

Giving Thanks – God's Will For You

Psalm 145

For those of you who have been here at Hope CBC for several years, you know that we come to this Sunday with a bit of tradition; that tradition being that I like to use this Sunday before Thanksgiving to exhort and encourage the congregation toward being God-centered on this day of celebration. In addition to that tradition, I have found myself doing something else on this Sunday before thanksgiving that has also become a “semi-tradition”; for just about every other year, I find myself coming back to preach from the same text that always strikes me as wonderfully descriptive of God and as one that calls us to this joyful duty of giving thanks to a gracious God. So then, if you would, please turn in your Bibles to that text which served as our Scripture reading this morning – Psalm 145.

As you turn there, let me give you some preliminary thoughts concerning this text. Let me remind you of the truth of 1 Thessalonians 5:18 where we are told, ***“in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*** We are called to be a thankful people, but not just thank for thanksgiving sake, but thankful as we recognize who God is and what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Our lives are to reflect the attitude of being thankful to God. Indeed Matthew Henry, the great commentator of the Scriptures said it well, *“Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better.”*

With regard to Psalm 145, let me first have you note that this is the last Psalm identified as a Psalm of David. For all intents and purposes then, this is David's last Psalm. God has saved the best for last. As one reads through the Psalms of David, many subjects, concerns, joys and trials have been addressed. But what would be the focus of this last Psalm of David? In short, this psalm is a monumental song of praise and thanksgiving, a joyful acknowledgment that God is God; that God is benevolent, loving, caring and gracious.

This Psalm has long been a favorite of mine, especially as a Psalm of Thanksgiving because it provokes the mind upon more noble and spiritual thoughts concerning God. You see, if there be one main thought, one main goal of David as he penned these words it is this; *as one ponders the great character and workings of our God, the only appropriate response is praise and thanksgiving.* My prayer this morning is that I might be used of the Lord to help prepare you for whatever special times you might have planned later this week. I assume that much thought has or will go into food and preparations. This morning may I give you some spiritual thoughts that you might use to feed your souls, both this morning and most especially on the day our own country has allowed to be set aside and set apart for a holy remembrance and convocation, recounting the great and gracious acts of the true and living God on our behalf. Charles Spurgeon once said, *“There should be some preparation of the heart in coming to the worship of God. Consider who He is in whose sight we gather, and surely we cannot rush together without thought. Consider whom we profess to worship, and we shall not hurry into his presence as men run to a fire.”* This preparation of the heart in coming to the worship of God applies equally then to preparing our hearts to be constantly thankful and expressive of thanks to God. Psalm 145 helps us in this endeavor.

We will look at this Psalm in three ways. First, the introduction, explaining how we are to give thanks to God, followed by the why's for giving thanks to God, which will include four examples of God's character, and finally we have the conclusion, which draws us to a response or commitment to live lives that give thanks to our gracious God.

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I. HOW TO GIVE THANKS TO OUR GOD (145:1-2)

1 I will extol You, my God, O King, And I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever.

A. The GROUNDWORK (1-2)

This is a most beautiful Psalm. It is an acrostic Psalm, meaning that each line of thought begins with the successive letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. What this mean to us is this; David, the author took great time and care in composing this Psalm. With thoughtfulness and earnestness he penned these words, words that the Holy Spirit of God will use to guide us in our thanksgiving and praise if we will comprehend their meaning and importance, applying them to our lives. That this is an acrostic psalm calls our attention to the fact that this psalm was no arbitrary ranting; nor was it simply a spontaneous prayer, but rather it was a careful, deliberate and beautifully crafted expression of praise and thanksgiving. What a reminder for us as we might carefully, deliberately and beautifully craft this upcoming Thursday with food and activity. David’s determined resolve to praise is to be our resolve as well. Might we say with Francis Havergal, who wrote the hymn “Take My Life and Let It Be”: *“If I could write as I would about the goodness of God to me, the ink would boil in my pen!”* Oh that we might write and so speak about our God! With such attention might we devote ourselves daily to the giving of thanks to our gracious God.

The first thing these opening verses do for us is literally define what it means to give thanks to the Lord. In verses 1 and 2 there are three verbs employed to create a picture of what true thanksgiving is all about. To express true thanksgiving, one must;

1. **“extol”** - the Lord
2. **“bless”** - the Lord
3. **“praise”** - the Lord

These are not complex words, but they each tell us something special about our thanksgiving toward God and therefore bear a brief explanation.

The word **“extol”** simply means to raise or lift up. In Genesis 7:17 it is recorded that the ark of Noah was “lifted up” by the floodwaters. In Exodus 17:11, so long as the hands of Moses were lifted up, the sons of Israel prevailed against Amalek. And in the book of Leviticus, the priest was commanded to “offer up” the various sacrifices on the altar. The picture here is that what is held up is being held up to be seen. The ark was seen above the waters. The hands of Moses were seen above the sons of Israel. And the sacrifices of the priest were held or raised above the altar in honor and respect to God.

So, what is the application for us? Thanksgiving begins as we seek to **“extol”**, raise up, lift up and hold up the Person and work of the Lord to be seen by others. I love how David begins this psalm. He says, *“I will extol You...”* In other words, no matter what others may do, I will always and continually seek to show You off, to hold You up, Lord. Do we have this kind of determination to lift up the Lord?

The second word used is **“bless”**. This word literally means to kneel, as in recognizing the worth of something or someone. To bless the Lord simply has the idea of kneeling down, acknowledging the greatness of God. If I could put it in a more crude sense, to bless the Lord means to get out of the way so that others can see the object being blessed. With this idea, the word **“bless”** goes well will with “extol”, for if one is truly going to raise the Lord up for all to see

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by their words, actions and even thoughts, then they must also kneel or get out of the way. So, a characteristic of true thanksgiving is realized when get down and out of the way, pointing people to the worth of God so that others might actually see God and not ourselves.

The final word used is **“praise”**. The word praise in the Hebrew is *halel* from which we get *hallelujah*, or praise to “jah”, *Jehovah*, the Lord. The word “praise” literally means, “to shine; to make a show, to boast; and thus to be (clamorously) foolish; to rave; and to celebrate.” Do these words describe your thanksgiving to God.

We have looked at the verbs used by David, but let us quickly note the object of these verbs. I wish we had time to consider these more in depth, but suffice it to say that David gives ample reason for extolling, blessing and praising. These opening two verses tell us that David gives thanks to God for his relationship to his Creator; and note it is a most intimate and personal relationship. In verse 1 David calls the Lord, **“my God” and “O King.”** This should be reason enough to give thanks to God, if you know Him as the Supreme Being and the Sovereign Almighty. David would not be content with just this, but he certainly starts with this.

In addition, David gives this thanks and praise to the Name of the Lord, which means David was intimately aware the character of God, he knew who God was and what God was like, for a name to the Hebrews was linked to a person's character. The name of God is “Yahweh” or sometimes known as “Jehovah.” God's name means “self-existent one.” God has no need, no wants, is lacking nothing physical, spiritual or emotional. God is perfectly content with Himself. He does not need us, so then the fact that He desires a relationship with those whom He has no real need of is all the more glorious and gives all the more reason to give thanks. I love how Spurgeon said it, *“When God is praised, we have come to the ultimatum. This is the thing for which all other things are designed.”* We have been designed to extol, to bless and to praise God. How are we doing?

The final thing these verses convey to us is the most difficult for any person who is truly committed to praising and thanking God. In verse 1 and 2, David says he will extol and bless God's name **“forever and ever.”** David's was to be a continual praise. But continual could mean a lot of things. If I meet with a person once a week, every week for 20 years, could it not be said that I was continual in that meeting? If possible, I could meet with that person once a week, forever and ever and that would certainly count as being continual. But notice that David was not content with this and reveals the true life of thanksgiving in verse 2 when he adds that His thanksgiving will be how often? EVERY DAY! For David, one worship service a week was not sufficient. He sought to worship every day, singing songs of praise every day, meditating on the Word and communing with his God in prayer everyday. Charles Spurgeon once noted about this verse, *“Our love to God is not a matter of holy days – every day is alike holy to holy men.”* So, as we come to a day of Thanksgiving, may it not be the only day in which we momentarily give thanks to God, but rather may it be a memorial day, a day in which we call ourselves to remember daily the blessings of God. Every day is to be a day of thanksgiving as we extol, bless and praise the Lord.

II. WHY WE GIVE THANKS TO OUR GOD (145:3-20)

Although David has laid a groundwork from which his readers could go and make ample strides in giving praise and thanksgiving to the living God, he is not content to leave us without greater detail. In verses 3-20, we are given five key reasons as to why, or for what we give thanks to our God. These are the things that we ought to think about, dwell upon and

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contemplate, especially as we pause for a day of thanksgiving. My desire is to provide each of you with two things:

- 1) a desire to give open thanksgiving to God
- 2) a goldmine of reasons for which to give thanksgiving to God
- 3)

John Bunyan, the author of the beloved "Pilgrim's Progress" once said, "*You that are called born of God, and Christians, if you be not criers [proclaimers], there is no spiritual life in you.*" If you need reasons to give thanks to the Lord, here are five as outlined by David in Psalm 145.

A. Thank the Lord for His GREATNESS (3-6)

Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised...

According to David, what is it that makes the LORD so worthy of thanksgiving and praise? Verses 3-6 reveal that our God is great. Our God is infinite, His power irresistible, His brightness insupportable, His majesty awful, His dominion boundless, and His sovereignty incontestable. J.I. Packer noted, "*The world dwarfs us all, but God dwarfs the world.*" Great is the Lord! If God be so great then how ought He to be praised and thanked? Carefully, fully, deliberately. We ought to employ every faculty of our being to find words and ways by which to give thanks to God. Our praise is not to be shallow, but deep. It is not to be low, but high. He is to be highly or greatly praised. In proportion to His greatness, we are to greatly praise Him. If God is at such a level then at what level out to be our praise and thanksgiving? We should be going out of our way, we should desire to be inconvenience to give thanks to our God. These verses go on to give four reasons why God is so great:

1. His greatness is unsearchable

"...and His greatness is unsearchable" (3b)

The word unsearchable means "past examination or deliberation." Some may take this as an excuse not to examine or deliberate the things of God. This is not what this means. The point is that we can examine, discuss, talk about, explore, probe, investigate, survey, assess, study and analyze the person and work of God for hour upon hour, day upon day, month upon month and year upon year and we will never come to the end of our examination. Upon our consideration of the things of God, we will never, if truly seeking, come to the end of God and therefore run out of things for which to praise and thank God.

2. His greatness is enduring

"One generation shall praise Your works to another; and shall declare Your mighty acts" (4)

In addition to this thought, verse 4 specifically reminds us that even as one generation passes into the next, the consideration of the work and person God will continue. As we declare to our children the mighty acts of God, they will, if we do so with sincerity and passion (taking time around the table), be awed at the God who created all things of naught in the space of six days; and the God who delivered Noah and his family from the floodwaters will inspire them. They will be impressed by the countless miracles found in the Scriptures and of the compassion and mercy of God to forgive and love those who so often stray from Him. Spurgeon once exhorted, "*Let us see to it that we praise God before our children and never make them think that His service is an*

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unhappy one.” The Lord God was, is and always will be a great God. Thanking the Lord for His greatness has a cumulative effect...as one generation adds praise upon praise for who God is. Therefore thanking Him is a great duty and joy. His greatness is enduring, For that give Him thanks.

3. His greatness is majestic

“On the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate” (5)

In verse 5 we learn that the greatness of God is majestic. The word “majesty”, what does it mean? We say it, we sing it, but what does it tell us about God? The word majesty speaks of the excellence and beauty of God. When you desire to truly thank God the way He desires and not simply the way you may desire, then you must meditate on the person, character and nature of God along with the works of God.

You see, it is not enough to say to ourselves or to our children, “God parted the Red Sea for the people of Israel.” Sure, such a thing is impressive to a certain extent, but the real question, the question that brings such marvel, is why did God do this? What is it about God's character, His person that motivated Him to do such a thing? With such a question we begin to consider the mercy of God, hearing the cries of His people in bondage to the Egyptians. We also consider the wrath of God, seeing how he obliterated the false gods of the Egyptians as well as His punishment upon those who would mistreat His children. Give thanks for the nature and character of God for He is great and majestic. On such things commit yourself to meditate.

4. His greatness is powerful

“And men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts; and I will tell of Your greatness” (6)

Finally, we see in verse 6 that God is great because of His power. I mean any God who can cause the sun to stand still, or deliver three young men from a fiery furnace, or cause a virgin to conceive and be with the child of the Most High God, it stands to reason that I ought to give thanks for the blessing that He promises to use such power in my life, and therefore I ought to respect such power and give Him thanks.

B. Thank the Lord for His GOODNESS (7-9)

“They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness (7a)

In addition to God being great, verses 7-10 also reveal to us that God is good. Again, how often do we say God is good? You say, all the time. But I ask you in preparation for giving thanks, how do you know God is good? What is it about God that makes Him so good? David reveals three reasons in these verses.

1. His goodness is revealed in His righteousness

And shall shout joyfully of Your righteousness (7b)

We are to give thanks because the Lord is righteous. We are even to shout it out. The word “righteous” simply means that everything God does, everything God brings to pass and plans out is completely right and without any evil intent. In other words it is good and therefore God is good. Having been disappointed in this life by those who were not completely right and not without evil intent, I am thankful for a God, who even when things don't look so right, I can trust is working all things together for the good because He alone is completely righteous in all He does.

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2. His goodness is revealed in His character

The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness (8)

The goodness of God is shown to be as a mighty fountain. It is His character, His nature to be good. William Plumer noted, *"The character of God is a perfect, glorious whole."* There is nothing missing. Therefore, the Lord is said here in verse 8 to be gracious (full of grace) to them that serve Him; he is full of mercy (not giving people what they deserve; death, condemnation) to them that need Him. Our God is said to be slow to anger to them that continually offended Him. Finally, God's love is great and grand, motivating Him to send a Savior, even Jesus Christ, demonstrating that the LORD is ready to give, and ready to forgive, more ready to do these things for us than we are to ask of Him, than we are to repent.

3. His goodness is revealed His impartiality

The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works (9)

God is good to all, to all His creatures. This means that from the highest angel down to the meanest worm, to all "but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from His goodness", the Lord has revealed goodness. His tender mercies are said to be over all His works. How else should one respond to such goodness? So many neglect it or reject such a truth, but only to their own harm and destruction. Because God is good to all.

C. Thank the Lord for His GLORY (10-13)

In verse 10 through 13, we extol, praise, bless and therefore give thanks to the Lord for His glory, but I would like you to note here that David defines glory here by means of God's rule or kingdom. In other words, God's glory (that is His splendorous presence), is realized or known in His rule. It is only as people come to recognize God's sovereignty and Lordship that God's glory is realized. Therefore, God's glory is most manifested in those who are His subjects, that is those who have submitted themselves to God's rule, His kingship, His glory. Note then how God's glory is revealed in the following two ways.

1. There is given the contrast of the kingdom

All Your works shall give thanks to You, O Lord, and Your godly ones shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power (10-11)

People will speak of God's kingdom in contrast to what is available on this earth. What is it that makes God's kingdom so glorious? All of God's creatures, all of His subjects will give Him thanks. Unlike earthly kingdoms in which the subjects, no matter how well they may be treated will find fault, there is no fault to be found in God's kingdom. The people of God are continually getting out of the way, blessing God, speaking of how wonderful God's rule is and how awesome His power.

2. The content of the kingdom

To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts, and the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations (12-13)

In addition to speaking of God's rule and power, God's people are to make known the very content of the kingdom. God's kingdom is not natural, but supernatural. Even as God's kingdom rules in the hearts and minds of those who have trusted in Christ as Savior and King, there is to

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be a continual desire to make known to men the awesome acts of God, the greatest of which is the regeneration and transformation of a sinful heart, to a heart that knows God, loves God and serves God. Such a kingdom is eternal and will endure for all time. No one can take God’s kingdom away and for this we are to give thanks. Such a kingdom and glory should cause us to be in awe. John Piper said, *“We are all starved for the glory of God, not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem....There is greater healing for the soul in beholding the splendor than there is in beholding self.”* This is the glory of the Lord.

D. Thank the Lord for His GENEROSITY (14-17)

When we consider giving thanks to God, we must recall the Lord’s generosity to us. And as we will come to see, the Lord’s generosity is in no way limited but plays out in the lives of all people, both the people of God as well as those who do not know Him as Lord. Let us see in these verses how our God is gracious and worthy of thanksgiving for His generosity.

The LORD sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds.

What is to be noted here is that the Lord’s generosity is given to all people and all creatures. It is a common misconception that God does not bless and give to unbelievers. The mere fact that there are unbelievers present is a manifestation of God’s generosity. For the mere fact of their unbelief gives God grounds for exacting punishment. For, *“that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:19-20).* Yet, God in His generosity has not only allowed believers and unbelievers to live life, but, as these verses reveal, He provides for their needs (the very air they breath, the very food they eat, the very homes they live in), and yet often without notice or thanks. How much more ought the people of God give thanks to God for the gifts of sustaining our lives, of food and of proper earthly pleasures? I would simply draw your attention to exactly what is said at the end of verse 14. It says, *“And raises up all who are bowed down.”* Remember that the word **“extol”** means what? To raise up. And the word **“bless”** means? To kneel down – or get out of the way to show off the Lord. Here the Word of God makes a statement of fact, Those who are bowed down, who bless and honor the Lord, showing forth His glory, they will be the ones who are raised up. As our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in Matthew 23:12;

Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

Why should we give thanks to the LORD? The LORD has promised to bring blessing upon blessing to those who would humble themselves before Him and call upon the name of His Son, Jesus for salvation from their sinful selves. This brings us to our final reason to thank the Lord from our text.

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E. Thank the Lord for His GIFT (18-20)

In verses 18-20 we are given the final reason for which we are to praise the Lord and give Him thanks. We are to praise God for His gift. Although God does bring blessing upon all of His creation, there are yet special or specific blessings given to those who submit themselves to Him. Verses 18-20 say,

The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. The LORD keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.

Why should we praise the LORD? Notice that there is a four-fold promise given in these verses. Beginning in verse 18, the LORD is near to all, the Lord will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him, the LORD will hear their cry and save them; and the LORD keeps all who love Him. In other words, there is the promise of God's presence, God's provision, God's protection and God's preserving His people.

Yet, I just made an important statement here. God's presence, provision, protection and preserving is promised only to His people. There is a qualification to be fulfilled in order to receive this gift. Do you see what it is from verse 18? Yes, a person is required to "call upon Him" and to "call upon Him in truth." What does this mean, to call upon Him in truth? This is the essence of the gospel message, the truth of man's sin, that all have sinned have fallen short of the glory of God and that the wages of sin is death; the truth that God Himself paid for the penalty of sin for His people; the truth that Jesus Christ is not only Savior, but LORD, to whom every person will bow down to, either as Savior, or as Judge, the former bringing eternal life, the later eternal judgment.

The truth is, that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved, but to call Him is to acknowledge His work, His plans, His Word and to submit to such. For the "LORD keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy." There are many today who do see the general blessings of the LORD as described in verses 14-16, yet never respond to such generosity and to such a gift and therefore are headed for destruction. Have you given thanks to God for His generosity and gift of salvation. For such is the very essence of true thanksgiving.

III. A CALL TO GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE TO OUR GOD (145:21)

Finally, we come to the response. What shall we say to these things? In David's statement we are given his goal, a goal that each one of us who have called upon the name of the LORD, must make our own.

A. Our GOAL (21)

My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord; and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.

It should go without saying that the believer's goal ought to be, to speak the praise of the LORD. Or should it go without saying? For David himself gives an absolute resolution to give God thanks and glory. As Matthew Henry once noted, "When we have said what we can, in praising God, still there is more to be said, and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as [David] did [in verse 1], but conclude them with it, as [David]"

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does here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of one thanksgiving be. While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises."

But our praises and thanksgivings are not to be isolated, but we are to be resolved to call others into such praise. That is the beauty of this Psalm. It reminds each of us to praise God for His many blessings in our lives, but also pushes us to call upon others to do the same. We are to call all flesh, that is all people to bless the name of the LORD forever and ever. We know that only some will so thank our gracious God, it is a shame that not all are willing or able to do it now, but there will be a time then after the wicked are destroyed, all flesh will only and ever give God praise, blessing and honor. In the meantime, let us be a people of continual praise calling people's attention to the marvelous works of our God, especially the work of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, through the grace of God, for the glory of God.

Soli Deo Gloria

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