

Give Thanks to the Lord.

Saying 'thank you' to God is an act of faith. We trust that the food in front of us is a gift and blessing from the Lord. Through the work of many others, from farmers to our own family members, God has given us this meal. We trust this to be true. Saying thank you to God sets us apart from other creatures that God has made. (maybe)

It is easy to take gifts for granted, too easy to see them as possessions we are entitled to. It is a conscious act of faith to say thank you to the the Lord. The Lord is the giver of every good gift.

Give Thanks to the Lord.

Giving thanks is an act of faith.

Giving thanks is evangelism.

Give thanks to the Lord.

Make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him, tell how the Lord has done things bigger and better than anything we could do.

When athletes give credit to the Lord for their athletic gifts, it is an electric moment in every post-competition interview. Journalists often move right along, because there it is, someone is giving thanks to the Lord.

My friend Ken is Jewish. When I thank him for the work he does so that I can still run he says, 'Baruk ha shem'. It means, 'blessed be the name'. It is short for, 'blessed be the name of the Lord'. It directs attention to God.

The simple act of openly giving credit to the Lord for the blessings and gifts he has given is a witness to the Lord who is generous and who loves to bless. It is a beautiful, non-threatening witness that calls for a response at some level from the people we are speaking with.

Give thanks to the Lord.

The psalm writers knew all about the beauty of creation. They gave the Lord thanks for food and harvest, for family and friends. They gave glory to God for answered prayer. They were people who lived in the world, just as we do. The kinds of things that matter to us, mattered to them.

But those were 'lower case' thanksgiving items. They varied from one person to another, just as ours do today. For some of us, this year has been a year of prosperity and abundance. For some it has been a year of struggle.

The thankfulness of the psalm writers ran in one direction. Reading to the end of the psalm showed us that this psalm is about the biggest and best gift of all. It is the gift of the Lord, keeping his promises to all his people.

The key word is 'covenant', as in, 'the Lord remembered his covenant'.

In Genesis 12 the Lord formally begins his work to save and restore all that he has made. All of creation. All nations.

He does this by calling one person, Abram, and making promises to him and to his wife Sarai.

The Lord promises a great nation and a great name for Abram.

Abram will be blessed and be a blessing.

The Lord promises divine protection as Abram follows to the new land.

And, all peoples on earth will be blessed through you!

These promises are sealed in a covenant.

All of the rest of the psalm is the story of how the Lord kept that covenant. It is a story of impossible rescues, of slavery, starvation, unlikely heroes and miraculous signs and wonders, until the people were in the land.

Give thanks to the Lord, tell of what he has done, how he remembered his promises and kept his covenant.

We know of a faithfulness that the psalm writers did not. We know that at just the right time, God came in Jesus Christ.

We know of Jesus' life **with** us, of his death **with** and **for** us. We know that God raised Jesus from the dead. And so we know that there are no dead ends where the Lord is at work, and we trust that not even death is the end of us. We believe that the way of Jesus is the way of blessing.

Remember what he has done. Make it known among the nations.

Give thanks to the Lord. Say your thanks to the Lord publicly. It is evangelism.

Call on his name.

Did you notice the second theme woven through the first?

Thanksgiving is completed in trust and obedience.

Counting our blessings reminds us we can count on the Lord.

We can call on his name. We can glory in his holy name. Our hearts have a reason for confidence. Look to the Lord and his strength. Seek his face always.

Remembering and thanking, are completed in trust and obedience.

I find too often that this is the hard part. Trust and obedience is often a scary thing for me.

What is it like for you?

This is where the psalm goes. The story it celebrates ends with the people in the land, 'that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws'.

Thanksgiving is an act of faith that is completed in trust that dares to act and follow.

Let's go over some of the things we have given thanks for in our service:

Here is how I think this connection between thanksgiving for the past and present and trust to follow works.

Thanking our Heavenly Father for our pay cheques and his faithfulness in harvest, calls us to put our trust in him and dare to share generously as he does with us. With Food Bank offerings, with the World Hunger campaign that will start next week.

Thanking the Lord for the fellowship of our families calls us to trust that it is the Lord who holds us together, maybe leads us to ask about God's call for our families and maybe to dare to make room at our tables for others.

Last Saturday night at Camp Encounter the guys went outside at midnight and lay down on our backs under the stars. We saw the stars like never before. In twenty minutes we saw I think seven shooting stars. We learned that a quiet breeze in poplars and aspens sounds exactly like drops of rain. And we heard a coyote choir.

Thanking the Lord for his glorious creation, his great unspoiled gift calls us to do whatever it takes to fight against a way of life that spills oil into the Gulf of Mexico and toxic sludge onto the land in Hungary, then there is Fort Mac Murray. Thanksgiving calls us to hand that gift along to the generations who will follow us, not just here, but around the world.

Thankfulness for our healing and answered prayers calls us to use our strength to love and serve the Lord and our neighbour.

Thanksgiving for the 'indescribable gift' of God's love in Jesus Christ calls us to call others to trust in him with us, and to follow where he leads us together.

What about you? What are you thankful for today? How is the Lord calling you to follow him from thanksgiving into trust?

Give thanks to the Lord.

Call on his name.

The Lord be gracious to you.

The Lord be gracious to me.

And, all God's people said, Amen.