

Special Meetings 01 God's Thoughts

by John W. Bramhall

God's thoughts are precious, directed towards us, and incomprehensible in number, and he values human life and fellowship with his people.

Duration: 46:32

Scripture: Leviticus 17:11, Psalm 49:6-8, Psalm 133, Psalm 139:17-18, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Eternal Value", "Soul Winning"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of sowing the seeds of the word of God in the world. He recalls an incident from his past where he distributed tracts during a circus parade. He encounters an old colored man who recognizes him and expresses gratitude for the tract he received. The preacher then discusses the value that God places on human life, citing biblical passages that highlight the inability of wealth to redeem or ransom a person's soul. The sermon concludes with a conversation about a wealthy man who left a large sum of money for humanitarian purposes, prompting the preacher to question the listener's own ability to leave such a legacy.

Transcript

I'm sure it's a real joy to have the privilege again of being with you, and looking forward to the blessing of God's Word by His Spirit while we're together this weekend. Would you please turn with me tonight to the book of Psalms chapter 139. Psalm 139.

It has been so properly stated that the book of Psalms has often been expressed as being the book of experiences, and I'm sure that no believer has been without many experiences that are described in the words of the psalmist. Again and again we find, whatever mood, whatever circumstance, whatever conflict and trial we may be passing through, there is a psalm that expresses the feeling of the heart and the experience of the soul. We turn tonight and read in Psalm 139 verse 17 and 18.

The words of the psalmist saying in the midst of this psalm, how precious also are thy thoughts unto me O God, how great is the sum of them. If I should count them they are more in number than the sand. When I awake I am still with thee.

Now if you were to read the psalm through, you would find preceding the verses that we have read that the psalmist speaks concerning the great attributes of God which are sometimes called his relative attributes. In the opening words beginning at verse one, going down through verse six, you will find the psalmist

declaring the omniscience of God. He opens the psalm by saying, O Lord thou hast searched me and known me, thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off, and so on.

And he speaks particularly of the great omniscience of God, meaning in brief words, God knows everything, and he declares the complete knowledge of a God who knows all things. Then he follows to speak of God's omnipresence. He declares beginning at verse seven, going down through verse twelve, he declares the omnipresence of God.

No matter where he might be, God is present. No matter where he may go, God is there. He mentions particularly some strange words, as you could hear him say in verse eight, if I ascend up into heaven, thou art there, and if I make my bed in hell, even there behold thou art.

And it may seem strange that the omnipresence of God can be consciously known itself, either in heaven, we can understand that, but also in hell. But there is a verse in the book of Revelation, chapter 14 and verse 11, that declares that in that day of judgment that the worshipers of the beast will be in that place of eternal torment, where they have no rest day nor night, and that even there they will be conscious of the presence of holy angels, and conscious of the presence of the Lamb, that everyone who died to redeem them, there will be the consciousness of his presence. One can recognize, though one can never explain it, the revelation of the fact that God is everywhere.

Many years ago, I recall reading there was a certain infidel who, when he was taken sick and found himself confined in bed, he wrote a motto that all who came to visit him might see on the foot of his bed these words, God is nowhere. One day there came into his room a lady to visit him with her little child, and the infidel said to the little child, little girl can you read those words right at the foot of my bed? She looked at those words and then she began to say, God is now here. Well she couldn't think of anything else but what it would mean then, but how true it is.

Then the third thing, God is not only omnipresent, but God is omnipotent, for beginning as you have it in verse 14 and on, or even verse 13 and down through verse 16, you have the omnipotence of God revealed. As one can tell the omnipotence of God, one is properly stated that if you could take the stars that are in the Milky Way, possibly totaling 18 million in number, every one of them weighing perhaps a million times more than this little earth of ours, and if you were able to place those stars in an adequate stack, God would be able to lift and move them with his finger as though they were but a grain of sand. The omnipotence of God is beyond our comprehension.

Likewise, he's omnipresent, likewise he's omniscient, but will you note something? These great attributes of God, great as they may be and are, are incomparable to what you read in verse 17 and 18, for as you find the opening words of verse 17, the psalmist says, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee." Will you note the word also, indicating in addition to the omniscience, the omnipresence, and the omnipotence of God, the psalmist emphasizes here is something else, and what he reveals is the subject I would like to bring before you tonight from these words. He reveals the infinite heart of God.

God's omnipotence is great as well as his omnipresence, as well as his omniscience, but God's heart is greater still. The infinite greatness of the heart of God, who can tell? But the psalmist declares it in these words, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! Now, when any thoughts are revealed, they

come from the heart. As he thinketh in his heart, so is he," wrote the wise man in the book of Proverbs, "for thought they come from the heart." And how we can acknowledge, and do acknowledge, that whenever there is a thought, it springs from the heart, and the psalmist declares in these words the thoughts of God that come from his infinite heart.

But note three things particularly. First note, he mentions their incomparable value. He uses the word, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" Their incomparable value.

Precious, precious, precious. I'm sure that you and I would never say to God what we sometimes say to each other, "A penny for your thoughts!" and sometimes our thoughts are not even worth a penny. But the Spirit of God, through the psalmist, declares the incomparable value of God's thoughts.

Precious! And, my beloved, if you and I could only know and understand some of the divine thoughts in the heart of God, every one of them can be termed in their value, precious beyond human comprehension. Then there's a second thing concerning those thoughts coming from his heart. Not only their incomparable value, but their inconceivable direction.

Notice what he says, "How precious also are thy thoughts' in what direction? "Unto me, O God!" Beloved, this is a stupendous revelation, that the thoughts of God's heart are unto you and me. "Unto me, O God!" One wrote these lovely little words that I value. "How thou canst think so well of me, and be that God thou art, is darkness to my intellect, but sunshine to my heart.

I do recognize the inconceivable direction of God's thoughts, as the psalmist declared in another place, Psalm 40 verse 17, "Though I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.' Well, one can be grateful for being an individual who is called me, and to acknowledge the direction of God's thoughts are unto me." Then notice that thing, and that is their incomprehensible number. How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. Their incomprehensible number, that all that stand upon the earth, every grain of sand, if all could be computed and numbered, God says His thoughts are even more in number than the grains of sand.

I recall reading in one of the books of Dr. Samuel Swain, a missionary to the Muslims, that on one occasion he was walking upon the seashore of the Arabian coast, on the Arabian Sea, and he saw a strange sight, an old Arab who was sitting in the sand, and playing with the sand, lifting it up in his hand, and letting it flow through his fingers. And, again and again, like a child, he was lifting the sand up and letting it go through his fingers over and over. He thought it was strange to see an old man doing such a thing, and he came near to him and said, "What are you doing?" The old man looked up and said, "Leave me alone, I'm thinking." Then the missionary said, "What are you thinking of?" Then answered the old Arab, "I'm thinking of eternity." Then the missionary was more interested and asked, "What is eternity?" The old Arab said, "What is eternity? Why, if a bird could take one grain of sand away from the earth one grain a year, when he would have finished, he would only just be beginning eternity, for eternity would just be commencing." Makes him a graphic illustration, but eternity is measureless, and yet God says, "For all the grains of sand upon this scene he has a thought that is precious toward you and me." Now, beloved, the intellect of God is beyond our comprehension.

How great is the sum of those thoughts? And, if we should be able to count them, they are more in number than the sand. But, oh my beloved, those thoughts of God are the precious toward you and precious toward me. Someday we'll be exploring those thoughts in eternity forever, and enjoying that.

But, I'd like you to enjoy with me tonight five of those precious grains of God's thoughts toward you and me. The psalmist in this great book has written five occasions beside this scripture that we have read, and used the word precious that conveys the thoughts of God's heart toward us. May I refer, first of all, to the 72nd Psalm, Psalm 72.

I would like to read verse 13 and 14. Just a little background concerning the psalm, as many of you may know, it's one of the psalms that is called a messianic psalm. So, it's a psalm that was prayed by David for his son Solomon when he came to the throne.

David prayed for the reign of Solomon. Far greater than the psalm declares, the prayers of David for Solomon can be recognized. The prayer of the psalmist by the spirit for the messianic reign of the Lord Jesus, when he will be king of kings, and Lord of lords over the earth.

But, in verse 13 and 14, there is a characteristic presentation of our blessed Lord Jesus towards the poor and the needy. If you note verse 13 and 14, he shall spare the poor and the needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

Note the last words of verse 14, and precious shall their blood be in his sight. We shall have the poor and needy with us until Jesus comes in his glory. We shall have violence and disdain in the world until he comes and sets up his eternal kingdom.

But, here is a statement that indicates and conveys the heart of God toward humanity. He values human life. May I express it this way? How precious also are thy thoughts of the meal God, and let them personally be applied to my heart.

First, here in the psalm that we have just read, chapter 72 verse 14, he values my life. Precious shall their blood be in his sight. Human life is valued by God.

Human life is of great value to the heart of God. From the Old Testament scriptures, it was very evident that when blood was shed, and man's blood was poured out upon the earth, God required that it should be avenged, and God required that that blood should not be less exposed, but covered over. And God values human life.

Man's inhumanity demand will someday cease, praise God. And when the Lord Jesus comes, he will manifest that compassion and grace for the need of mankind. For precious shall their blood be in his sight.

And, oh may I say, every man, woman, boy and girl is valued by God in their human existence. Go with me to psalm 49, please. Briefly, but quickly, let's look at psalm 49, and recognize another value that God places upon me.

Chapter 49, may I read verse six and seven, and part of verse eight? They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, and give to God, nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their soul is precious. God not only values my soul, God my life, but God values my soul.

And here we find the same word of incomparable value used to describe his value of the soul. The redemption of their soul is precious. Now, look the infinite cost of this redemption for the soul.

It can never be bought by silver and gold. For they that trust in their wealth, and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him. Many years ago, as I met a friend in the town I once lived in, he said to me, Mr. Graham, oh did you read the paper this morning? I said, well Mr. Lawrence, by glance at the headline, what were you thinking of? He said, did you know that Will Rogers, the noted humorist, died yes I did.

I said, I noticed that. He said, Mr. Graham, oh he must be in heaven, and I looked at him and said, well Mr. Lawrence, did you know him, that you could say such a thing? No, he said, I didn't know him, but he said, I read in the paper that when he died he left a half a million dollars for the blessing and use of humanity in a humanitarian project. Well, I looked at my friend, I said, well Mr. Lawrence, do you have a half a million dollars to leave? I don't.

I said, if that's the way to heaven, I'm drunk, and you too I wouldn't think, and I told him, I said, I knew a man that gave away a hundred million dollars during his lifetime, and he left only twenty million dollars, but I'm afraid he went to hell, for he had no confidence nor belief in the hereafter. My beloved, if God values my life, he values my soul in a greater way. The redemption of their soul is precious, and the words of Peter are so appropriate, as he wrote in 1 Peter 1 verse 18 and 19, for ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb, without blemish, and without loss.

My beloved, I'm sure that all of us say, by grace, we'll say with the poet, precious, precious blood of Jesus, shed on Calvary, shed for rebels, shed for sinners, shed for me, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul? My beloved, God's value of my soul, if I could ever measure it, I must only attempt to measure it by that death of his beloved son upon the cross of Calvary. For God's soul of the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The value of my soul, my beloved, your soul and mine, must have been of such infinite and eternal value to God that he gave his only begotten son. Hallelujah! Precious! My soul is to God. Go with me to Psalm 133.

I'm taking them in their moral order, as we mentioned them, in their proper spiritual order of blessings and experience. Psalm 133, where we have the psalmist singing in the whole psalm these precious words, only three verses in number, Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Nerman, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

May I give you the setting of the psalm? You will find this coming next to the last psalm in a group of psalms that are called psalms of degrees, or the psalms of ascent, beginning with 120 and going through Psalm 134. It was the custom of the pilgrims, the Jewish pilgrims, when they rendered their path to Jerusalem upon their annual feast day, they would sing these psalms as they rendered their way up to Jerusalem. It was also the custom of the priests, the Levites, when they ascended the temple steps to go toward the altar in the courts of the Lord, they too would sing these psalms of ascent.

Now, when you read the psalms through, you will find them ascending in their truth and in their glory higher and higher, until you come to the closing two, 133 and 134. Dispensationally, they describe the blessing of Israel when under the reign of their Messiah they will be enjoying their land, their nation, and

their kingdom, and that millennial reign of their blessed, blessed king. And it crowns the glory of that day when they will be found in happy, united fellowship of the people redeemed around their king in the glory of his kingdom.

Now, there's another meaning that we could imply, but oh it reminds us, as you see this psalm reminding us, that that great day of Pentecost went from heaven above. There was poured out the Holy Spirit by the risen, glorified Lord upon the believers below, and he formed the one body of Christ which is the church. And in rich profusion, the Spirit of God was poured out from heaven above to form the one body to dwell in the believer, and to dwell with the believers until the dispensation is finished.

That's another application that I like to think of. You can read a bit in Revelation chapter 21, the first five verses, when in that new creation God will be dwelling together with his redeemed creation, and in that day God will be their God, and they shall be his people in happy unity forevermore in that eternal scene. But, it does have an application even in our day.

When I find that he values my faith, and Christ becomes my savior, then I am God immediately. He's in the fellowship of his people, and in fellowship with his people, in God's hands, I should dwell together with them in unity. How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, and in that fellowship that God is trying his people to enjoy, when he sees the unity, when he recognizes how good and how pleasant that fellowship is, that it's like the precious anointing oil that was poured on the head of Aaron that ran down his beard unto the thirst of Esau, and that it's a sweet fragrance and aroma that came to the heart of God in satisfaction, all speaking to him, which we have no time to answer into tonight, but all speaking to him of the fragrance of Christ.

May I present my brother with this? God not only values my life, God not only values my soul, God values my fellowship with his people. You know there's one thing about fellowshiping with God's people. You know who is it that enjoys bringing his people together? The Lord himself.

The Lord himself. Days of Malachi, as he described them in Malachi 3 verse 16, days when the remnant's testimony was small, declension and moral declension together with spiritual declension was great, then they that hear the Lord say often one to another, and the Lord heard, and often they stood nearer to listen to them, that they can heard of his name, and the book of remembrance was written before him. And my brother, may I say, there is one person who values the fellowship of God's people more than any other, God himself, and the blessed Lord Jesus.

God values my fellowship. He places me in fellowship with every child of God. He places me in fellowship with his people, and my beloved, let you and I realize God values that fellowship, and he wants that fragrance of it to be like a precious ointment that was on the head of Aaron.

I know I said I wish I could have smelled him, but he must have been the sweetest smelling man that perhaps has ever been on the earth, and it doesn't always be the sweetest eating. In that respect, but the joy of realizing God values the fellowship of his people, and when he sees it as he wants it to be, it's precious, precious, precious. You know I'm glad I'm saying, more than that, I'm glad I belong to the people of God, the best people on the earth.

What did you say? The best people on the earth, God's redeemed people, and with what joy they say, you and I redeemed by the precious mother's sight, we belong to them. Members of his body, members of the family of God, and oh how the father delights when he can indeed take into his heart the fragrance of the

fellowship of saints. That's one good reason, y'all, to come to Parker Park.

You'll smell better. Okay, but what a joy to realize the preciousness of the fragrance of such fellowship. He values it.

Praise the Lord, I'm glad he's glad I'm here. What a joy to realize it's God that values his people when they come together. Hallelujah! I don't know what value the rest of them have put on us, but never mind.

The one who values it the most is the Lord himself. Let's go on, Psalm 126. Psalm 126.

Let me read the last two verses. They that go in tears shall reap in joy. We that go with thoughts and weepers bearing precious seeds and shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bring into seed with him.

He not only values my life, my soul, my fellowship, but he values my service. You have the picture of the man sowing seeds, the seed sower. He may sow in tears, but he reaps in joy.

He goes forth and weeps, but he's carrying precious seed, and he shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheep with him. He values my service, all the joy of recognizing in the sight of God whatever service we render as we carry this precious seed basket of his word, and sow the seed of the good word of God the word is the good seed, the field is the world, and you and I in harmony with our Lord Jesus and in fellowship with him can sow it. We used to sing a little chorus when I was young that said sow, sow, sow, you may not see it grow scatter seeds of fresh fruit everywhere you go sow, sow, sow, and God will fruit thee so, and it will keep your heart aglow, sow, sow, sow, oh beloved you never know.

You know I never forget an incident comes to my heart. Many years ago when first moving in the south, and that's 36 years ago, I recall a circus came to the town where I lived, and it's the last time I ever remembered seeing and knowing of a circus parade that was usually held before they had the circus. I thought to myself now that would be a good opportunity to get tracks away, so I fortified myself with hundreds of tracks.

I walked along the parade line of that circus parade all through that town, and it was a long, it was a long way to go, but the crowds were there, and I gave tracks out. In the afternoon, I went near the circus ground, moved around in the in the crowd, and gave many away. I went back at night again, and I recall going home that night, and my back ached, and well-minded ache, for I had been going from at least nine o'clock in the morning till 10 30 at night, and I said Lord I hope something's been done.

A few weeks later, I had the privilege of having a little place at the county fair, and the privilege of giving testaments, bible, and distributing tracks, and I think we must have given about 10 to 12,000 tracks away that week. The end of the week, the common citizens of the town asked that they could have the fair and the exhibits kept for another week, and it was granted. So, I thought I'll do my best and stay for another week if I can, at least part of the time.

One day, as I was standing in the booth where I was, I saw an old colored man coming down with five little pickaninnies tagging after him, and I could see they were begging him for money. So, when he came to me, he said maybe this gentleman has change for a quarter. So, I said sure I'll give you change.

So, I gave him change for a quarter, and he gave the youngster the dime and said run away now, I want to talk to this gentleman. And he looked up at me, he said brother, he said I'd know you anywhere. He said you're the man that was giving them tickets away at the big show the other week, and he said you gave

me one of them tickets.

And he said I looked at it, and I read it, and when I read it I thought that's just what my people need. And he said brother, I looked for you all over, and I couldn't find you anywhere, because I was moving all around the place. But he said you know I picked up every one of them tickets I could find on the ground.

I said Lord, I wish you'd follow me everywhere. And then he said you know what brother, he said one night my aunt, she said to me she ran a boarding house, and she had a man over there that was dying, and he was afraid to die. Could I come over and help him? So he said brother, I went over there, sure enough he said that man was scared, he was dying, and he was afraid to die.

And I looked at him, I looked down at him, and said I'll tell you what I done. He said the other night, he said the man gave me something at the big show, some tickets, I don't know who the man was, he said I suppose he went on with the show, he actually said. But he said I got two of them tickets left, and he said I took them out brother, out of my pocket, and I said I'm going to read them to you, and then when I read them, you believe them, and you'll die happy.

Then he said brother, before I left, I gave them to him. I said you read them, and if you read them, and if you believe them, you'll die happy. And he looked up at me with a big grin, he said brother, that man died happy, and I said thank you Lord for the package, it was worth it.

Now we don't always see that truth, the harvest day is still ahead, and the day will come when he'll show how much he's valued our service. And like the old hymn says, I don't know when we sang it last, bringing in the sheaves, we shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves. My beloved, there's no other person values what you do for him in his service than the Lord himself.

Hallelujah. Now I'm going to tell you, you've got no idea how much he values what he does for you, what you do for him. I want he, I may do for him too.

He values my service, and he values yours. One more text, Psalm 116. Psalm 116, and I'm sure you notice the happy sequence of these precious truths.

He not only values my life, he not only values my soul, he not only values my fellowship, he not only values my service, but here in these words are words that no other one but God could ever write. Verse 15, Psalm 116. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

You will never find anyone upon the earth that will write these words in an obituary column of the newspaper, but these words have been written of every believer. These words are written for every saint that passes through the valley of the shadow of death to go and be with the Lord which is far better. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

He values my death. Hallelujah! Somebody's going to value me when I die. And that will be the Lord himself.

Oh, the joy of being, you know, it's a strange thing, but it's human. We only value things that live. God says, I value my people even if they're dead.

No wonder he wrote in Revelation, happy are the dead which die in the Lord. The joy of realizing the value he places upon my death. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

May I point out to you, I'm sure you see it, only five grains of sand, but I'm sure you recognize how in beautiful sequence he covers my life. He values my life, he values my soul, redeeming me through the precious blood of his Son. He values my fellowship with his people, he values my service that I do for him, and he values when the end of that service is reached, and I pass through the shadow of death to be in his presence forever.

He values my death. I'm precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. From beginning to the end, I'm precious to him.

Hallelujah! I'm glad I'm worth something to somebody, and particularly to him. One more text and I'm closing. The book of Revelation, please.

I like the thought that I found in the book of Revelation, chapter 21. Let me read verse 10 and 11. It's a description of that glorious city, the new Jerusalem, when the bride of our Lord Jesus will be seen in her glory eternal.

Let me just read verse 10 and 11. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone, and most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. My beloved, listen.

I'm precious in life. I'm precious in my soul to him. I'm precious in my Christian fellowship to him, and so are you.

I shall be precious in my service, and so will you, as we serve him. We shall be precious to him in death, but may I suggest to you, when we get of the glory, we're going to be most precious. Most precious.

Having the glory of God, and in that glory of day, shining with the glory of God, out of the clay of earth, he will have redeemed us, to present us to himself, to be forever to him, not only precious, but, thank God, most precious. Hallelujah! I must say again, how thou can think so well of me, and be the God thou art, is darkness to my intellect, but is sunshine to my heart. May God bless his words, for his name's sake.

Amen. Shall we close in a word of prayer? Blessed Father, we lift our hearts to thee with gratitude. Father, we're amazed, we're overwhelmed, when we recognize the dust that we are.

Not only the dust that we are by nature, but when we recognize and acknowledge our unworthiness as sinners, who have proved their unworthiness in rebelling against thee, that in the greatness of thy grace, and the matchless character of thy love, thine infinite heart has gone out to us. With the silence we say, how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should help them, they are more in number than the sand. And then, Lord, when the moment come, we shall wake in glory.

When I awake, I'm still with thee, and Lord, in that day we'll be most precious. Father, may we not say in closing, unto you that believe he is precious, for it's only because of thy precious love, these truths have ever become our blessed portion, and shall be forever. We thank thee.

May we go our way tonight saying, in the words of the poet, for he is so precious to me. Take heaven below, my Jesus to know, for he is so precious to me. We ask it in his adorable name, giving thanks as we separate.

Amen.

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