a time of drawing closer to God and being enriched in his love and in his grace.

Let's pray. Father, how thankful we are for all you have done. Lord, how we love to sing our praises unto you.

Help us, Lord, that we might call upon your name. That we might spend more time in just communing with you. Let us become as Mary, Lord, just sitting at your feet, worshiping, adoring you.

And Lord, help us to seek you at all times. That we might know your strength and your help. That you wish to bestow upon us in our hour of need.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Talk about him. Tell of his wondrous works.

Maybe there's just something that you're especially thankful for. And you'd like to just give thanks unto the Lord. And share with others the thankfulness of your heart.

But they're here just to minister to you today. To pray with you if necessary, if you have a need. Or just to receive from you the things that God has done in your life.

As you've walked with him this week and experienced the joy of his presence and the power of his spirit working in you. The Lord bless thee. And keep thee.

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee. And be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee. And give thee peace.

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