

GIVE THANKS TO HIS HOLY NAME!

Psalm 97: 1-12 and Psalm 30: 11, 12 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Sometimes the drama of life, has a tendency to cloud and blur our vision of everything God does for all of us. Sometimes, like yesterday when the lights went out around noon and didn't come on until 5 PM, and I sat at church without my message done, do you think I knew God could do anything? I did. I knew it wasn't ultimately up to the power company. It was up to God. Sometimes the portraits painted by the psalmist in Psalm 97 don't seem graphically to be true for us in our own world until things like a snow storm show us who is in control. Then we begin to understand Psalm 97. When trouble or disaster strikes, we realize everything in our world is vulnerable before the Lord. Back in 410 AD, Augustine received the news that Rome was sacked by barbarians, terrorists, the Visigoths on August 24, 410 AD. In the wake of the sack of Rome, he wrote, "All earthly cities are vulnerable. Men build them and men destroy them. At the same time, there is the City of God which men did not build and cannot destroy and which is everlasting."

In 1992, Dr. Francis Fukuyama published his best seller, "The End of History and the Last Man." The book voiced the exhilarating hope of the times. The Berlin Wall had fallen, the Iron Curtain had rusted away, the Soviet Union had crumbled, and the Cold War was over. The world as we formerly knew it, was changed, and to America's exuberant surprise, America found herself to be the world's only remaining superpower—the book said, "King of the World." Millions were reading this bestseller. Millions were believing the seducing words that said, "Western liberal democracy has won the great ideological struggle of the 20th century. Communism and fascism have been vanquished. A new era of enlightenment has dawned. Defense budgets are slashed, fueling the great economic boom of the nineties. Nothing can now derail a future of peace and prosperity, with America and its ideas reigning throughout the planet." Was this utopian hope true? On September 11, 2001, all those utopian hopes collapsed. That was the day the Twin Towers fell. America, for two months, cried out to God and remembered God. "God Bless America," was sung throughout the land and prayer was not a forbidden act in any place, including school. How long did the revival last? For two months we saw our nation trembling before God and praying before the Lord of all the earth. In those two months, many Americans once again believed God could do anything He wanted to do. I still believe that. Do you? Can our God make mountains melt like wax? Can He make lightnings light up the world. Can He make us all tremble? Can He burn up His adversaries with fire? Can He deliver the righteous from the hand of the wicked? Yes He can. As I prepared this message this week, I realized just how far we have drifted as a nation from God's wake-up

call thirteen years ago. In my lifetime and yours, a theological man rose to the proverbial top of the heap in his denomination, the Episcopal Church in America. John Shelby Spong spoke startling words saying, “Literalistic Christians will learn that a God or a faith system that has to be defended daily is finally no God or faith system at all. They will learn that any god who can be killed ought to be killed. Ultimately they will discover that all their claims to represent the historical, traditional, or biblical truth of Christianity cannot stop the advance of knowledge that will render every historic claim for a literal religious system questionable at best, null and void at worst.” Yet as America has seen faith freeze over like a lake in sub-zero weather, Africa, India, South America have turned to God by the millions. Sudanese Christians are daily martyred. They refuse to stop believing the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. One Sudanese Christian brother wrote about the persecution of Christians recently, saying,

“If we say Jesus is God, we do not eat. We starve within sight of the UN planes filled with food Americans send us, denied to us by our government...It is mutilations, our ears, lips, hands, feet gone, another generation without education, mass rapes—our daughters, many men. It is slavery, running barefoot...before the utterly incessant tracking of spraying, hissing, whining bullets spitting at our heels from helicopter gunships. It is our expectant mothers placed in jails so hot their babies inside are poached and born dead. They have held us down and pierced our lips so they can use padlocks, to prevent us from speaking or eating.” Yet against all logic, against all hope, in spite of these tortures, the church in Sudan is continuing to grow. The English translation of one of their songs they sing is: “God has not forgotten us. Evil is departing and holiness is advancing. These are the things that shake the earth.” Beloved, we have no idea just how blessed we are, even in our greatest sorrows. We have the Lord and we have the privilege today with saints the world over to say with Psalm 97: 12, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to His holy name.” What I want us to camp on today is primarily this Thanksgiving verse in Psalm 97: 12. This verse literally should be translated, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.” That’s how the KJV translates it. Why do many translators translate the Hebrew this way as we have it in the ESV?—“And give thanks to His holy name.” It has much to do with one Hebrew word, **zehker**. **Zehker** means commemoration, remembrance, and memorial or covenant name. Turn to God’s words to Moses from the burning bush in Exodus 3: 13-15. “Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to

the people of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my zehker, name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.” God is saying, “This is my memorial name throughout all generations. So the literal meaning of this verse is, “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to the memorial name of His holiness, or give thanks to His holy memorial name.” Let me share with you today four major reasons we should give thanks to God’s memorial name, His forever holy name:

GIVE THANKS TO GOD’S HOLY NAME FOR REIGNING FROM HIS THRONE ABOVE. (I.) Notice with me Psalm 97: 1-5: “The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Clouds and thick darkness are all around Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. Fire goes before Him and burns up His adversaries all around. His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.” What does this mean that He is reigning? The Hebrew word is **malak**. Malak means to ascend the throne, to induct into royalty—that’s what the Lord does for each of us when we are born again. We become children of the King of Kings, and we are inducted into royalty. Malak means King over all. I am shaken in my spirit with awe when I see sometimes the awesome power of the name forever, the holy memorial name of our reigning King.

On my trip to Little Rock, I confess God swallowed me up in the awe of His holy name, the name of Jesus, His memorial name forever. I won’t tell you all the nuances of this true story, but suffice it to say, that though I was at the Denver Airport two hours early, I managed to think I had time to order a Chai Tea Latte—only a short distance from our Gate B-84. I walked down there because it was a few minutes after 10 AM and our rescheduled flight was scheduled for 10:30 AM. I heard no announcement that our flight was boarding, but as I returned at about 10:18 AM, I noticed the boarding ramp was wheeled back, the door was shutting on my plane and men with yellow flags were standing behind our plane making gestures of coming back. My heart sunk as I realized somehow I had missed boarding my flight to Little Rock. I walked up to the lady at the United Counter and asked, “When is our flight boarding? She looked at me with incredulity and said, “You have missed your flight.” Without a moment to think, it came out of my lips. I earnestly said, “In the Name of Jesus, please help me.” She fired back, “Don’t say that to me.” I repeated my passionate plea, “In the Name of Jesus, please help me.” The lady turned her back to me and I thought she was talking to someone. It seemed like five minutes went by, and she said, “Your prayers are not without hope.” I thanked her profusely for attempting to help me and she fired

back. If this happens, praise Jesus! I told her I would. Then she walked to the closed Airport door, put in a code and opened the door, telling me not to touch anything. Then at the side door she told me to stand there and wait. I listened as much arguing went on outside. Then she came to the door, and ordered me to follow her slowly down steep steps as the snow was pelting down. As I followed her, the door was now opened to the plane, the steps were lowered, and I got on the plane. The stewardess gave me a private debriefing of how to use the seat belt, and as we were landing, she returned to say, "I forgot to debrief you on the oxygen mask." I sat on the plane as we were shortly deicing and I felt like I had just witnessed one of the mightiest miracles because of the memorial covenant name, the holy name of Jesus. I knew once the airport doors and the airplane doors are closed, that's it-federal regulations. Now I trembled at the name of Jesus who reigns above. I was seated on my flight and on my way to Little Rock. I trembled at the One who said to Saul of Tarsus, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

Now I knew afresh what it was to see a miracle in my life, and I saw it happen and I trembled. I was clearly shaken. I ask you—What has God done for you to prove He reigns from His throne above, opening shut doors? Pastor Will, when you walked up at the Bill and Hillary Clinton International Airport in Little Rock, in your uniform, I realized afresh, "You reign, Lord Jesus." When we began our 3 hour drive to Horseshoe Bend, and Dorie texted me to tell me Pastor Larry made it safely through his endodraft stent surgery, I knew, "You reign, Lord Jesus and You answer prayer." When I preached in Horseshoe Bend at the New Beginnings in Jesus Fellowship that very night, and Carol Lynn Berman, received Jesus, a 55 year old grandma, I knew—"You reign, Lord." When another woman, Erin Kay Roper, and two men, Ronald Ray Wallis, and Gerran Trent Lankford, and a young person, Dakota Paine Townsley, and two children, Stormy Dawn Lankford, and Tyler Wayne Wynn Roper all seven received Jesus, I knew, "You reign, Lord Jesus." When we baptized Stormy and Tyler on Sunday morning, along with Volly, Carol's mom, a great grandma with 20 great grandchildren, I knew, "You reign, Lord Jesus." When W. E. Smith, (Smitty) and Diana Smith came from Cave City, Diana is Joanie Jereb's sister, I heard their salvation testimonies and I knew, "You reign, Lord Jesus." First, I want to lead you all today in giving thanks to God's Holy name for reigning from His throne above."

GIVE THANKS TO GOD'S HOLY NAME FOR PROCLAIMING HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE HEAVENS AND CALLING FOR OUR

WORSHIP. (II.) Notice verses 6, 7. "The heavens proclaim His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory. All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship him, all you gods!" Just try calling on a god

made out of wood or stone. It's true however that many boast in worthless idols. Any god we can produce with our hands has less value than that little "god" all painted and decorated would have produced if we had just sold the wood for fire wood. So how does God proclaim His righteousness so all peoples? America is without excuse. We have so many different Christian radio stations across our land. Do you listen to one of them? God has opened doors so Christian songs are sung and Christian messages are preached across our land and the Christian message is piped into lands across the sea and into almost every nook and cranny of our world. Let me tell you how God proclaims His righteousness so people can hear and see His glory. He uses people like you and me. I love the song by the Martins, "God's gonna do what He's gonna do, He's always up to something new. And you never know just who He's gonna use So when He calls your name my friend Find your place and jump right in, If you want to be in on what God's gonna do. If God has a boat that He needs building, Or a sea to be dry land. If He needs someone to walk through the fire, Or heal a crippled man, He will find one willing and ready to obey If you're the one He calls on, Well, just let Him have His way. God doesn't always call the equipped, But He will equip the called. He knows everything that we need, To make sense of it all. He'll work through our weakness, When we depend upon the Lord. Cause if He said to do it, we have His full support." 3rdly,

GIVE THANKS TO GOD'S HOLY NAME FOR HIS JUDGMENTS IN DELIVERING US FROM THE HAND OF THE WICKED AND PRESERVING OUR LIVES. (III.)

Notice verses 8-10. "Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of Your judgments, O LORD. For You, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods. O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked." Did you know that giving thanks is part of the overflow of our being created in the image of God? It is. If we aren't a thankful people, we are some of the most thankless people in the world for we in America are so blessed. A.W. Tozer once said, "God who needs no one, has in His sovereign condescension stooped to work by and in His obedient children." One of the many ways God has preserved our lives and delivered us by His justice and judgments is by His judgments He makes through His people. One vote can make a tremendous difference. No matter how badly our country is on the skids, I still stand today with freedom to worship and to preach God's words. God wants us to be thankful, to hear when He turns issues around for His glory, to be glad, and to rejoice because we, His church, are, v. 8 part of the Zion of God. May we thank our exalted Lord! Along with rejoicing and being thankful for God's preservation of our freedoms, He calls us who love Him to hate evil.

I sat here at church yesterday by candlelight without electricity, looking up the words hate and evil. Hate is the Hebrew word **sawnay**, which means to disdain, to hate, to set ourselves up against whatever is wicked, and it means to unlove evil. The word evil comes from the Hebrew word, **ra**. This word means wickedness, the evil deeds and their consequences. Ra means any breach of harmony with God and His will. Ra means evil words, deeds, thoughts, and actions that displease the Lord—deeds we should hate and be thankful to God for knowing about, to hate. Back in the 19th-century, Pastor Henry Ward Beecher told of a mother living in frontier country. She was washing clothes beside a stream. Her only child was playing nearby. Suddenly she realized he was gone. She called out his name, but there was no answer. Alarmed, she ran back to the house, but her son was not there. Frantically, she dashed back out to the stream and looked in the nearby woods, all over. There she found her little boy, but it was too late. He had been killed by a wolf. Heartbroken, she picked up his lifeless body, drew him close to her heart, and tenderly carried him home crying out. Pastor Beecher concluded, “Oh, how that mother hated wolves!”

Beloved, every Christian should have a similar hatred for evil. It is not people we should hate, but wickedness. I hate this awful wicked belief of ISIS, not the people, but the wicked ideology that beheads anyone not worshipping a god who is no god--Allah. I hate the awful disease Ebola that just killed an American physician, a Christian doctor in Sierre Leone. Yet today many mothers and fathers who so carefully guard their youngsters from physical harm, and from germs and viruses, don't notice evil forces that threaten the spiritual welfare of their children. Few parents these days examine the books, the magazines, the video games, the cute little witch and warlock games, the TV programs, and so much more, they leave their children unprotected from the enemies' wolves and these deadly threats. It's not wrong to hate when we hate what is wrong. Thank God, part of Thanksgiving is giving thanks for knowing what to hate with God's perfect hatred. I thank God when I see you as parents hating evil. 4thly,

GIVE THANKS TO GOD'S HOLY NAME FOR SOWING/PLANTING LIGHT FOR US AND JOY FOR US WHO KNOW HIM SO WE CAN BE THANKFUL. (IV.)

Look with me at the last two verses of Psalm 97: 11, 12. “Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!” This is the harvest thanksgiving of the righteous, and it has parallels to a farmer. A farmer scatters his seed on the dark earth and is no poorer for it. A planted wheat field sells for more than fallow land. While the seed sown is not in sight for weeks, the farmer knows

his seed is in the custody of God. God is His banker. His entire dependence is upon God for rain and sunlight. Beloved, what is sown for us by God is not lost. We can't today run and gaze at our eternal prize just as a wheat farmer can't run to his planted field to see the wheat ready for harvest. There must be waiting, tarrying to gain the prize. This is the hour for work, for battle, and as a farmer, we can't rest on our laurels, knowing God has sown light and joy for us. What's ahead for you and me however, is far more certain than a wheat harvest. The lights of glory, the joy of heaven, and only glory by and by—when we cross the river to our Home on high. God has planted and sown light and life from the dead for us and joy unspeakable and full of glory. It's Thanksgiving Sunday, beloved. As the song by Shirley Murdock says, "Don't wait till the battle is over Don't wait till the victory is won Don't wait till it's already done Shout now... Don't you worry about the future Don't worry about what lies ahead We won't see the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging for bread So don't wait.. Shout now!"

Oh, thank God (1) for His holy Name for God is reigning. We reign with Him in the powerful memorial covenant holy name of Jesus. We've been inducted into royalty. Thank God (2) for His holy Name for God is proclaiming His righteousness through you and me. He's gonna' do what He's gonna' do. Thank God (3) for His holy name for His justice and judgments, delivering us from the hand of the wicked, and teaching us to hate evil. And thank God (4) for His holy name for sowing/planting light and joy for the righteous, that's us, so we don't to wait til' the battle's over—we can shout now! God give you all a glorious Thanksgiving. I love you. Amen.