

A SONG OF THANKSGIVING– Sunday June 9th 2013.

*Then you will say on that day,
“I will give thanks to You, O Lord;
For although You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away,
And You comfort me.
2 “Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.” (Isaiah 12:1-2)*

Beloved in the Lord,

One of the most powerful words we can express is thank-you. This little word thank-you is very important in our relationship with God and also with one another. When we thank someone for something they have done, that conveys our appreciation and makes them feel good.

Thanklessness is not only rude, but often it is a symptom of a prideful heart. A prideful person finds it hard to be thankful, because he or she think they deserve whatever you do for them. A prideful person thinks that the world revolves around them. If someone does something for them, why should they be thankful, it was that person’s duty to do whatever had to be done.

In our relationship with God our Heavenly Father, a thankful heart should be at the centre.

Thankfulness and thanksgiving should be a high priority in our prayer life. Thankfulness and praise brings us near to God. Without thanksgiving we cannot not get near to God. We read in Psalm 100 ***Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him, bless His name. (Psalm 100:4)***

We are told to enter God’s gates with thanksgiving and to come into His courts with praise. The first gate is thanksgiving. Thanksgiving opens to us the presence of God. Our text today is a song of thanksgiving. It is one of many we find in The Holy Bible. There are three things that I would like to emphasise that arise from our text:

1. God and not man is my salvation
2. When we are with God we can live without fear
3. God is our strength

Firstly God and not man is my salvation. Herein we have a reason to praise God, thank Him and glorify His name. If our hope for salvation was in a man, or based upon man’s abilities and understanding we would not have anything to rejoice about. If we had to rely upon man to save us we would have little hope. The problem is that man is man. Man’s abilities and powers are very limited. All the people that men have placed their hope and trust in, who are founders of religions are dead. The prophet Mohammed – dead! Buddha – dead! Krishna – dead! The Virgin Mary – dead! Martin Luther – dead! I could continue this list but I am sure that you get the picture. On the other hand – Jesus Christ – Alive! He is alive forevermore.

He Himself said: ***I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. (Rev.1:17b-18)***

Jesus has all authority and power. With His Holy and innocent blood He paid the penalty for sin . He paid the death penalty and when we believe in Him, then He is our salvation. This is so beautifully stated in our text today.

***"I will give thanks to You, O Lord;
For although You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away,
And You comfort me.
2 "Behold, God is my salvation,"***

Please understand that God never leaves sin unpunished. Sin is a very serious thing. The wages of sin is death. Please understand that in order to pacify God and to satisfy His laws Jesus took our place and died in our stead. He took our punishment upon Himself, He paid our death penalty, He suffered rejection from the Father, He experienced hell in the full sense of the term so that we wouldn't have too. He did that so that we may never have to experience God's wrath.

He did all this simply because He is love. He loved us so very much:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

Herein we have reason to praise God everyday from here to eternity. If you believe in Jesus then He is your salvation. Because Jesus is God, this salvation is complete. There is nothing to be added to it. Your salvation is sure and you are secure eternally because nobody can take it away from you. You are eternally secure because Jesus promised it.

So then firstly we are to be thankful because God and not man is our salvation.

Secondly: When we are with God we can live without fear. This is a great reason to be thankful for. So many people are living in constant fear. So many are fearful of so many things. Many fear the future, the unknown. Many are fearful of illness, of growing old, of natural disasters or manmade disasters, of other people and of course death itself.

A word that God often uses when appearing in the Bible is "Fear not." Do not be afraid. Many of God's promises begin with an encouragement to not be afraid. One of my favourite ones that I recall almost every day and quote to myself is Isaiah 41:10

***Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'***

These words come from God Himself. These are not the words of man, but the words of Almighty God. Because they are God's Word, we can be 100% sure that they are true and will never fail. This promise is ours if we are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We can be thankful everyday that we do not have to live in fear. While I was in Indonesia I spent a lot of time thinking about Islam. The main thing that saddens me, is that a Muslim is always living in fear. They are afraid of Allah. They have no assurance whatsoever. They are required by their religion to adhere to the five pillars of Islam, and even this gives no guarantee of a blessed afterlife. They are as I mentioned last Sunday, slaves to a lie. This applies not only to Muslims, but to anybody, religious or not, who does not have faith in Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour.

Praise God that we do not have to live in fear and insecurity. We do not have to doubt, because we have God's own Word, that can never fail. We have God's provision in His promises.

Just think about what the Bible teaches us. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens that God does not have control over. He knows the number of hairs on our heads. He knows what is going on in our lives and He knows the future also. He is absolutely sovereign and if we abide in Him, then there is no room whatsoever for fear. Nothing will come our way without God's permission.

Let this truth sink deep down into your heart. Let it permeate your thinking. If you can grasp the meaning of what I am saying, then you will be truly blessed, You will be able to thank God and praise Him no matter what happens.

When we thank God and praise Him, then we are confessing that God always knows what is best for us and that we trust in Him. A spirit of thanksgiving, an attitude of praise drives away doubts and fears and brings us closer to God and strengthens our faith.

This is why we should begin and end each day with a prayer of thanksgiving. We should take time during the day to pause and thank God for all the wonderful things that He has done. Simply pause and say "Thank you Father for everything You do." The more you do this, the more your faith will grow.

This brings us to our third and final point, namely, God is our strength.

The father of our Church, Dr Martin Luther knew this fact and based upon Psalm 46 he wrote the Hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God".

"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing"

Truly, God is a mighty fortress. When our own strength fails us, when we are assailed by doubts, when illness strikes, when we are persecuted, or fall into sin, when we are lonely and fearful where do we turn to for help?

We should set our gaze upon Jesus. We should always look to Him. We should take a hold of God's Holy Word and read it with a thankful heart. Let's look at Psalm 46:

***“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.***

***² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;***

***³ Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.***

***⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.***

***⁵ God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.***

***⁶ The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.***

***⁷ The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.***

***⁸ Come, behold the works of the Lord,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.***

***⁹ He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.***

***¹⁰ “Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”***

***¹¹ The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.***

Very powerful words that we should remind ourselves of regularly. We should use them as a basis for our thanksgiving. God who is almighty, all knowing, ever present is with us and He loves us with an eternal love.

Come to Him today. Surrender all to Him and leave Church today with a song of praise and thanksgiving. Live in victory. Live with thanksgiving in your heart and on your lips. Live in trust and fear not for God is your strength and song and your salvation.,

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.