

Thanksgiving Psalm 116 bible-sermons.org November 22, 2009

We are going to take a break from our study of the letter of First John to celebrate the goodness of God to us. This morning we'll have a simple service of thanksgiving to God. I'd like to share with you some of the many things I'm grateful for, and then let you have a chance to declare something that overwhelms your heart with gratitude.

Let's begin by standing and reading one of the many psalms of thanksgiving, Psalm 116. I'll read the odd verses and if you have the (NIV) please read together the even verses.

I think we would all begin our words of gratitude with our greatest blessing, salvation. ¹² *How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?* ¹³ *I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.* Psalms 116:12-13 (NIV) That salvation was provided in the greatest display of love the world has ever seen. I recently read that one reason God chose the cross to be the method of sacrifice that would merit our redemption is that the cross, like no other means of death, so clearly displayed Jesus pouring out His life for us. How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness? It's by receiving more goodness, the cup of salvation, made possible by Jesus taking the punishment we deserve upon Himself.

Someone recently asked how we could keep our first love as we mature. The answer that came to me is that it is by a deepening appreciation of the cross. I'm not talking about the symbol, but what it means to us. It was there the love and justice of God was demonstrated to its fullest possible extent. It was there that my sins met the justice I deserved, and there that righteousness of Christ was credited to me. It was not because I deserved it. On the contrary, I did nothing to deserve it, but on the merit of the life Jesus lived for you and me, it was granted to us. The fullness of what was accomplished there will capture our hearts to a greater extent when we see more clearly the wonder of what was done there. And how are we to respond? Take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Live out what that means before the world.

I'm thankful for the revelation of God in His word. What an awesome and perfect God Scripture reveals to us! I could not imagine a more perfect God if I spent my life trying. I'm thankful for the Word that continually guides us, our yardstick, Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. I'm thankful it was demonstrated in the Word incarnate, Jesus, so I could understand it. I'm so thankful that He has been so patient with me as well as abundantly merciful and gracious.

I'm thankful that my parents were believers. I'm grateful for their prayers that saw me come out of darkness and into His marvelous light. (1Peter 2:9) I'm thankful for a believing wife that not only puts up with me but loves me and prays for me. I'm thankful that my children and their spouses are believers.

I'm thankful for the answer to prayers that I have prayed for a love for God's word, for direction in ministry, for mentors, for fellow elders that desire to be led

Commented [notes1]: 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

of the Spirit. I'm thankful for this congregation, for each and every one of you. Sedona has a lot of wonderful believers, but you are the cream of the crop. Of course I'm prejudice and would expect other pastors to say the same about their congregation. For a town this small, we have some good churches and have had a good number of missionaries and ministries.

I'm thankful for the other Bible believing pastors in Sedona. We are so blessed with a unity that is exceptional. I don't talk about it as much as I should, but those fellow pastors could have better paying jobs and an easier life, but they know they are called. The amazing thing is that they want to see other churches succeed. They aren't just focused on their own church. We cooperate in events and outreaches and even help support one another financially. Denominations will not separate us for Jesus unites us. This is a very special gift we have of unity among churches here in Sedona. In fact, we are going to have another joint time of praise and worship at the end of January, something you rarely see in other cities and a joint Crown Ministry seminar. I'm very thankful for that unity, for the Lord commands a blessing where there is unity. (Psalm 133:3)

I'm thankful for healthy, beautiful grandchildren. I'm thankful for being called to this beautiful place, in this country, at this time. I'm thankful for financial provision, for a home, and that all my family's needs are met.

I'm thankful for all the tools of study and access to information to help us study God's word. What a blessing it is to live at this time! I'm thankful for the ministry opportunities God has given me through preaching, the internet, and publishing.

I'm thankful for the ministries He has called you to, Potter's Hand, Young Life, the Shoeboxes, the Small Groups, and so many others. I'm thankful that so many of you have a heart to reach out to the lost you come in contact with and to share with them the joy of knowing Jesus personally. I believe the Lord is going to show us some other ways to reach out to the millions of tourists that come here searching. Thank God in advance for that.

You know that the Thanksgiving Celebration was passed down to us from those first Pilgrim settlers. They had experienced disease, starvation, death of loved ones, and incredible hardship. The one verse above all others that kept them going was 1Thessalonians 5:18, *...in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* So let me conclude my part by thanking God for walking me through the difficulties of my bad decisions and worldliness. For all the things that make my heart ache, for all the things that I don't understand, by faith I thank God. I thank Him for using what was meant for evil to end up glorifying His name.

I thank God for Daniel's (my son) illness, for he will learn character and compassion and walk closer to the Lord through it. I thank the Lord that by faith he will be healed in God's perfect time. I thank God for the wrong choices I have made in life, for they humble me and help me walk with a sense of my vulnerabilities. I thank God for every painful thing, for He has been there to comfort me and see me through. I thank Him that He has never and will never

Commented [notes2]: 3 It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. Psalms 133:3 (NIV)

allow more than I can bear. (1Corinthians 10:13) I thank Him for the faith to see the good in difficulty and the trust to know that all things work together for good. (Romans 8:28)

Finally, I thank God that He will complete the work He began in us. (Philippians 1:6) I thank Him for the promise that I will see Him face to face and be transformed (1John 3:2), which, by the way, is the topic of next week's sermon. I thank Him for wondrous eternity that awaits us, an eternity that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the hearts of man. It is that amazing. (1Corinthians 2:9)

I could keep going, but I want to give you a chance. If you feel led, share one or two brief things for which you are grateful. I'll bring the microphone to you.

After the congregation shares, read Psalm 116 together one more time. Close with communion and the song, His Love Endures Forever.

¹ *Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!* Psalms 147:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor 10:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- 1 Cor 2:9 (NIV)