

THE HIGHEST THINKING IS THANKING GOD!

Psalm 65: 1-13 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

True thanksgiving is never shallow. G. K. Chesterton once said, “I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness, doubled by wonder.” David in the Psalms was forever thinking about the Lord. The writer of Hebrews 13: 5, wrote, “Through Jesus, therefore, **let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise**—the fruit of lips that openly profess His name.” Have any of you ever stopped in life to count God’s blessings, to write them down? If you do, you’ll discover God has allowed your life to yield far more blessings than it seems. Johnson Oatman in 1897, wrote a marvelous old hymn I love, “Count Your Blessings.” Have you tried to do this? The first time thanksgiving is ever mentioned in the Scriptures, is found in Leviticus 7: 11-13. I read, “And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread.” The first time I ever noticed this reference in the Word of God was when I have been reading Ann Voskamp’s devotional book, “One Thousand Gifts.” In Leviticus, of all places, there is a lesson for us all for this Thanksgiving from the Old Testament law.

The first loaves offered the Lord in thanksgiving were like crackers, the second like wafers, but both un-leaved bread known for their thinness. This was God’s order of thanksgiving. The thanksgiving began for the thin things, the meager things that were almost too thin to notice—and beloved, that’s where your thanks and mine should begin, with the thin things, the meager things, the unlikely things, and the often unnoticed things. Here are a few of mine. God wants us to thank him for little things like the ability to chew food, the fact that unlike lepers, we have the sensation of pain when we are hurt, the digestive process that we seldom think of that goes on hour after hour inside us, the core charge refund for the old battery when we buy a new one, the one place in town, Smiths, that still carries the shampoo I desire to use, and the presence of Jack’s Shoe Repair on Washington Boulevard in Ogden, where the repairman is one of 6-7,000 shoe repairman left working in America. He half-soled my boots last week when I traveled to Boise. Jack knows and loves Jesus, and he always lights up when I walk in the shoe shop with boots to repair and he calls me Pastor.

Beloved, God designs that we start our thanksgiving with unleavened crackers and wafers. But then He calls us to bring him our loaves of leavened bread, that have risen high, and they have turned out perfectly, they are buttered on top, steaming, and He wants the first fruits of my cinnamon rolls. We think of leaven as impure

and unwanted, but yeast is included in the thank offerings God has ordained. Beloved, authentic thanksgiving includes all things—In everything give thanks. The apostle Paul gave thanks in tribulations, in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, although at the moment, they didn't look like they held anything good for him in them. (II Cor. 12: 10) To bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving means we bring everything to God. As I was preparing this message, Mandi Davis, our professional cleaner for our church stopped in to tell me on Friday, that it was her husband's birthday, but his Dad, Lane Davis, and his uncle, Ed Davis both just died on the same day. It gave me a chance to pray with Mandi, who sometimes attends here and came to faith in Christ with her mother, during this past year. She asked if I would say a prayer for Sean, her husband, who for years now, can only speak in a whisper. I said I would pray! Let's stop this message for a moment and pray now for Sean and Mandi Davis that God would draw Sean to faith in him and comfort him in this huge loss of his Dad, Lane, from MS in Logan, Utah at age 67 and of his older brother Ed who died in Sandy, Utah who was a few years older than Lane.

As I have studied Psalm 65: 1-13, I can feel it in my spiritual bones. David is doing the highest form of thinking—He is praising and thanking God. H. C. Leupold wrote in his commentary of Psalm 65 in 1959, "The essence of this psalm is thanksgiving for a harvest that still stood unreaped in the fields, but this thanksgiving was built up on a broader basis than this one great gift of God." Some commentators think David wrote this psalm after a threatening drought that was miraculously averted. The picture in this psalm is of farmers who sowed their grain in faith, and at harvest-time, paid their vows. Today, I want to draw my thoughts from the water pivot in Psalm 65: 9. There I read, "The river of God is full of water." The question I want to answer this Thanksgiving Sunday is, "What kind of waters flow in the stream or the river of God?" I see ten kinds of water that David alludes to in this glorious psalm of praise and thanksgiving. What are they?

SEEK THE WATERS OF READINESS. (I.) Notice verse 1. "Praise is due to You, O God, in Zion, and to You shall vows be performed." The KJV states, "Praise waiteth for You, O God." Look real closely with me. The ESV states, "Praise is due to You. But the Hebrew word for "is due," or "waiteth," is **duwmiyah**. Duwmiyah means stillness, waiting in stillness, waiting silently, something that is due and someone is quietly waiting to give God praise. David is telling us that we need to think through our praise and thanksgiving. We need to be in a condition where everything is ready and all the preparations have been made. The noise of preparations is past, the rehearsals are over, all is quiet, and the minister seeing the bride at the back with her father, and the groom at the front looking longingly towards her, says, "All rise!" Then the bride comes down the aisle. Beloved, there is something about thanksgiving and praise to God that needs

a fountainhead. The very fountainhead of the streams or the river of God must contain the hush, the calm, the times of meditation, the reverence, the getting away alone, the times when our hearts well up with a deep sense of the majesty of God. These waters of readiness mean all anxiety rests, the soul now is ready to burst forth into praise. Praise not only comes in obedience to our vows, v. 1, but in the hush, in the silence. Psalm 46: 10 is clear. “Be still and know that I am God.” Beloved, I dare each of us to learn something the Quakers call “centering.” The Nigerian members among us can teach us by example if we will pause to watch them come into our sanctuary. Visiting is joyous, but we all need the waters of readiness—the hush, the stillness, the silence Habakkuk 2: 20 speaks of, “The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

I remember so well the times we as a family walked through the wilderness. Jinny would often blow on her whistle. But there were times she refrained. When we climbed up to the top of the saddle between Warrior Peak and Warbonnet Peak, up to 12,000 feet, we wanted to look over the edge and see the Cirque of the Towers. As we climbed up from Donald Lake up, up, up to that saddle, Jinny wasn't whistling, just as she never whistled during our devotional times around the campfire. When you realize that anticipatory silence is part of praise, it opens the door for mighty thanksgiving, revival and mighty praise. As we climbed, all the children, Jinny and I, we were within a few dozen steps from the top, when from the Cirque side, here came three mighty buck deer, all huge 4-6 point bucks. They crossed over the top of the saddle in the hush, stood there, watched us, and we all, in the hush of readiness, got to see more than the Cirque. Beloved, seek the waters of readiness as part of your praise. Beloved, ask God to help you seek the waters of readiness in the river of God. Secondly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF FORGIVENESS. (II.) Notice verses 2, 3. “O You who hear prayer, to You shall all flesh come. When iniquities prevail against me, You atone for our transgressions.” I like the paraphrase in the Message. “We all arrive at Your doorstep sooner or later, loaded with guilt. Our sins too much for us, but You get rid of them once for all.” Beloved, the river of God has open ears for the prayer of sinners, and that includes believers like me who still need forgiveness at times before thanksgiving can flow and praise can exult in the Lord. This picture of the river of God reminds me that there is no other resource for sinful men, women, boys or girls. All of us alike must come to the waters of forgiveness to find remission for our sins and solace to abandon our guilt and shame at the foot of the cross. This phrase in v. 3—When iniquities prevail against me really means, “when our hearts are overwhelmed by the load of our guilt and our transgressions. The weight of our sin hampers praise and thanksgiving; it hampers intimacy with God and free and easy access to the Father. Our next psalm, 66: 18, declares, “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” We read,

“You **kaphar** for our transgressions, which means You, Lord purge away and You atone for our sin by cleansing and purifying us. This spiritual detoxifying of our souls is completely necessary for praising and thanking God. Beloved, the truth is, not just you, and not just me need to confess our sins readily to God, and to each other. Each of us are daily prone to justify our actions to each other and to God, and it robs us of the river of God flowing—of the waters of forgiveness cleansing us. James 5: 16 is still in the Book. Thirdly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF INTIMACY. (III.) Notice verse 4. “Blessed is the one You choose and bring near to dwell in Your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, the holiness of Your temple.” At the heart of thinking highly and thanking greatly is being blessed to be brought near to God Himself in worship. And when we are brought near to the Lord in worship, it is as if the waters of intimacy rain down on us. In a short time we can be drenched together with the river of God and the waters of God’s Spirit, the waters of intimacy. I hear afresh today the words of our Lord Jesus on the last day of feast standing up and crying out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” I can’t forget our seeking the waters of intimacy in prayer meeting on Nov. 13th, the day before Pastor Larry had his three tests. We held hands and prayed and there we stood in God’s presence, v. 4—in His courts, satisfied with the goodness of God’s house and the holiness of His temple. And oh, the thanksgiving when Pastor Larry called with the praise report. I sincerely believe God did something for us that night that flowed down from the river of God, from His waters of intimacy. 4thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF TRUST, HOPE, AND CONFIDENCE. (IV.) Notice verse 5. “By awesome deeds You answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.” This portrait David paints is of awesome deeds which God uses to inspire us and fill us with awe to make us confident, hopeful, and willing to make Him our trust. God finds ways to impress us so we will trust Him more. He answers our prayers, v. 5 in His righteousness, so He will get the glory and we will worship His majesty. Last week, I got to spend two nights with Pastor Jadon and Audrey. Often I recall how God worked on one of our vacations when we were fishing at Fish Lake. Audrey was using her spin casting rod and reel, and she had on a fishing lure with treble hooks. She was at the north end of the Lake casting towards the shallows on the other side. She casted too far and the lure caught in a branch. With a mighty heave, she pulled and the lure broke loose and came straight back, catching her in the lower lip. We were 8 miles from our truck. But we were within a short prayer of the waters of trust, hope and confidence. One of the treble hooks was sticking all the way from the outside of her lip to the inside of her mouth. I told Audrey all I knew to do—we prayed that I could do the surgery. Then I took out my filet knife

and sterilized it by burning it hot with a match. It was new territory for me. I'm no surgeon, but the river of trust was flowing. Audrey has no scar there today. We prayed, and then we praised God for answering us with awesome deeds—for He was our only hope of all the ends of the earth. Seek these waters, beloved. 5thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF GOD'S POWER. (V.) Notice v. 6. "The One who by His strength established the mountains, being girded with might." When I left here a week ago last Friday morning, I left with a message God had given me on the rich young ruler. I felt so powerless as I went, as far as what good I could do at the Meridian Friends Church. I knew it would have to be the river of God or it would be nothing. In both services, I gave an invitation, and the river of God's power was surging over the banks of heaven into Meridian. Seven adults prayed to receive Jesus—including their own worship leader. Except for one lady, the other three men and three women were church people, in their 50's and 60's, who came in at the door who is Jesus by grace through faith. I am still praising God. 6thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF GOD'S PEACE. (VI.) Notice v. 7. "Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples." The river of God, the waters of His peace is over all the waters of the earth. The river of God can stop the wind, calm the sea, stop the rain, end a drought, put out forest fires, and it can end an angry dispute. The thinking, thankful heart needs to run to the river of God's peace. This past week, I faced a roaring tumult as President of Travelers Assistance Society of Sweetwater County. Some people we helped with a voucher ransacked one of our local motels—we lost their participation. I knew what I must do. I importuned myself and wrote a letter of confession and bought some flowers. The next day, the waters of peace came cascading from heaven. The manager called, and said, "I won't stop partnering with TASSC." Together, we'll be more selective on who we help, and am I thanking God? You bet! Glory! 7thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF AWE BEFORE GOD. (VII.) Notice v. 8. "So that those who dwell at the ends of the earth, (that could be Rock Springs), are in awe of your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy." One day I sat with my family in Thermopolis and watched the reenactment of the giving of the medicinal hot springs by the Shoshone Indians by Chief Washakie to the United States for \$60,000.00. It was quite an experience to see the Indians riding above the cliffs in war garments, and to see the chiefs and sub-chiefs dancing to their mournful beat and nearly worship the medicinal waters of Thermopolis. Beloved, the waters I am in awe of cost God's love in sending Jesus to die on the cross of Calvary and these are not medicinal waters. These waters of awe are healing waters that make sinners into saints. I think of the bisexual man I met who was the owner/manager of a business. He told me what he believed unashamedly—in fact, proudly. The Holy Spirit told me to read to this man from

Romans 1. When I did, the heavenly reservoir spilled out waters of awe. Chris is now our brother in Christ. I shared a few months ago with a wonderful man with his Ph.D. The waters of education can be admirable, but that day this man prayed to receive Jesus. Those are the waters of awe—and God’s greatest sign of all time is II Cor. 5: 17. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...” PTL! 8thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF REPRODUCTION AND HARVEST. (VIII.) Notice verses 9-11. “You visit the earth and water it; You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, for so You have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with Your bounty; Your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.” The picture of David relates to reproductive water that brings out the harvest. There are many word pictures of furrows, abundant water, settled ridges, soil softened with showers, growth arising, and thriving right in the old Oregon Trail wagon tracks, that is, in the oddest places. Some of this seeking takes time, but the water of God’s Word of reproduction and harvest will not return void. Since January, I’ve been praying daily for two people who’ve showed no interest nor an ounce of understanding for the things of Christ. But I kept praying. November 3rd, both those prayers were answered in an amazing work that had two uninterested sinners, begging to come to faith in Jesus. This past week, God saved a man I love right in the wagon tracks of God’s river. This man talked often to God, but now he is born again, my brother. I can’t get over how God can grow fruit in worn wagon tracks, places that look unlikely. Thank You, Jesus! 9thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF PLENTY. (IX.) Verse 12 is beautiful. “The pastures of the wilderness gird themselves with joy.” Seldom, after a drought, has our land had such a late summer and fall season of rain and snow. Our water levels are back up. Spiritually, God has been up to something with showers of blessing. As of this morning, Nov. 24th, 18 people have come to Jesus for salvation in 21 days. I’ve been praying for souls, and God has been raining on us, beloved. 10thly,

SEEK THE WATERS OF SINGING. (X.) I read in v. 13, “The meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.” In my heart, I hear badpipes and laughter and a song, “Down the mtn. the river flows, And it brings refreshing wherever it goes, Through the valleys and over the fields, The river is rushing, and the river is here. The river of God sets our feet a dancing, the river of God fills our hearts with cheer, The river of God fills our mouths with laughter, And we rejoice for the river is here. The river of God is teeming with life, And all who touch it can be revived, And those who linger on this river’s shore, Will come back thirsting for more of the Lord. Up to the mtns we love to go, to find the presence of the Lord. Along the banks of the river we run, We dance with laughter giving praise to the Son.” Amen.