

## Sing unto the Lord with Thanksgiving

Psalm 147:1-11

Praise ye the LORD: for *it is* good to sing praises unto our God; for *it is* pleasant; *and* praise is comely. <sup>2</sup> The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. <sup>3</sup> He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. <sup>4</sup> He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. <sup>5</sup> Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: His understanding *is* infinite. <sup>6</sup> The LORD lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: <sup>8</sup> Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. <sup>9</sup> He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry. <sup>10</sup> He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. <sup>11</sup> The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.

In last week's message, we began with a simple question: "What's your story?" When you stand at the Judgment Seat, what will this week look like in God's sight? Looking ahead, how will this coming appear when you stand before the Lord?

This is a week for families to gather to rejoice together. But for some, this may not be a joyous prospect. Let's face it: there is the very real possibility that there could be parts of the week that could be bad: bitter and inappropriate for a Thanksgiving holiday. So how can you be sure that your week will appear good, pleasant and appropriate in God's sight?

**"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name"** (Malachi 3:16).

This verse raises an exciting prospect! The Lord pays attention to those who fear the Lord and encourage each other with God-honoring speech. He loves it so much that He includes it in His Book of Remembrance. The next verse reminds you that this remembrance is God's precious possession. So let's get practical. How can you be sure that your Thanksgiving week will be pleasing in God's sight? Psalm 147 can guide us into a week that is pleasing in God's sight. It shows us why we should please the Lord and how we can do so.

## **Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord!**

Psalm 147 begins and ends with praise [*hallel*]: “Hallelujahs” to the Lord. And between these two “bookends of praise” are volumes of verses that lead us to give thanks to the Lord.

Here in the United States, the day of Thanksgiving began as a harvest festival. In 1789, it was formalized with a declaration by President George Washington. Then, in 1863, at the height of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln declared the fourth Thursday in November as a day of “Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.”<sup>i</sup>

### **Why Should We Praise the Lord?**

**<sup>2</sup>The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.** When we look at the works of our God, we can see His character.

■ **Our God is the Builder and Shepherd who gathers His people.**

**<sup>3</sup>He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.**

■ **Our God is the Healer.** He alone can heal the brokenhearted and bind up every wound.

Isaiah 61:1 prophesied of the Lord Jesus Christ, **“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*;”**

Christ alone could fulfill all these things. Why should we shout a “Hallelujah” and praise the Lord this week? Christ is the Builder, the Shepherd and Healer who helps His people. Through His atoning work, shedding His blood on the cross, Christ heals us. He builds up His people. And today we can praise the Lord by saying from our hearts, “The Lord is my Shepherd!” He brings the outcasts home.

**<sup>4</sup>He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. <sup>5</sup>Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.**

■ **Our God is Great and of Great Power. He is the Sovereign Creator of the stars. His understanding is infinite.**

The more we learn about science, the more we learn about the great power of our God. “In October 2016, an article in Science (based on deep-field images from the

Hubble Space Telescope) suggested that there are about 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe, or about 10 times more galaxies than previously suggested. In an email with Live Science, lead author Christopher Conselice, a professor of astrophysics at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom, said there were about 100 million stars in the average galaxy.”<sup>ii</sup>

Of course, this new information boggles the mind. With the help of the Hubble telescope, scientists now estimate that there are now 2 trillion galaxies (which is more than ten times the previous estimate)! Now think of our powerful Creator. He determines the number of stars – and He gives them all names!! Truly, we can sing Hallelujah to our God for His understanding is infinite. Verses 4-5 portray our God as the transcendent Creator. From this, we would expect to find that He is distant from human beings who seem so insignificant by contrast. This is why verse 6 is so surprising:

**<sup>6</sup> The LORD lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground.**

■ **Our God is our Helper and the Judge of all.**

The God of Creation is the Lord of salvation. The God whose understanding is matchless lifts up the meek. Though the Hubble telescope cannot discover His greatness, our God draws near to the humble. What a reason to praise our God during this Thanksgiving week. But make no mistake: the same Lord who lifts up the meek also casts the wicked down to the ground.

**How should we praise the Lord?**

Note the exclamation in the next verse. It is as if the psalmist can no longer contain himself:

**<sup>7</sup> Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:** And this is what we will do as our service continues in just a few minutes: sing unto the lord with thanksgiving. But there are more reasons to praise Him!

**<sup>8</sup> Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. <sup>9</sup> He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.**

Over the last couple of days here in Ohio, we have seen verses 8 and 9 on display. Cloud droplets are about one million times smaller than a raindrop. These cloud droplets coalesce around particles of volcanic ash, desert dust and smoke in the

atmosphere. Then the raindrops form to fall as rain to the earth.<sup>iii</sup> According to the forecasts, two and a half inches of rain fell in our county in the last couple of days. Now stop to consider what this really means. One inch of water falling on one acre of ground amounts to 27,154.2876 gallons. That much water would weigh 226,610.6763 pounds: more than 113 tons of water!<sup>iv</sup> This life-giving water causes the grass and the grains to grow, providing food for the animals and birds.

This is why we sing: *For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies, Lord our God to Thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.*<sup>v</sup>

When we stop to consider these amazing demonstrations of God's power, a question ought to come to our minds: What is it that gives pleasure and delight to our God? The answer is found in verses 10-11. Here the psalmist explains what gives the Lord pleasure and what does not give Him pleasure:

**<sup>10</sup> He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. <sup>11</sup> The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.**

Does the Lord take great delight in the Kentucky Derby winner? Does He take great pleasure in the NBA slam dunk contest? Or the Olympic high jumper? Remember how the Lord touched Jacob's thigh (Genesis 32:25, 31)? He took away Jacob's great leg strength so that Jacob "worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Hebrews 11:21). In whom does the Lord take pleasure? This is an important question for us on this Sunday before Thanksgiving Day. **"The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."**

Verse 1 of this psalm reminds us of the great benefits of filling our week with praise and thanksgiving. **"Praise ye the LORD: for *it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.*"** It is good! Singing praises to God this week is good! It is pleasant. And it is entirely fitting that we should do so. So how should we sing our Hallelujahs to the Lord today?

Let's sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving! Let us do so in the fear of the Lord – an attitude of reverence that draws us into a respectful relationship with our Lord. He delights in those who set their hope and confidence in His steadfast love. And today, we know the love of Christ our Savior, and we have greatest reasons to sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving. Let us sing from our hearts:

*Now thank we all our God / with heart and hands and voices, / who wondrous things has done, / in whom his world rejoices; / who from our mothers' arms / has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.<sup>vi</sup>*

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Elizabeth Howell, "How Many Stars in the Universe?" Space.com accessed at <https://www.space.com/26078-how-many-stars-are-there.html>

<sup>iii</sup> This process is known as the Bergeron Process. See Cloud Physics, accessed at <http://weather.cod.edu/sirvatka/bergeron.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Llewellyn L. Manske, Weight of Water per Acre from One Inch of Rain, North Dakota State University, 2005 annual report, accessed at <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/archive/dickinso/research/2004/range04c.htm>

<sup>v</sup> Folllott Sanford Pierpoint, "For the Beauty of the Earth"

<sup>vi</sup> Martin Rinckert, "Now Thank We All Our God," translated by Catherine Winkworth