

Unstoppable Worship and Thanksgiving

Col 3:15-17

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REMARKS TO OPEN SERVICE: It's good to be at church today, amen?

Ps 122 'I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.' That psalm also says it was decreed that there should be thanksgiving (v. 4). That's the decree of the King who governs us, we give thanks in His house.

This Thanksgiving week I can't tell you how glad I am to go to His house. This past week as your elders and deacons met, I was glad when I heard the other leaders say to me and to each other, basically "let's go to God's house. Let's keep meeting, doing what God commands, we obey Him, not man."

We've shared before we're committed to keep gathering and to keep singing and we'll keep preaching the Word even if legally or politically incorrect.

Corey and I were blessed to be with a bunch of pastors we're in fellowship with who are standing together in their places of worship this Lord's Day.

We were willing to stand alone but PTL for you with us

SPECIAL WELCOME TO THOSE JOINING BY LIVESTREAM. YOU WHO CAN'T BE WITH US ARE IMPORTANT TO US AND TO GOD. YOU'RE NO LESS FAITHFUL AND NO LESS LOVED BY GOD OR HIS PEOPLE HERE IF YOU NEED TO STAY HOME. WE'RE WITH YOU IN SPIRIT AS WE WORSHIP IN SPIRIT & TRUTH AND OUR DOORS AND ARMS WILL BE OPEN WHEN YOU CAN RETURN.

I don't have a lot of announcements today other than we're meeting here next week and next month. Week to week ministry updates we'll give as we go – if you're not getting our email updates or if you're new please stop by the kiosk or back table if you'd like to hear more from us and stay informed.

Please turn if you would to Ps 148 and please stand in honor of the Word of the Lord. Our opening song is All Creatures of our God and King, and this Psalm talks about the sun beams or the moon's gleam that praises Him. v. 7:

Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, ⁸ fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! ⁹ Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! ¹⁰ Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! ¹² Young men and maidens together, old men and children! ¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. ¹⁴ He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him.

Praise the Lord! 149:1 Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! This is the Word of our King.

SERMON

Please take the word of Christ and turn to Col 3 we continue focus on Him. Thankful for fellow leaders united in the essentials wanting to honor gospel. Thankful for our church, its prayers, many notes of support, your unity, PTL

Much division in our world	Much division in 1 st century
Today political and pandemical division	NT days people and prejudice

Col 3:11 starts with how Christ is all in all and overcomes all divisions and then it tells us how to pursue unity (v. 12-14) and thanksgiving (v. 15-17).

Colossians 3:11 (ESV) *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

¹² *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

A lot in these verses that will take more than one week, for today in light of it being Thanksgiving week and where we are as a church and State I want to just focus on why thanksgiving and church worship is vital. Our church is in a State that told us to stop singing in church and now tells us stop being in church and stop singing in homes, esp. if you have Thanksgiving guests!

As I'm going through Colossians verse-by-verse this next section is God's perfect timing. I couldn't have planned a more up to date passage for this week. It's about why thanksgiving and worship as a church can't stop. End of v. 15: *you were called in one body. And **be thankful.** ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with **thankfulness** ... [end of v. 16 commands] giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

4:2 *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it **with thanksgiving.***

Look at ch 1, how it starts and ends **1:3** *We **always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you...** ¹² **giving thanks to the Father ...***

SERMON TITLE: UNSTOPPABLE THANKSGIVING AND WORSHIP

3 reasons we can't stop:

1. God commands we do this with the church
2. Christ and His Word alone rules the church
3. God blesses us in thanksgiving and worship

1st reason we can't stop: God commands we do this with the church

This is something to always do (1:3). Thanksgiving is to **continue (present tense**, it's never to stop). Corporate worship and thanksgiving isn't optional and it's not just for individuals. We're commanded to do this as the church.

By the way, the Greek word *church* means assembly, by definition. Watching a church service isn't doing church, the assembly called out from the world.

Heb 10:24 commands us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together

Some of you may be providentially hindered for a season, or homebound for a longer time, that's ok. If you long for this so that you would if you could, the Lord understands, but let me know if you'd like worship brought to you. I think of how the GCRC group does this, carolers can bring worship to you.

Col 3:16 mentions **wisdom** as you worship **in song** with and **for one another**

In Col 3, v. 14, the context is love that **binds the church together in harmony** (image of different musical parts sung together, blended unified voices in a beautiful way you can't do by yourself). Then v. 15, the middle of the verse says God calls you (plural noun) together in one body to be thankful, again not one person giving thanks, God calls people into one body, a local church

Then v. 16 says the Word of **Christ dwells in you** (again plural, you all) and we **teach and admonish one another** (NT phrase for church) in our worship. Our hymns and songs are to God but we're also ministering to one another. Some translations say '*singing psalms*' (ESV), but the NASB and NKJV say '*teaching and admonishing with psalms*' – that's the direction I'm going.

Paul tells the church to teach and admonish one another with psalm related to our worship. I want to do that with psalms that call for thanksgiving and command able-bodied Bible-believers to assemble and sing with His people

1 Cor 14:26: '*When you **assemble**, each one has a psalm, has a teaching ... Let all things be done for edification.*' (NASB). The psalms teach and edify

Ps 22: *I will proclaim your name **to my brothers and sisters**. I will praise you **among your assembled people**. Praise the Lord, all you...I will praise you **in the great assembly**... in the presence of those who worship you.*¹

35:18 *I will **give you thanks in the great assembly**; among throngs (NIV)*

108:3 *I will give thanks to you, O Lord, **among the peoples**; I will sing...*

109:30 *I will give thanks...**in the midst of many** I will praise Him. (NASB)*

GOD COMMANDS WE ASSEMBLE TO SING AND GIVE THANKS

7:7 *“Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered...”* (NKJV congregation)

68:26 *Praise God **in the great congregation**; praise the Lord **in the assembly**...*

107:32 *Let them exalt him **in the assembly** of the people... NIV*

111:1 *Praise the Lord! ... **give thanks ... in the assembly**. (NASB)*

134:1–2 *Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord ... **in the house of the Lord**. Lift up your hands **in the sanctuary**...* (NIV)

Psalms 149:1 *Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise **in the assembly of the godly!*** (ESV, NAS ‘in the congregation’)

That’s all from the Hebrew hymnal, the psalms, that’s what the readers of the book of Hebrews grew up singing and that’s what they’d be thinking of when they heard in Heb 10 don’t forsake assembling together in worship

THANKSGIVING IS COMMANDED CORPORATELY IN WORSHIP

Ps 95 *‘let us come into his presence with thanksgiving (not let me, let us) ...come let us worship...we are the people of His pasture’* (image of flock)

Ps 100 *A Psalm for giving thanks. Enter his gates with thanksgiving...*

Ps 105:1 *‘Oh give thanks to the Lord ... among the peoples!’*

Ps 106 *‘...gather us ... that we may give thanks to your holy name’* (v. 47)

Ps 147 says the Lord gathers His people (v. 3) and then it calls His people to *‘Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving’* (v. 7, Heb plural verb, sing all of you)

Why is it important we keep our doors open? For our thanks in His house.

Ps 118: *Open for me the gates...I will go in and thank the Lord...We bless you from the house of the Lord...Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!²*

Col 3:16 commands the church to be taught and admonished with psalms as we worship. May those dozens of commands exhort us to corporate thanks.

Why can’t the church stop? 1. God commands we worship with the church

2. Christ and His Word alone rules the church

Col 3:16 says the Word of Christ is what drives this. v. 15 uses the word ‘rule’ for Christ’s peace. But let’s go farther back in context to chapter 1.

WHO IS THE HEAD AND AUTHORITY OVER THE CHURCH?

1:18 says **Christ ‘is the head of the body, the church. He is *the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*’**

2:10 *you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*

No spiritual authority or secular authority is over Christ's church in how it worships. We gather and sing at the command of our King. The head is who the body follows. 2:6 says we're to walk in Him, not what the world says.

This is how our church website says it: 'We believe the details of how we gather in worship are the jurisdiction and responsibility of church leaders under Christ and His loving headship and care for all His flock' (Acts 20:28, Psalm 148:12-13, Leviticus 19:32, Philippians 2:3-4, Proverbs 11:14).

As another church says it Jesus is 'King of kings—sovereign over every earthly authority ([1 Timothy 6:15](#); [Revelation 17:14](#); [19:16](#))... Insofar as government authorities do not attempt to assert ecclesiastical authority or issue orders that forbid our obedience to God's law, their authority is to be obeyed whether we agree with their rulings or not... [But] as pastors and elders, we cannot hand over to earthly authorities any privilege or power that belongs solely to Christ as head of His church... we do not need the state's permission to serve and worship our Lord as He has commanded... Jesus said, "*I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it*" ([Matthew 16:18](#)).

Christ's own authority is "*far above all rule and authority and power... as head over all things to the church, which is His body...*" ([Ephesians 1:21–23](#))... [He says] "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" ([Matthew 28:18](#))... this is by no means the first time in church history that Christians have had to deal with government overreach ... In Calvin's Geneva, for example, church officials at times needed to fend off attempts by the city council to govern aspects of worship... In 1662, the Puritans were ejected from their pulpits because they refused to bow to government mandates... wearing of vestments, and other... aspects of state-regulated worship.' (GCC 7-2020)

SOLA SCRIPTURA – regulative principle of worship – banner behind me
In Col 3:16 The Word in us is what drives worship. The Word defines and regulates it, our forefathers called that the regulative principle of worship.

2:6 *Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him... kurios was a title Caesar in the 1st century asked the Colossians and Roman Empire to call him. But churches said 'only Jesus is Lord of the church, not Caesar.'* Jesus taught render to Caesar what belongs to Him (taxes and honor) but to God what belongs to God (worship, absolute obedience, higher allegiance).

How we gather in worship we cannot render to Caesar, that's God's realm. Different churches may take different safety measures, it's their elder's call.

DIFFERENCE OF ORIGINAL SHUT DOWN EARLY IN PANDEMIC

- Millions of deaths projected, half of CA infected, asked for 15 days
- The original stay at home order was for all, but the latest “limited stay at home order” is different. The purple tier redefines essential to include what used to be non-essential but treats church as less than
- This time many others allowed to continue but churches must stop?
 - Indoor schools still have hundreds of kids, daycare, libraries, sporting goods, big indoor malls, tourist rentals, casinos, etc.
 - Toy stores stay open at 25% capacity, churches close to 0%
 - Close up: Nail salons, massage, piercings, tattoos, body wax
 - Body of Christ can't gather in far larger buildings spread out
 - Strip clubs in SD county (they argue freedom of expression, but no freedom to express our religion decently and in order)
 - Those are all things still open in purple tier but not churches³
 - Even outside, Health Officer in Sac limits churches to 100 people as of 11/13 but no restriction on protests in the order⁴
 - Thursday film or TV production were exempted from orders, as entertainment industry workers are now essential, not us⁵
 - CA allows protests of thousands who want to defund police but stops hundreds of Christians in peaceful assembly ... No
 - CA is literally kicking faith to the curb, leaving it out in cold
 - This is not the emergency they thought it was in March and to redefine all of that as essential but not church is injustice
 - Politicians this month joined huge celebrations for Joe Biden because of the election, we're here to celebrate Jesus because of His resurrection. He's the unelected Lord of lords, and the undisputed King of kings, and preeminent over the president

Government authorities gave strict orders to us this month, can't continue to teach in the house of God (or even in the backyard of your house with more than 2 households). In Acts 5:28 here's what government authorities said as they tried to shut down church gatherings in Jerusalem: ***“We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name...²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men...”*** (NASB). So must we.

Motive: obedience, not defiance – about God's Word, honored above all.

NOT ABOUT REBELLION – ABOUT RECOGNITION OF WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE CHURCH? He calls undershepherds to lead His church

Our focus isn't the constitution and our rights, our focus is Christ and what's right as defined by Him. It's about compliance to Christ's orders

WHY WE'RE GATHERING: Not because we're frustrated with the CDPH orders, not because we're fed up – but because we want to be faithful to God's commands to gather as a church.

Not about saying 'enough is enough' or standing up against government overreach, it's about standing up for Jesus and saying He's enough, even if more discrimination comes to the church.

Why can't church stop?

1. God commands we worship with the church
2. Christ and His Word alone rules the church

3. God blesses us in thanksgiving and worship

The Paul who wrote Col 3:16 experienced blessing as he sang in prison for illegal ministry. Acts 16:25 says Paul and Silas in prison sang hymns, encouraging each other and it had an impact on other listening in, including the Philippian jailer. Rom 15 '*I will sing hymns to your name...Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples...so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*' (v. 9, 11, 13 NIV).

The same Peter who said 'we must obey God rather than man,' Peter wrote that we're to be subject to governors, then the next verse says, 1 Pet 2:15: '*it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.*'¹⁶ *Live as free men...¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.*' (NIV). We're not to fear man, but to fear God and honor Him above those we honor under Him.

Peter says as we live as free men and do good we silence the ignorant talk of foolish men (there's been a lot of that talk in the media or on social media). Who defines good to do? Government calls evil good but God defines good

Ps 52:9 '*I will thank you forever... it is good, in the presence of the godly.*'

54:6 '*... I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.*'

65:4 '*How happy is the one You choose and bring near...in Your courts! We will be satisfied with **the goodness of Your house...***' (HCSB)

O how good it is when brothers come together in unity to worship their God

Ps 68 says God sets the solitary people in families, He doesn't want them to stay isolated, He wants them to be with families, and His holy place is for widows (v. 5-6).

'Your congregation [it says]... You, O God, provided from Your goodness...Great was the company of those who proclaimed it... into the sanctuary. The singers...players on instruments... the maidens playing timbrel [drums]. Bless God in the congregations...' (10-11, 24-26 NKJV)

Ps 73 begins '*Truly God is good...*' but then he talks about time away from God's people and how he wasn't doing good spiritually, he thought wrongly '*until I went into the sanctuary of God...for me it is good to be near God.*'¹⁶

Better is one day in your house than thousands elsewhere, good even at door.

Psalm 92 (ESV) *A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath.* ¹ *It is good to **give thanks** to the Lord, to sing praises to your name...to the music...* ¹² *The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

¹³ *They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.* ¹⁴ *They still bear fruit in old age...* [NKJV 'fresh and flourishing']

Psalm 147: *Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God... he gathers the outcasts...heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds... he blesses your children within you...Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving...*

1 v. 22-25 NLT.

2 NLT.

3 <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/hhsa/PublishingImages/pages/EDCCOVID-19-Cases/What%20is%20Open%20in%20Purple%20Tier.pdf>

4 https://www.saccounty.net/COVID-19/Documents/20201113_Sacramento_County_Health_Order.pdf

5 SOURCE?

6 v. 17, 28.