

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

Focal Verses • 1 Kings 18: 5 - 18

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson we will: ANALYZE the psalm David sang when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem; REJOICE in the wonderful things God has done on behalf of His people; and EXPRESS thanks for God's greatness and provision.

IN FOCUS

A few weeks ago, the family heirloom, an old wooden clock, arrived at Breana's house. She was excited to see the clock Grandma Lottie had talked about for years. The clock belonged to her great-grandmother's grandfather. Grandma Lottie had told stories to each new generation about the significance of the clock and the fun times family members had regarding the heirloom.

The wood that framed the clock was from a family tree planted on land the family owned in North Carolina. Later, the land was seized and stolen from the family. Therefore, the family heirloom passed down from one generation to another, serving as a reminder of their past and an inspiration for their future.

Through the years, various family members kept the clock in their homes. Unfortunately, a fire in Breana's uncle and aunt's house damaged the clock. Although the clock was rescued and repaired, no one knew its whereabouts. Breana's cousin, Darlique, recently contacted family members to say the clock was in their uncle Harold's attic. He had forgotten about the clock until he went to the attic to look for a model train his grandchildren wanted to see. Uncle Harold mailed the clock to Breana's house, and everyone praised God for the clock's return.

How does your family praise and thank God? Why do you praise and thank God?

Keep in Mind

"Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people" (1 Chronicles 16:8, KJV).

Say It Correctly

Kiriath-Jearim. KEE-ree-ath JEH-ah-reem.

Abinadab. ah-BEN-an-DAB.

Focal Verses

1 Chronicles 16:8-12, 28-36

KJV

16:8 Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

- 10** Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.
- 11** Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually.
- 12** Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
- 16:28** Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
- 29** Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
- 30** Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.
- 31** Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.
- 32** Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein.
- 33** Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth.
- 34** O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.
- 35** And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.
- 36** Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

NLT

- 16:8** Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done.
- 9** Sing to him; yes, sing his praises. Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds.
- 10** Exult in his holy name; rejoice, you who worship the LORD.
- 11** Search for the LORD and for his strength; continually seek him.
- 12** Remember the wonders he has performed, his miracles, and the rulings he has given,
- 16:28** O nations of the world, recognize the LORD, recognize that the LORD is glorious and strong.
- 29** Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor.
- 30** Let all the earth tremble before him. The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.
- 31** Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice! Tell all the nations, "The LORD reigns!"
- 32** Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy!
- 33** Let the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he is coming to judge the earth.
- 34** Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.
- 35** Cry out, "Save us, O God of our salvation! Gather and rescue us from among the nations, so we can thank your holy name and rejoice and praise you."
- 36** Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, who lives from everlasting to everlasting! And all the people shouted "Amen!" and praised the LORD.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

The People, Places, and Times

Psalm. Any sort of religious song can be considered a “psalm,” whether it offers a cry for help, a shout of thanks, or simply adoration. The words of many Jewish religious songs have been preserved in the Scriptures. The book of Psalms is a well-known source for these songs, but some of the psalms are also repeated in other parts of the Scriptures. In today’s lesson, we have a psalm that parallels several psalms found in the book of Psalms.

David. As king of Israel, David was responsible for unifying the nation, building Jerusalem as its capital, and bringing the Ark of the Covenant to a proper place of worship. King David composed many songs, some of which are recorded in the Scripture.

Background

Readers should be aware of two backgrounds when interacting with this text. First there is the background of David’s story, and second, there is the background of the writing of Chronicles. David ruled in Israel around 1000 BC. The date of Chronicles’ writing is between 400 and 350 BC. There is no specific scriptural reference to the author, but according to Jewish tradition, the writer of Chronicles was Ezra.

The original audience of Chronicles was the Jewish people who returned from exile. The book was written to provide perspective and historical continuity as they returned to Israel from Babylon. They had to rebuild the Temple, restore worship, including the Levitical sacrificial system, and rebuild the cities. Many negative events of David’s reign are left out of Chronicles. This was not because the author wanted to erase those events from history books; rather, the book of Chronicles focuses on relaying the key elements of Jewishness that were considered foundational in rebuilding the nation.

Chronicles’ post-exilic audience saw newfound meaning in David’s previous establishment of a center for national worship. Generations ago, when David brought the Ark into Jerusalem, he sent the message that every Israelite should worship Yahweh, and Yahweh alone. He also sent the message that Jerusalem would be the center of this worship, the one special place on earth where God chose to dwell, as represented by the Ark. David called the Israelites to joyously remember all God had done to bring them to this point.

At-A-Glance

1. A Call to Thanksgiving (1 Chronicles 16:8–12)
2. Nature called to Praise God (vv. 28–33)
3. Petition for Israel’s Deliverance (vv. 34–36)

In Depth

1. A Call to Thanksgiving (1 Chronicles 16:8–12)

This first part of this psalm of thanksgiving (vv. 8–22) parallels Psalm 105:1–15. David invites all those who accompanied him to Jerusalem for the installation of the Ark to give thanks unto the Lord (v. 8) for all His wondrous works (v. 9), His holy name (v. 10), and

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

for the judgments of His mouth (v. 12). These verses demonstrate what should comprise a song of worship to God: adoration not just for what God has done, but also for who He is.

In writing Chronicles, Ezra recounted this psalm to encourage the Jews to engage Yahweh in worshipful praise. The Jews who just returned from exile are to thank God for keeping His everlasting covenant with their forefathers, fulfilling His promise of settlement into the land of promise (Psalm 105:8–11), and bringing them back to the land of promise after years in exile.

There is also a place for shouting aloud to God in praise. The call requested here is not that of lament or deliverance, but of a loud shout to God in praise. In recounting this time that David leads the Israelites to praise God for establishing them in Jerusalem, Ezra hoped to lead the Jews to praise God for bringing them back from exile.

Verse 8 says, “Make known his deeds among the people.” These words challenge the Israelites to share what the Lord has done for them among the people of other faiths, tribes, languages, and countries. The Israelites of David’s time had many groups living close by in Canaan to show God’s deeds to the Philistines, Moabites, Amorites, and so forth. The Israelites of Ezra’s time had broadened their worlds through the exile and would think to spread the news of God’s deeds to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece. Verse 9 commands the listeners to sing. David assigned the Levites the duty of singing praise to God, but today we are all called to sing unto the Lord as an expression of our gratitude to him.

The reference to God’s “strength” (v. 11) likely refers to the Ark of the Covenant, which they were moving. The Ark was seen as a symbol of the strength of God. Ezra, therefore, encouraged his audience to depend on the Lord, both in good times and bad. Verse 12 declares that Israel should “Remember his marvellous works.” This is a reference to the Exodus from Egypt (Psalm 105:5, 26–27). The phrase “judgments of his mouth” (v. 12) refers to God’s verdict against those who offend Him.

What did the Israelites thank God for? Is your thanksgiving to God different?

2. Nature Called to Praise God (vv. 28–33)

We also read 1 Chronicles 16:24–33 in Psalm 96:3–13. The first invitation to thanksgiving is specifically to the Israelites, while the second call is general. In these verses, families of nations and all nature are invited to praise God. The audience is called to bring various gifts to the Lord, like glory, strength, and offerings.

Nature is also invited to praise God. Both the tumultuous sea and orderly fields shout their praises to Yahweh. These verses call us to consider the injustices humans inflict on God’s creation via polluting the sea or chopping down forests. When we abuse the natural habitat and animals around us, we deprive God of the worship His creation brings Him. Taking care of natural resources is another way to show our gratitude to God.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

How should your praise of God include enabling nature to show His glory?

3. Petition for Israel's Deliverance (vv. 34–36)

These last three verses parallel Psalm 106:1, 47, and 48. It is a transition from praise to petition. These verses depict what comprises a proper attitude for the worshiper: gratitude for what God has done, followed with a humble prayer for God's constant help and deliverance.

The prayer for God to "gather" (v. 35) them and hold the people together reflects the fears of a people surrounded by enemies. While the Israelites of David's time felt pressure from the neighboring Philistines and Moabites, the Israelites of Ezra's time were likely thinking of the threat of the Egyptians and Persians. The Israelites finally learned their lesson and cried out for deliverance from the Lord, not from their leaders or prophets. Verse 36 encourages the people to say Amen. It was a common practice and the usual way to respond in the public worship to the priests' and Levites' prayer (Deuteronomy 27:15– 26; Nehemiah 8:6). "All the people" here refers to those who accompanied David to Jerusalem in bringing the Ark.

What do you do in your time of crisis? Whom do you call, and how can they help you?

Search the Scriptures

1. What blessings should the nation thank God for in these verses (1 Chronicles 16:8–12)?
2. How was Israel to tell other people of God's greatness (v. 28)?
3. What elements in nature praise God (vv. 30–33)? How?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Discuss the injunction to give thanks to the Lord. What effect did this have on the attitudes of the returnees? How does it impact us?
2. What do you think the statements about nature and the earth meant to the Hebrew people?

Liberating Lesson

We are in a society where people want things done in a jiffy, and this attitude has penetrated into our worship service. People rush in and out of God's presence without spending time to appreciate Him for specific things He has done for them. Some who wish to thank Him are often at a loss on what to thank Him for. David and the chronicler offer us specific things to thank the Lord for: all His wondrous works, His holy name, and the judgments of His mouth. We can thank Him for the daily victories He gives us, the gift of eternal life, and the gift of His Word that teaches, rebukes, and corrects us, as well as the Holy Spirit who reminds us of all things and convicts us. We are called to be grateful for all these things. Often pains and challenges of life blind us from observing these immeasurable blessings.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

Expression of our gratitude to God should be seen in our relationship with nature. It is our responsibility to care for the natural resources around us in order to enhance their worship of God. When we pollute and waste the environment by chopping trees, pollute the atmosphere and pour waste into the sea, it destroys them, thereby depriving God the praise they bring Him.

Application for Activation

Having seen the various ways the Israelites were encouraged to praise God, we are also called to express our gratitude to God. First, remember God's miracles in your life and write them in a journal or notebook as a record of His grace. Then tell three people, especially those of other faiths and unbelievers, about God's blessings. Second, as you consider the practical steps you could take to preserve nature around you, spend about 30 minutes each day tending to God's creation. Third, turn your eyes from hope in people and instead cry unto the Lord concerning situations you are going through. Take time to petition the Lord for those issues that are on your heart and for His grace upon others, making sure that you praise Him in anticipation of His answers.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned?

More Light on the Text

1 Chronicles 16:8–12, 28–36

In Exodus 25, God commanded Moses to build a Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant that would represent the center of worship for the people and be a symbol of Yahweh's presence among His people. When the Lord would meet with the people, He would appear above the Ark between the two cherubim placed on the cover of the Ark (Exodus 25:22). In the times of Eli the priest, the Philistines captured the Ark during the war (1 Samuel 4). This brought the wrath of the Lord heavily upon the Philistines, and after seven months, they were compelled to send the Ark back to Israel. It was deposited at Kiriath-Jearim in the house of Abinadab.

During the reign of King Saul, the Ark was neglected. However, when David became king, he sought means to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. His first attempt failed for lack of preparation, which resulted in the death of Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:4–11). David in a second attempt, with all the care required, brought the Ark to Jerusalem to be the center of worship life in Israel. The psalm in 1 Chronicles 16:8–36 was sung at the occasion of the coming of the Ark to Jerusalem. The placement of the Ark in Jerusalem is the manifestation of God's presence in the center of the people's lives and the transformation of their entire pattern of worship.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

8 Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

Three actions are outlined in this verse: to express gratitude to the Lord, to call upon His name, and to proclaim His deeds among people. The Hebrew term *yadah* (yaw-**DAW**) translates as “give thanks,” to profess or celebrate, with the idea of extending one’s hands. It is a sign of gratitude. Gratitude should be expressed to someone for what the person has done.

However, when directed to God, our gratitude is to celebrate who He is. His character implies His actions. He fulfills His promises because He is faithful. The Ark is a symbol of His faithful presence in the midst of His people.

To “call upon [God’s] name” is an invitation to pray to God with dependency, confidence, and praise. The Hebrew word *qara’* (kaw-**RAW**), translated means “call,” “to cry out” or “shout aloud.” In other psalms, too, the Lord urges His people to call on His name in the days of their trouble, and He would deliver them (Psalm 50:15, 91:15). The Ark serves as a place for the gathering of the nation to worship the Lord and to pray to Him in any circumstance they might experience. When Solomon dedicated the Temple where the Ark would be laid, he will ask God to answer His people or even the nations when they come to the Temple (1 Kings 8:31–52). The Hebrew word *shem* means “name” and connotes the personality revealed by someone’s character and actions. The Lord’s name reveals His character (self-existing) and is evident in His choosing of His people and making them His own. His name, symbolizing who God is, deserves praise.

Verse 8 encourages the Israelites to proclaim the deeds of the Lord among the people, which could include Gentile nations. His deeds (Heb. *‘alilah*, ah-lee-LAW) certainly comprise what God has done for His people, starting with the covenant with Abraham and continuing until Israel inherited the land. These deeds are embedded in their history. They should proclaim the wonderful works of the Lord to other nations.

9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

The Hebrew language has two synonymous verbs for to sing: *shir* (**SHEER**) and *zamar* (zaw-**MAR**). *Shir* usually denotes a religious praise as rendered in a historical hymn. *Zamar* is used for singing and for accompanying oneself on a stringed musical instrument as part worship.

Singing is an important part of celebrating the Lord. Music has been part of public worship throughout the history of Israel. After the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea after their pursuit of the Israelites, Moses and the people sang to the Lord to proclaim His mighty deeds (Exodus 15). Hannah (1 Samuel 2) and Mary (Luke 1:46–55) magnified the Lord with praises to share of His wondrous work in giving them children. The importance of songs in the proclamations of God’s word and works are tremendous. God, the supreme King, deserves beautiful songs and poetic skills to stress His might and greatness.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

**10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.
11 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually.**

Glory (Heb. *halal*, haw-**LOL**) here has the sense of bragging about something and is used here to indicate not just pride, but happiness as well. As the prophet would tell Israel, pridefully boasting is foolish, unless done to brag about what an awesome God they serve (Jeremiah 9:24). God is worthy to be praised for what He has already done, but this phrase could also be a direction for a worship service. Praise is to be offered with an attitude of delight and joy, perhaps with music, singing, and dancing.

These verses contain three references of seeking God. However, the three occurrences are expressed by two Hebrew words: *baqash* (baw-**KASH**, vv. 10, 11) and *darash* (daw-**RASH**, v. 11). Hebrew poetry, like this psalm, often relies on repetition of a concept to reinforce its point. The emphasis is not on the words' slightly different nuances but on how the words are synonyms. Both words refer to seeking someone out to ask (or demand) something of them. We ought to "continually" seek out God's judgment and strength rather than rely on our own, as His is infinitely better. The result of seeking the Lord is joy and deliverance from all our fears (Psalm 34:4). The implication of seeking the Lord in this instance requires going to the place where the Ark is placed, as "his strength" is a reference to the Ark itself.

12 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.

To remember something is to keep it fresh in your mind. Remembrance is often paired with action in the Bible. Because they remember God's works, they will worship Him. The subject of this remembrance is to be God's marvelous works, specifically His wonders and His judgments. The wonders of the Lord are probably a reference to the wonders God performed from the days of Egypt to the possession of the Promised Land. The word for judgments (Heb. *mishpat*, meesh-**POT**) may be a reference to the condemnation of Israel's enemies.

28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

After calling "the people" (v. 8), the song now calls the "kindreds of people" to honor God and glorify Him. Both of these refer to all people everywhere, the nation of Israel and other nations. The Hebrew word for people is plural in both cases, better translated as "peoples," that is, several different people groups. Here, David is more specific about inviting everyone, calling on each "kindred" (Heb. *mishpach*, meesh-**PACH**, tribe or clan) of each people group to glorify God. The other nations have to glorify God because, as verse 14 states, His rule is over the entire earth, while the gods of other nations are only idols who do not perform anything worthy of praise (v. 26). Obviously, no one can truly give the Lord anything, since everything is already His. When worshiping, however, it is common to talk about "giving" the Lord blessing and honor. Elsewhere, this word is

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

translated "ascribe," showing the song means to acknowledge that God already possesses all the glory and strength.

29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

The people of Israel are encouraged not to appear before the Lord empty-handed (cf. Exodus 23:15). They are to bring an offering into His presence. This verse is echoed in Psalm 96:8. There the writer records the phrase "come before him" as "come into his courts." This change is understandable given the circumstances of the psalm. The Temple with its courts was not yet built during David's time, but by the time the song was recorded in the book of Psalms, it could be more specific about where a worshiper could encounter the presence of God. The presence of the Ark represents the presence of the Lord Himself.

30 Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. 31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.

The word "fear" (Heb. *chul*, **khool**) in the Old Testament often describes respect, reverence, and awe when God is the object of that fear. "All the earth" refers to the inhabitants of the earth, but it is followed by "the world" (Heb. *tebel*, **tay-BALE**), which refers to the physical globe. The call is to both the people and the world itself. God is the sustainer of the universe. All the laws of physics by which there is balance in the entire cosmos have been set by Him. Humanity only discovered these laws. While the stability of the world (the physical globe) is firmly established by God and will "be not moved," the stability of the world (all people) depends solely on the reverence humankind has for God. The various troubles the world goes through are the result of human refusal to acknowledge God as the author of life and the universe and to follow His precepts.

The praise started with telling Israel to reach the nations, and now the whole universe is required to express joy and gladness because the Lord is King. God is not only the King over Israel; He is the King over every nation of the earth. He reigns over the universe.

32 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. 33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth.

The elements of the universe and nature are personified and urged to sing to the Lord, who is the supreme Judge. Chaotic elements like the sea and the trees of the forest are called to praise God alongside the domesticated, orderly fields. This should give us hope and assurance in the midst of confusion, chaos, iniquity, and inequality. The One we serve rules the affairs of this world with justice, and eventually, His reign will prevail. Sin in the world may darken our horizons and paint a gloomy picture of the future world, but

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

we must prayerfully and patiently await the restoration of the universe (cf. Romans 8:19–23), when the King will subdue all His adversaries and reign forever and ever.

34 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.

This verse is a common refrain in the Psalms (Psalm 106:1, 107:1, 118:1, 136:1). The Hebrew word translated “mercy” (KJV), and “faithful love” (NLT) here and steadfast love elsewhere is *chesed* (**KHEH**-sed). The word expresses an idea of love, devotion, and faithfulness to a promise or covenant. When the word is used to describe God, it highlights God’s faithfulness to His covenant with His people.

35 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. 36 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

Verse 35 is a prayer for salvation and deliverance. Calling the Lord “God of our salvation” establishes the prayer on the basis of God’s past actions. The prayer will be answered in two steps: first, gathering together, and then, deliverance. David prays for the nation to be gathered together and delivered from the threat of Canaanite nations like the Philistines. When Ezra reminds the people of the hymn, it gains even greater significance as a prayer to gather the people back from exile to far off countries. We often find throughout Scripture and our present lives that God will answer prayer and then answer it again in an even greater way years later.

The psalm promises that after God has gathered and delivered His people, they will thank and praise Him. While we can offer God our thanks and praise anywhere at any time, we are better able to devote our whole bodies, minds, and hearts to worship when we are able to do it corporately in a designated place of worship.

The psalm is concluded with a blessing to Yahweh, the God of Israel, who forever deserves to be praised. The people responded “Amen” (Heb. *’amen*, ah-**MEN**), which means “let it be so” or “truly,” and they praised the Lord.

Thanksgiving: A Heart Filled with Thanksgiving

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Deuteronomy 28–29
Psalm 31:1–8

TUESDAY

Deuteronomy 30–31
Psalm 31:9–15

WEDNESDAY

Deuteronomy 32–34
Psalm 31:16–24

THURSDAY

Joshua 1–4
Psalm 32:1–5

FRIDAY

Joshua 5–8
Psalm 32:6–11

SATURDAY

Joshua 9–11
Psalm 33:1–5

SUNDAY

Joshua 12–15
Psalm 33:6–11