

## "THE OPPOSITE OF FORGETTING"

We say "**Happy Thanksgiving!**" Thanksgiving Weekend CAN be a very happy time. There IS such a thing as nice weather on a Thanksgiving Weekend. Family gatherings CAN be happy. Feasting can be a good time if you know how to do it without overdoing it.

So then It might be that Thanksgiving is **taken more lightly** and **seen as less important** than it is. **And less solemn than it is.** It's important and solemn for all of us who think of it as an occasion to express our thankfulness to God.

We make it **solemn and important** when we make it **about God.**

(Solemn and important can **also be joyful and peaceful.** Joy and peace are **gifts of God** and fruit of the Spirit of God!)

**Psalm 50, a serious psalm, is about thanksgiving!** Listen to its seriousness:

**Psalm 50:1-6** The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!" The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!

God, the "Mighty One" summons the whole earth, and then out of that great crowd of people that he has summoned, he asks for his own people, "my faithful ones," to be gathered. [We can think of this as a courtroom drama ~ or as a picture of the whole world: to be alive is to be **summoned into existence**: and then God's own people are **summoned into his hearing**, more fully into his presence. And here is what he says to them [to us!]

**Psalm 50:7-13** "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. [Oh oh] Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. [Right. Check.] I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? So then what DOES he want? If not the things that we have to give ["...the cattle on a thousand hills..."]

God **asks for** in this psalm is **THANKSGIVING AND TWO ADDITIONAL THINGS**, which give us our first two **NOTES**. **NOTES** for God's thanksgivers:

1. God calls for thanksgiving AND for "vowperforming."

**Psalm 50:14** Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, **AND perform your vows to the Most High...** Why do these two things belong together? How are thanksgiving and "vowperforming" related?

We can begin to see what connects them by seeing **what Thanksgiving means.** Obviously, it means **ACKNOWLEDGING** that we have received some good thing. But it **ALSO** means that **we IDENTIFYING** who we have received the good thing from. **Both.** The difference between saying that we have something to be thankful for ~~ and saying, "Thank you."

**Q: Why is THAT important? A: Because our relationship to God is important. It is important to God!**

**John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

To know you have received good things and then to ignore the person you received them from is a serious error. It is **INGRATITUDE**, which is always an ugly thing. An ugly thing but not a rare thing. And is it getting less and less rare? Is the notion of entitlement getting more and more common? It seems to me that it is. So along the same lines, God calls his people to perform their vows: to do what they said they would do.

*Why is that?* First he gets the wrong answer out of the way. It's not that he needs the help. (Or the things.) It's that **we need the connection to him.** We need to identify him as the giver of the gifts. Our vows to him should also do that.

So here is an instruction to all of us who have made any sort of vow to God. Or before God. Marriage is a vow we make before God. Around here, so is Baby Dedication. So is church membership. So is a commitment to serve in a ministry. So is what we call “A MATEO testimony.” Taking these vows seriously is a further connection to God!

Now this “call to perform” might be so intimidating that it discourages us from ever vowing anything else ever again! And there are warnings in the Bible, in the teachings of Jesus in fact, to that effect. (**Matthew 5** and it’s picked up by James in **James 5**). **But we HAVE made vows.** They are kind of inescapable. (Marriage vows, e.g.)

If that is what it’s feeling like to you, here is some encouragement! This morning, it’s called **Note 2.**

**2. God calls for our thanksgiving, our “vowperforming” AND for us to call upon him in the day of trouble.**

**Psalm 50:14-15** Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, **AND call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”**

He is the Mighty One. He who doesn’t need anything from us continues to have lots to give!

**These three things:**

1. *presenting our thanksgiving*
2. *performing our vows*
3. *calling upon him in the day of trouble.* Which isn’t intimidating at all, right?

So here is a personal question: **Do you have any trouble just now? Is this a “day of trouble” in your life?**

Maybe it’s the things you have made your vows about that are causing you the trouble. It probably is!

So what are you doing about this trouble? Is it working for you? Are you up to trying another approach?

But being intimidated is not the thing here. The thing is getting God identified in our lives as what he is. These things all **IDENTIFY HIM** as

- the God we worship
- the Lord we submit to
- the Mighty One who does great things for us!
- (And the Judge of all the earth before whom we will stand)

**Psalm 50:14-15** Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; **I will deliver you, AND YOU SHALL GLORIFY ME.”**

These three actions we are called to all GLORIFY HIM. So they all contribute to the re-ordering of our lives, with God at the centre.

You can check out for yourself where this psalm goes from here. You’ll see that these three actions are all **“the opposite of forgetting God.”** And it’s important that we do not! (**vss. 16-23, esp. 22**)

**ACTIONS to go along with thanksgiving:**

**a) “Perform your vows to the Most High” (vs. 14)**

It’s bad to fail to perform vows. And where this gives you trouble...

**b) “Call upon God in the day of trouble” (vs. 15)**

It’s good to call upon God in the day of trouble. Our troubles provide us with the opportunity! So in a way our troubles are good. *“Good grief, Charlie Brown.”*

Let’s be clear on the happy, hopeful outcome: We shall glorify him, by all three of these actions: we give him the credit for the good things received, as the one we worship and as the One who delivers us in the day of trouble FROM the trouble.

**NEXT WEEK:** “To live equals Christ” [Men’s Weekend Theme] **Philippians 1:21-2:3**