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## A Thanksgiving Prescription

*"Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise..." (Psalm 100:4).*

### A Thanksgiving Prescription – Psalm 100

*1 Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 3 Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.*

I would think it safe to say to a group like this one, we all know that as Christians our lives are to be marked, known for, and expressly identified as being grateful to God. We are to be a thankful people. Passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 are clear saying that we are to, **"16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; [and] 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."** But as is true in so much of life; it is one thing to know something; and often times quite another to do it or to experience it.

I believe as Christians living in the United States, we have so much to be grateful for, frankly more things than we can even imagine. I am reminded of the wealthy Texan who was in the habit of giving his father unique gifts every father's day. One year it was hang-gliding lessons. The year before that it was the entire record collection of Slim Whitman's Hits, autographed by the singer himself. But in the most recent year he had outdone himself. He purchased a rare kind of South American bird, called the translator. This bird could speak five languages and sing "Yellow Rose of Texas" in any key while standing on one foot. The talented bird cost \$10,000, but the son felt it was worth every penny. This would be the Father's Day gift his dad would never forget. A week after Father's Day he called his father. "Dad, how did you like the bird?" His father responded, "It was delicious."

We have so much that sometimes we cannot see the great value of all God has done for us and has given to us. Such is the attitude of ingratitude. As Francis Schaeffer once noted, *"The beginning of man's rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart."* Beloved, we need to make sure we have and that we exhibit a thankful heart; a heart, indeed a life that expresses nothing short of exuberant gratitude toward God.

As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, I would turn your attention to the very familiar, Psalm 100. Psalm 100 is said to be the second most beloved and quoted Psalm; just behind the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. If you are reading the text from the NASB, you see that this Psalm begins not in verse 1, but with the description, *"A Psalm for Thanksgiving."* If you were to read that description from the ESV, it reads, *"A Psalm for giving thanks."* In either case, God's people are presented in this short Psalm the prescription for giving thanks and praise to God. It is a command and call to remember the goodness of the Lord and to proclaim such goodness anywhere and at any time regardless of one's apparent circumstances. It also interesting to note that while many other Psalms speak of thanksgiving to God, this is the only Psalm specifically identified as *"A Psalm of Thanksgiving."* In other words, here we have a clear, God-given prescription for giving thanks.

In the 1500's, after Mary Tudor, the fanatical Roman Catholic, became queen of England, she forced many Evangelical Christians in the British Isles to flee the country or face execution (thus becoming known as "Bloody Mary"). One friend of John Knox, the great Protestant reformer of that time, a man named William Kethe, wrote Psalm 100 out in meter; so that it could be sung by the fleeing Christians. His rendering of Psalm 100 reads as thus:

*All people that on earth do dwell;  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
Him serve with fear, His praise foretell,  
Come ye before Him and rejoice.*

*Know that the Lord is God indeed,  
Without our aid He did us make;  
We are His folk, He doth us feed  
And for His sheep he doth us take.*

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This morning I would like to open up this “familiar” Psalm to you with the hope and prayer that it becomes a most “intimate” Psalm for you; reminding you and motivating you to proclaim constant thanksgiving to God; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. To do this, we will break this Psalm down into four sections; the indicator of giving thanks to God (1-2); the imperative of giving thanks to God (3), the instruction for giving thanks to God (4); and finally, the inspiration for giving thanks to God (5). Before tackling the first point; I would have you note the verbs of this psalm. There are seven key verbs, all of which are in fact commands. In other words, if you wish to rightly express thanks to God, then here are seven commands to obey (you might wish to circle them in your text); we must shout joyfully (1); serve gladly (2a); come expressively (2b); know definitively (3); enter thankfully (4a); give thanks specifically (4b); and bless exclusively (4c).

### I. The indicator of giving thanks (1-2)

As we begin, I would like to answer the question, “How do we know if we, as an individual Christian, or as a congregation, are giving thanks rightly to God? In other words, what is the indicator of a thankful spirit? A quick glance at verses 1-2 reveal to us that the indicator of a thankful spirit can be summed up in the word “joy” – there will be a sense of joy in the Lord that permeates the life of a believer as well as the life of a congregation. See you do not agree as I read again verses 1-2, **1 Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.**

This opening salvo of the Psalm sets a majestic scene. What is pictured for us is a coronation service of a king. The psalm sets out to instruct the subjects of the king how they are to approach their glorious ruler. And while these expressions of gratitude are to be the experience of believers now; note in verse one that the command is to **“all the earth.”** Everyone is commanded and expected to be thankful to God. Of course, the nations of this earth are currently far from being thankful to God. Because of this, I believe our text actually looks forward to the Millennial Kingdom where King Jesus is taking His throne. It will be at this time that **“all the earth”** will indeed fulfill this command and express such gratitude. Until then, it is the responsibility of God’s people to manifest this attitude of the kingdom; utter thankfulness in our everyday lives. Looking at verses 1-2, we see three ways in which this “joy” is to be experienced and expressed by the people of God. First, we are to...

#### A. Shout joyfully (1)

The first description of a thankful heart is a loud and joyful proclamation of the victories and glories of our King. Again, the picture here is of a congregation of people watching the entrance of their victorious King, coming in from battle; and upon seeing Him, they “shout” a word meaning *“to blow a loud trumpet; to make a loud and attention grabbing sound.”*

think of the celebration that occurs when people see a famous person or their favorite sports team. As he or she walks on the stage, or as that team takes the field, what happens? The crowd yells and screams in delight. Did you ever stop to think why people do this? Why is it that people get all loud and delighted in such circumstances? Beloved, it is built into us to worship and the sad thing is that we can often get more excited about a puny humans or a team of puny humans (not something I would say in front of the Denver Broncos Defensive Line – but yet certainly puny by God’s standards) but we get more excited about such “persons” than the Person who made them; than the Person who called this whole universe into existence out of nothing; the Person who holds all things together by the power of His own hand. And just who is this person we are to make loud and jubilant expressions of praise to? Beloved, the person pictured in this scene of Psalm 100 is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:15-18 we read:

**15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He**

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***is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.***

Where is the shouting? Where is the cheering? Let us at least get a loud "Amen." This is our God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is who He is. This is what He had done. When we come together, as is the expectation of this psalm, we are to give thanks to our King with a joyful shout! He has victory over death; victory over sin; victory over Satan. He has redeemed us, bought us, purchased us off the slave market of sin. Does that not warrant a loud, "Amen"? Now, are we really to "shout"? Are we to be screaming at the top of our lungs, "Jesus is Lord; Jesus is Lord!" I suppose we could do that, but I really do not see the emphasis here on the shouting, but rather than on the attitude of our coming together, which is "joyfully." It is clear from the first two verses that the inspired writer wants us to come joyfully, with gladness and then with joyful singing. So, how do we know if we are being thankful when we come together to worship the King? Are we seeking to praise God loudly, boldly, fervently, intensely because we are so delighted to worship Him for saving us? Charles Spurgeon noted, *"Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with His nature, His acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for His mercies."* Beloved, check your heart, check your countenance; check your words; do you seek to come before your King with joyful shouting! But note only are we to ***"shout joyfully"***; we are also...

### **B. Serve gladly (2a)**

Verse 2 says we are to ***Serve the Lord with gladness!*** Some translations say, "Worship the Lord" here; but the Hebrew word does mean to serve; to wait upon, to minister to. Have you ever thought about this; that we are called to minister to God; to serve the Lord Jesus as we gather together? Whether we are singing, whether we are praying, whether we are partaking of communion in memory of the One who died for us, whether we are listening to God's word, whether we are giving of our blessings to God, we should do so with gladness. The word ***"gladness"*** speaks of exceeding glee; of possessing the most excited expectation. Like parents and family finally experiencing the arrival of a newborn baby; like a high school student receiving that letter of acceptance and scholarship to college; like the employee being given a significant change in job responsibilities along with a huge raise; all such things are accompanied by exceedingly great glee. This is how we are to serve the Lord Jesus Christ as we gather together; with that sense of excited expectation.

Notice that this is a command; and while we cannot manufacture joy and gladness; we can determine to obey God; to seek His grace, to remember what He has done for us as that will change our complaining into celebration. How can you know if you are a thankful person; just ask yourself; do I come to the worship services of the congregation with gladness? If not, you are not being rightly thankful and you need to pray, asking the Lord what needs to change. But there is one more description given in our text. We are also to...

### **C. Come expressively (2b)**

The psalmist next writes, ***Come before Him with joyful singing.*** Notice the command, we are to ***"come"*** – we are invited by God to an event and we not to miss the corporate gathering of the saints (Hebrews 10:24-25). It is a thankful heart that realizes the uniqueness of gathering with the saints. The call is to come to the gathering; to come to every gathering of the saints as you possibly can; for it is in the gathering of the saints that we can and must express the greatness of our God; which is an expression of thankfulness to God.

Not only are we commanded to come to the services where God's people gather to express praise; but we are told how we are to come. We come ***"before Him with joyful singing."*** Two thoughts here: first, your coming to a service is not to please someone else. The thankful person comes to the worship service to stand "before the King." It is in times like that that we, as God's people, as the Redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ, come before the Lord Jesus. He is the audience, we are the actors and performers. We do not come before Pastor Ed, we come before the Perfector of our faith. We do not come before one

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another; but we come before the One who has purchased our souls. So, not only do not come to please any other but King Jesus, we also are to come with **joyful singing**. Now, I entitled this point that we are to come expressively. The idea of joyful singing speaks of a choir that has rehearsed and is purposely performing their song. In other words, thoughtful planning was involved. In the scene of Psalm 100, the choir had chosen and appropriate song or songs that would rightly express their attitude of gratitude. The command is for “joyful” singing, which like verse 1, speaks of something loud and jubilant. Beloved, when you come to a worship service, if you want to know if you are being thankful, just ask yourself, “Have I come prepared to express myself joyfully before the Lord?” Every other person in the congregation should know whether or not you are finding joy in the Lord. And there are only two options, you either are expressing joy, or you are not. Sometimes circumstances of the week will weigh you down. Sometimes illness will rob you of energy. But neither should rob you of your joy; of the delight you find in knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord. You can express such joy through song, through the prayers, through the consideration of the Word preached and through your ministering to one another before and after service. But are you joyfully expressive in your worship of God; such reveals whether or not you are giving thanks to God.

So, the indicator that you are giving thanks to God is joy revealed in that you shout joyfully; you serve gladly; and you come expressively. Let us consider the second point...

### II. The imperative of giving thanks (3)

Here we want to answer the question, “What must we know to engage rightly in giving thanks to God. If we are to rightly give thanks to God, there is something we must “know” and we find the answer in verse 3. There we read, ***Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*** The command is that we must “know” something. The idea here is to be aware of something, to acknowledge the truth of something. This tells us our thanksgiving to God must be intelligent. Beloved, we must know something about the One we are thanking.

Do you remember Paul’s encounter with the Athenians in Acts 17? The Greeks had been worshipping what they referred to as “An unknown God.” But Paul stood up and said to them, *“Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23)*. Beloved, we cannot rightly thank or worship a God is we do not know. So what is it that we are to know about God? Among other things, our text tells us at least three things we must know about God and for which we are to be thankful. We must know...

#### A. The LORD (Yahweh) is God (3a)

Verse three begins with a declaration we must know and which makes us thankful; namely that the LORD, that is the covenant name by which God made Himself known to Israel; that name being Yahweh; that Yahweh is in fact God. The LORD, Yahweh is the name of God, God being a title that means supreme being. The supreme Being of all things has name, and we know His name. Are you thankful for that?

#### B. The LORD is Creator (3b)

Not only are we to know the LORD as God, but also as Creator, ***“it is He who has made us.”*** The idea behind ***“made us”*** is that we have been fashioned; put together, in fact, created. Beloved, what happens if we do not know the LORD as Creator? According to Romans 1, we start to assume that we are our own creators. And do not think for a moment this is done only scientifically. To be sure, the theory of evolution, a theory that has essentially no evidence at all, seeks to do away with the need for God as creator. For if there is no creator, then we do not need to be thankful for being here; for we got here by ourselves. The only person we need to thank is ourselves. As Romans 1:21 so clearly points out about all people, ***“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”*** To not know God as creator leads to ingratitude, futile speculations and foolishness of heart.

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This points to another tragedy of not knowing God as creator and that is we start to think more of ourselves, more of our abilities and achievement than we ought. We start to think we have earned something, we deserve something; that people ought to notice us and what we have done. Beloved, it is only as we know God as creator that we know ourselves to be but creatures, and as creatures, we are dependent upon our Maker and Provider; which in turn makes us thankful to Him. Never forget to thank God for being the Creator. But there is one more thing we must know...

### C. The LORD is Redeemer (3c)

The end of verse 3 reads, *We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.* I would have you notice the words *"His people"* and *"the sheep of His pasture."* These words express ownership. We belong to the LORD. I cannot help but be reminded of the words of Psalm 95:6-7, *"Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."* The LORD has made us. The LORD has redeemed us. The LORD is our shepherd, which points us directly at the words of Jesus in John 10. Look with me at John 10 as I read for you verses 11-16...

*11 I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*

Did you marvel at verse 11? What does the Good Shepherd do? He lays down His life for the sheep. Beloved, if there is no other reason for which we must be thankful to the LORD, it must be this that He has both made us and has redeemed us. No one should be more thankful than the one whom Jesus has purchased off the slave market of sin to become a blessed sheep tended to by such a benevolent Shepherd.

Let me come back to the words *"He has made us..."* for a moment. Beloved, if it is the LORD who has made us and not ourselves, and if we are His because He has made us, then we are His to do with as He sees fit. Why do I say this?

Perhaps you come here today having experienced unusually great prosperity. You need to acknowledge this as the LORD's doing, it pleased Him to do so and you must be thankful to Him for being so good and generous. But perhaps you come today under the cloud of trouble or sorrow or sickness. If so, then you must thank the LORD for your circumstances, knowing that He is both wise and gracious even in allowing such times. Remember the words of the apostle Paul? In Philippians 4:12-13 he noted, *"12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* Where was Paul when he wrote this? Confined to quarters, chained to a Roman guard. Not the best of circumstances, yet the themes of his letter are "joy" and "thanksgiving." It was just a few verses before this that Paul combined the ideas of joy and thanksgiving to God as the only defense against worry and anxiety. In Philippians 4:4-7 we read, *"4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Coming back to Psalm 100:3, let me make one more observation that I believe should cause us to be thankful. Again, we read there at the end of the verse that *"We are His..."* Beloved, it does not matter what happens to us, we are still His. Indeed, the difficulties will come, but we are still His. The illness will

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come, but we are still His. We may lose a job, but we are still His. For those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior (as having paid their penalty for sin on the cross) and as Lord (believing Him to be God in the flesh, raised from the dead, ascended into heaven), we have the great promise of Hebrews 13:5. Do you know it? There we read this promise, ***"for He Himself has said, 'I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU..."*** It is our Lord Jesus Christ who said in Matthew 28:20, ***"And lo, I am with you....always..."*** The apostle Paul said it this way in Romans 8:38-39, ***"38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** We need to know these things about our God so that we will be thankful.

So, we have seen the indicator of giving thanks to God; expressive joy; as well as the imperative of giving thanks to God; to know the LORD is God. Now let us look at the third point...

### III. The instructions for giving thanks to God (4)

Here we want to answer the question, "What must we do in order to give thanks rightly unto God?" In verse 4 we are provided three instructions by which we might rightly praise God. First, we must...

#### A. Enter His gates with thanksgiving (4a)

This is both a command and an invitation. The people of God are called from their homes, from their labors, from their hobbies to come to the temple. And to enter before the presence of God, you must come through the gate. This reminds us of Jesus, who is in fact, the door, or the gate through whom we enter into the presence of God. It is because of the grace of Jesus Christ who came to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; and the grace of the Father in accepting that sacrifice that we can enter into the courts of God.

This command to "enter" is interesting. The word means to *"come into to dwell or abide."* We are invited to dwell in the presence of God, which, in context here, is done as the saints are gathered. This is a call to corporate thanksgiving, a call for the people of God to come together and tell God "thank You." When you came to the temple, you entered through the gates into the courts of the temple. But then notice next that the psalmist tells us what to bring with us. We are to come with "thanksgiving" or more accurately, with a thank offering and with praise with you. Even if you weren't carrying an animal sacrifice, you should never come to the temple empty-handed. You can bring your thank offering and praise. A thank offering would be something thought about beforehand. Carefully crafted thanks to God for His goodness. The praise we are to bring is a readiness for spontaneous expressions of gratitude to God as you hear songs sung to Him; as you hear the testimony of others who have been blessed by Him. So, we are instructed to enter into His presence with our thank offerings and praise, next we are to...

#### B. Give thanks to Him (4b)

What is the difference between entering with thanksgiving, as we just read, and now the instruction to ***"give thanks to Him"***? I think it is simply this, it is one thing to come to worship, having thought out what you wish to thank God for; it is another thing to actually open your mouth and do it. Entering with thanksgiving is your preparation; giving thanks is actually performing what you have prepared; expressing your joyful gratitude to God. So we are instructed to enter; to give thanks, and finally, we must...

#### C. Bless His name (4c)

Just as entering the gates with thanksgiving seems to correspond with giving thanks to Him; it appears that entering His courts with praise corresponds with blessing His name. What does it mean to "bless His name"? The word "bless" speaks of bowing down before someone in adoration and/or worship. Whereas praise speaks of exalting God; to bless the name speaks of our own getting out of the way to point people to God. When I bow down, I get out of way. When I bless the name of the LORD, I am getting out of the way so I can point people to Christ.

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Beloved, those who are rightly thankful are instructed to practice these things; to enter before God in worship; to give thanks to God for what He had done for you; and to bless God, that is point others to God by your expressions of thankfulness. This brings us to our final point...

### IV. The inspiration for giving thanks to God (5)

Here we will answer the question; *What are the reasons for giving thanks to God?* In verse 5 we are given three straightforward reasons. First...

#### A. The LORD is good (5a)

*For the Lord is good...*

In contrast to the heathen gods who were not good, but rather were selfish and fickle, easily turning from benevolence to malevolence, our God is and has always been good. When He created the world and all that is in it, He saw and said it was "good" (Genesis 1:4-31). When God gave Israel the law, the law was "good" (Romans 7:12). When God reveals His will to us, His will is, according to Romans 12:2, that which is **"good, acceptable, and perfect."** The word "gospel" means what? It means "good news." And even the word God is simply a shortened form of the word "good." Is it any wonder that the psalmist cried out in Psalms 34:8, **"O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"** We are to give thanks to the LORD for His goodness. But we are also to be thankful that...

#### B. The LORD is loving (5b)

*His lovingkindness is everlasting*

The love of God, this one-way, unconditional act of the will, whereby God seeks the highest good for His people, regardless of the cost is one of His most endearing attributes. Indeed, as 1 John 4:19 says, **"We love because He first loved us."** The word **"lovingkindness"** here encompasses not only the idea of "love" but also of mercy. Both the love and the mercies of the LORD are everlasting. We are to thank God because He is constantly extending His mercy to us as we go through life. As you know mercy is defined as **"not getting what you deserve."** We live in a time when everyone wants what's coming to them. Not me! If you and I got what was coming to us, we would all get Hell. If we got what we deserved this morning, we would all experience the undiluted wrath and fierceness of the Almighty God! Rather than in wrath, God deals with His people in mercy and love. He holds back His wrath from His children's lives. Why? Because some 2,000 years ago God's Son, Jesus, took our place on an old, cruel, Roman cross. While He was dying there, all our sins were transferred to Him and He died in our place. As He was dying, God looked at Jesus and saw our sins. It was as if He saw us hanging there that day and He poured out His wrath onto the Person of His Own Dear Son. God extinguished His wrath toward us that day, and now, we enjoy mercy! And, His mercy and love will never be exhausted. In Lamentations 3:22-23 we read, **"22 The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."** Beloved, will never use up the love and mercy of the LORD! He makes a fresh batch every day! This is a good reason to give thanks to the LORD! And finally, we are to be thankful that...

#### C. The LORD is faithful (5c)

*And His faithfulness to all generations*

Here we are told that God's **faithfulness [endures] to all generations**. Simply put, while the years go by, not a single promise of God's Word will fail! God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and what He has promised will be as good in 10,000 years as it was the moment He promised it! When He tells you He loves you, you can count on it. When He tells you He will save you if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you can count on it. If He tells you that He will care for you, you can count on it. If He tells you He is coming again to take us home with Him, you can count on it. If He promises to save you to the uttermost, you can count on it.

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Suffice it to say that if the Lord tells you anything at all, you can count on it. And, that is a good reason to give thanks to the LORD!

Beloved, we are to be a thankful people. And we can be thankful to God who has instructed us how we can in fact be an increasingly faithful people. Here is your prescription for thanksgiving to God; we shout joyfully (1); serve gladly (2a); come expressively (2b); know definitively (3); enter thankfully (4a); give thanks specifically (4b); and bless His name exclusively (4c). By these we are well on our way to becoming a more thankful people. Is there anyone on the face of the earth that has great reason to thank God than we who are His redeemed, who know Him not only as our Creator, but also as our loving Shepherd, Savior, and Lord? Then let us vow afresh this day to shout with gladness; to...*4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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