



## Israel's Greatest Hits Volume II-Part 12

God is Good

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Well, I will admit that it is hard for us to see the goodness of God when we are in a bad season of life. No doubt about that. Hard for us to affirm and be grateful for God being good when we are feeling bad. No doubt about that. Maybe that's true of you right now. Maybe you're in a job that you don't like. Maybe you don't feel supported by your friends. Perhaps your body is in pain. Maybe your life is heading in a direction you really didn't want to go. Maybe you feel boxed in by your circumstances. I don't know what might be going on but you may say I don't feel all that good so it's hard for me to see the goodness of God.

Now I hope all those descriptors are not true of you right now all at one time. That would be rough. But I know someone in the Old Testament, one of God's men, a prophet who felt all of those things at the same time. He wrote a book that tells us of his exploits. His name is Jonah. And you want to talk about being in a job you don't like, he had a job he didn't like. The only friends that we meet that he has there in the book had just thrown him over the side of the ship into the ocean. His body was certainly in pain. Talk about going in the direction you want to go, he wanted a vacation in Tarshish and God wanted to send him to the land of his enemies, the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. And I guess if you want to say about anyone that someone's boxed in, wink, wink, he was really boxed in by Chapter 2 in the cramped belly of a large fish, the Bible says, when he made a startling and surprising statement.

He said you know everyone who has another god but God, everyone who has a priority that consumes their life and their focus that's not the real true God of the Bible. The people who make their lives about something other than the Lord, those people have given up all hope in "hesed." There's the word we've been studying throughout the Psalms here in our short little series, the faithful covenant love of God. I mean, if you really are going to chase something else he says you are going to miss out on what we need the most. The faithful, covenant, persevering, dogged, tenacious love of God. And then he says this, he makes this resolve. Jonah Chapter 2 verse 9 he says, "I will," here's the result, "I will with a voice of thanksgiving, I will sacrifice to you.".

Now, the picture is him tangled with seaweed around him and he's here resolving that he is going to be thankful. There are a lot of circumstances in his life that he certainly doesn't feel good about. And yet he recognizes, as he has a little time in the darkness to ponder his life, that, you know what? God is the only hope I've got. God is good and I ought to be thankful. That's the fundamental underlying basic truth that if everything else in your life goes away you can sit back and realize this: regardless of your circumstances this God who created you, this God who is a God who sustains you, in him we live and move and have our being, he is a good God even if you're not feeling good, and you should be thankful. We can learn that lesson from a cantankerous prophet who is going in a direction he didn't want to go and in a lot of pain wondering if he was going to die in this belly of a large fish and he says, "You know, I'm going to be thankful. I will be thankful."



We need that instruction and thankfully there is a section of Scripture, five verses, that are titled with basically this superscription. Here are some instructions for you to be thankful. I want you to turn there, a nice round even number, Psalm 100, and I want you to study with me this morning something that is so fundamental to our existence that we are God's creatures and we should recognize that God is good and you ought to be thankful. God is good and we ought to be thankful. Take a look at this superscription there. You may think, well aren't all the psalms a psalm for thanksgiving or a psalm for giving thanks? Well, they may be but this is the only psalm that we have with this superscription that says here's "a psalm for giving thanks." Here it is. And we've got five short verses. Let me read them for you here.

Although I should stop for a second before we even read this text. "A Psalm for giving thanks." It might irritate you at some level, particularly if you're not a Christian here today or maybe you're a new Christian and struggling with why there's so much demand for us to be thankful to God. Is this like some insecure woman who, you know, wants to be told constantly that she looks good, or some new author who, you know, feels anxious about his work and wants you to constantly compliment him for his efforts? I mean, why does God always need, it seems, this thanksgiving, needs these creatures to be grateful? I mean, that seems like a personal moral weakness.

But, I'd certainly... Let me correct that sentence that I just made because it's not true about God. God does not need you to be thankful. He does not, he doesn't need it. He's certainly not insecure. He's not craving you to give him thanks. That's not at all God's nature. God doesn't need it. You need to be thankful because it's right. You need to be thankful because it's appropriate. You need to be thankful because like a piece of art, there's a piece of art there. It's like the kids who went on the field trip to the museum and as they're leaving and giggling about the paintings on the wall, the guard says, "Listen, you're not judging the art. The art just judged you." Right? I mean, there's something about the fact that if you don't recognize it then you're a blockhead.

Reminds me of Vincent van Gogh who, in his lifetime, you might remember this 19th century Dutch artist that now, by the way, on the top 50 art pieces to be sold at auction, he's got nine of them in the list and selling in those nine, in the aggregate, over \$900,000,000 for his paintings. Well, in his lifetime the blockheads who he lived with and the people who he hung out with, no one recognized the greatness of his art. Now there are entire complexes now given just to van Gogh's artwork. He only sold one piece of art for the equivalent today of about \$2,000, that's it. I mean he traded a few pieces of art for, you know, to get through and to get by. But this pastor's kid from the Netherlands, he didn't have anyone recognize the greatness of his art. Today they're buying everything they can get their hands on at exorbitant prices at auctions around the world. It's not that we would say it wasn't good when people didn't recognize it. It's who we are saying there's something wrong with a thick-headed people who didn't recognize the art.

Now, there's some subjectivity about art but there's nothing subjective about God. God is great. He's objectively great. And he does not need you to be thankful. As Psalm 50 reminds us, by the way, if God needed anything he certainly wouldn't come to us for it. Right? Think that through. I mean, if God needed something and that's the picture there about sacrifice, bringing sacrifices to God and God says basically this: "If you really saw that I had a need, which of course I don't, it's an absurd statement, but if I were hungry I wouldn't ask you to bring me something to eat." I



mean this is insane. The lowly fallen sinful creatures that we are, God's not saying, "I just wish they would just recognize me for the greatness that I have." That's not it at all. It's the right thing, it's the appropriate thing, it's the proper thing.

A psalm of thanksgiving, instructions for giving thanks, is very important for us to realize is ultimately for our good. Oh, it's for God's glory, there's no doubt about that. God is glorified when people recognize the greatness of who he is. But this isn't because he's insecure or wanting affirmation. It's not because he's so selfish. We call selfishness a moral weakness. Why? Because we don't deserve to be the center of all things. God deserves to be the center, objectively, of all things. He deserves all the credit, all the glory, all the honor, all the power, all the wealth. I mean, these are statements throughout the Scripture that remind us of God's inherent greatness. And for us to stand there and not, as we look at God and the effects of God, and not see his greatness, see, the problem is on us. It's not that we just don't, "Well, I don't really know. I guess I should give it." We're recognizing when we are not thankful that we have a deficiency in our own life. We have a problem. And God would like to fix that problem in us because he's a gracious God. He'd like us to recognize what is right and what is good. And so we ought to thank him and so another psalm about thanksgiving.

Now we see it, by the way, seven imperative verbs here in five verses. I mean this is kind of unique. You have stacked on top of one another, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this. And again you might think, "Why am I being called to be thankful. It's like someone handing you a gift and saying, you know, 'Be sure and write me a thank you note. Now make it a good note. I spent a lot of time on it.'" That just seems wrong. This isn't for God's benefit. It's not because of his insecurity. It's because when you get this right, when we recognize the greatness of God, it makes everything right. It makes everything right in our own lives. It straightens us out. Even if you're sitting in the dark, dank seaweed infested digestive tract of a big fish going in a direction you don't want to go, the Bible says something will be right about you, something will get right about your brain, something will be calibrated in your spirit when you just recognize God is objectively good, and you ought to be thankful for that. A psalm for giving thanks.

That's a lot of prologue for me reading the passage but let's get to it. Stacked on top of each other, imperative after imperative, there are four of them in a row in the first three verses, which become our four points this morning, by the way, on your outline there. Then the third imperative there in verse 3 it gets unpacked. There are three more imperatives in verse 4 as you'll see, which is just a recapitulation, kind of a revival of what starts this chapter, and that's way too much descriptive to read the text, but here it comes.

And it seems really cold in here this morning, is that right? I've got the biggest reaction out of you all morning. It's not my insights, not my great preaching, it's not my ability to articulate or exposit, it's "duh, it's cold in here." And you're like, "Yeah, finally, he's preaching." So I don't know what's going on back there but I know it's complicated. And I don't know, I'm serious, it is. I've been here for 14 years and I have no idea how to adjust the temperature in this room. But they're on it right now, I can see that. Because I can't feel my fingers. It's cold. All right. It's really sad when that's the best part of the sermon so far. Really sad.



I going to read the text - finally, and see some Hebrew imperatives here. "Make a joyful noise to the Lord." Now you see capital O-R-D there. Right? So that's his proper name, Yahweh. That's what's hiding under the English text here, the Hebrew word Yahweh. That's God's proper name. "Make a joyful noise to Yahweh." Who? "All the earth," everyone. "Ha'aretz," the whole world. "Serve Yahweh with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that Yahweh, he is God!" So, I got four imperatives: make a joyful noise, serve the Lord, come into his presence, know that Yahweh, he is God! "It is he who made us, we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

And I get three more imperatives in verse 4. Here's the command: "Enter his gates with thanksgiving," which is what this whole psalm is about, "and his courts with praise," implied again. I guess you'd make it eight imperatives if you imply the imperative there at the beginning, "Enter his courts with praise! Give thanks to him," there's another one, "and bless his name." Now we're back to the paradigm, which is there are reasons for it because you should know something. You should know this: Yahweh is good. Why? "For the Lord is good," because Yahweh is good, "his steadfast love," there's that phrase that Jonah used in the belly of that fish, "his steadfast love," his hesed, "it endures forever. His faithfulness," here's the Hebrew parallelism now, here's the restatement of it. It helps me see this is going all the way to the 21st century on the other side of the world, his faithfulness, that faithful enduring goodness, that commitment to the goodness and the favor and the well-being of his people, "it endures to all generations." That's a great, great short little psalm.

Take these four imperatives at the beginning and build our outline. Number one, "Make a Joyful Noise to Yahweh." Now those four English words "make a joyful noise" those all translate to one Hebrew word "Ruwa." Ruwa is a great Hebrew word because it has that "onomatopoeia" to it. Do you remember that word? It's like the word "hooray," which is really a nonsensical word because it is an onomatopoeia. It's just kind of what you do. You go, yoo-hoo. Right? It's like yee-ha, wah-whoo, yay, yo. That's this ruwa.

Ruwa is a word that is an imperative, it's a verb, it's a sensible verb, but it really is an onomatopoeia in that it's a word of exclamation. It's an exuberant expression. It's translated elsewhere this way: "shout" as a verb. And here it is, this imperative verb: "Shout, shout to Yahweh." Who should shout? Everyone, "all the earth." So let's start here with this. Now you might expect that I'm just going to turn this imperative into a nice imperative here for us and this is, you know, Homiletics 101 and make the outline from the text. It's expository preaching. BAM! But, you know, if we're going to pastorally think through this passage, I want to start with the superlative nature of that phrase. How extreme is it? How extreme is it to say, "Shout to the Lord, shout to the Lord?" And who should do it. ha'aretz, the whole Earth. Everyone, the whole world.

And I'm thinking to myself that's not happening. My neighbors this morning, reading the news feed, sipping their coffee, taking their dogs for a walk, they're not thanking God. It's a psalm for thanksgiving. And they're certainly not thanking him to the extent of exuberant YAY! They're not doing that. It's not happening. And even those who go to church, they go into church yawning. I mean, they may sing with a few decibels in church, but this is not happening. This doesn't happen. And the whole point is: it ought to happen, it should happen. Who should see it?



Everyone should see it. If you want to add one more thing to it, it should be happening all the time. Right? "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." I mean, this is a constant reminder throughout the Bible. You ought to be thanking God all the time in these extreme ways. So let's stop pastorally and sit back and say 'Hmmm' as we kind of think through a psalm for thanksgiving. Hmmm, hmmm. Let's think about this. How do we start? Here's a motivation: a little kick in the butt this morning for you and I.

Number one, you need to consider how ungrateful we are, because you know what, I mean "we" as human beings, we are not doing what this passage says should be done. The deficiency is great. We do not do all that we should do. We don't even come close. "Well, that's really not our disposition getting all excited here. I mean that's a different kind of church." OK. Great. It's not in you to be that way. Right?

Let me take this word and use it in the context, ruwa, as it's used elsewhere. It's a word that is used in contexts that I think are exactly like when you stately people here on a Sunday morning, you do exactly what the word is and says in other context of your everyday life. Ok? The context would be, for instance, here's one. When you are there as an Israeli soldier and there is a threat like the Philistines out there around you and you're going to go out there and clean up and militarily attack them, and here comes the king with his entourage into the middle of the troops to address the troops. So the king is now here, David. David the king, he comes into the camp, we're about to go to war. This is the kid as a teenager who is taking down Goliath with a slingshot. He's the most strategic military thinker that Israel had ever seen. Almost every battle he went into he won. And you were there ready to go to battle and he comes into the camp. Guess what the Israeli soldiers do? They ruwa. They yell, they shout, they go, hooray, the king is here. That's what they do. Ruwa.

\Which, by the way, "make a joyful noise." I know as kids we learned in Sunday school, this is kind of the comforting passage for the tone-deaf among us. Right? It makes you feel good if you can't sing. "If you can't carry a tune this verse is for you, just let it out, just be all, you know, sing off-key, it doesn't matter." This has nothing to do with that. This has to do with yelling when your favorite person comes onto the scene. When Mike Trout steps into the batter's box and you want to see a home run and they announce it, "Mike Trout, now batting for the Angels." What do you do? You say (weakly) amen. No! What do you do? You shout, you ruwa. Right? When you're a basketball fan and Steph Curry steps onto the court before the game starts, he's not done anything. Right? He's in his sweats. He hadn't even made a basket in the game. The scoreboard says zero. And he walks on the court and you're a Steph Curry fan, so what do you do? You ruwa. You yell! You go, "Hooray!"

When you're at Augusta and nothing has happened yet. And now Tiger Woods is announced to stand into that first tee box and take his first shot and everyone ruwa's, they shout. Nothing's been done yet. You say, "No, I understand that, but the reason we cheer for Mike Trout and Steph Curry and Tiger Woods is because we know what they've done in the past. They've done great things in the past. They are really good. And we know and anticipate when Mike Trout steps into the batter's box, we're going to yell, because he's our guy. Matter of fact, we're going to go out





now and pay good money to buy overpriced jerseys to wear with their names on it." Right? But it starts with what? Very stately, very, you know, reserved Orange County men yelling.

And you women are going, "Yeah, that's what my husband does, he's a beast out there." Listen, what about your kid? When your kid before the Little League game gets announced on the big microphone. Right? "Johnny Fabarez, playing third base." Guess what? Mom goes, "Hooray!" He's done nothing yet. Matter of fact, he may be the worst player on the team. Doesn't matter. Mom's excited and she lets out a ruwa. Why? Because that's her guy. That's her man. That's the kid that's going to, you know, even if he's... "I love this person. I think they're going to do great." That's the picture.

And the Bible says this: you ought to be thankful because the king here is among us. The omnipotent, sovereign king has stepped into the batter's box, at least in our minds. It may be a bad, bad day. You may be tangled in seaweed in the digestive tract of a large fish, but you're saying I'm thinking about the greatness of God and I'm going to ruwa. I'm going to hooray. I'm even, that old phrase, "Hip, hip hooray." Which again, is a meaningless phrase it seems. That ancient "hip" means like, "hey," get your attention. "Hey, hey, hey, everyone." And then you ruwa, you hooray. You cheer. Cheer might not be a bad translation of this. Cheer for Yahweh. Have that sense that he is great. We're not even close to getting there in our minds, let alone our expressions most often.

But when there is something good and you see it. I know a very, very, very reserved kind of guy in our church. I went to a men's retreat I was speaking at and we had some time beforehand so we went to the golf course and we were playing there. It was the only time I've ever seen it. We were on like a, I don't know, 150-yard par three and he pulls out his eight iron and he takes a swing with that and that ball goes up in the air, comes right down, bounces three or four times and rolls into the cup. The only hole-in-one I've ever seen. Right? And I wasn't holding the club, let's just make that clear. My friend was, and he's very reserved, but guess what I saw? I saw some exuberant expression of ruwa, because there was a thought in his mind that he hit that ball, it went in the cup, I'm excited. And this is dumb, this is physics. Right? This happens every now and then.

But the reality of what we experience as Christians knowing that God is a great God who's done great things ought to be expressed somehow in our minds to move us to the next level of at least realizing that right now, as we go, (yawning) "thank you God for, you know, my food and my clothes." We're not even close. We've got a long way to go to learn to be a cheering group of people who think through the greatness of God. Who should do it? Everyone should do it. Every single person should do it. We should recognize the need for everyone to do it and that includes us. "Everyone?" Everyone. "What about the homeless?" Yes, the homeless. "Everyone?" Yes, everyone. The disabled?" The disabled. "Everyone?" Everyone. "The people who have nothing going?" Everyone should do this because God is objectively great.

And again, I'm adding, there are so many other passages, Ephesians 5:20. I can add this, it's not in the text, but we should do it all the time. "Giving thanks," here's a passage for you, Ephesians 5:20, "giving thanks always and for everything." You want some superlatives? There are two.



"Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." And again, through that rubric, through that lens, through that screen I'm seeing the greatness of God because I know in Christ the victory has been won. The victory over what? All the things that may bother me. I may die in the belly of this fish. It doesn't matter in the end. The pain and the destruction and the deprivation and the separation and the problems in life, ultimately in the end because I see something beyond the horizon of this life has been accomplished in Christ. "I can give thanks always and for everything." Ephesians 5:20.

We've got a long way to go. I just wanted to start that way. Then it was, "Okay, what are some things that are going to be true if this happens?" I'm going to number two, this is an interesting Hebrew word as well, "Serve Yahweh with gladness." Serve. You don't think you'd see the word "serve" and "gladness" in the same sentence. It's like that phrase that's used there in Genesis 3 when it talks about you're going to work the ground by the sweat of your brow, you're going to eat your bread. It's going to be a lot of work. You're going to sweat. It's the word "to serve." It's used in Scripture to "till the ground." That was the thing I hated as a kid. My parents would say, "before you can go to the park on Saturday you have to go out there and hoe the weeds in the backyard. You got to work in the backyard." I hated that, hated it. It was terrible. I had blisters on my hands out there in the sun.

That kind of hard work, sweat of your brow, that's the word "to serve" Yahweh and do it gladly. I mean that's an oxymoron it seems. And yet the reality is I want to, I'll put it this way, I want to "Drive My Thanksgiving," my thanks, number two, "Into Joyful Service." I want to make a decision that because God is great, I'm not only going to think about expressing this in a more dynamic way, I'm going to really try to find within the whole of who I am, I'm going to cheer for God. But I want to make sure that it's not just some kind of emotive expression. I want it to be service, I want it to translate into stuff that I do, things that actually cost me time and effort and money. That's what the Bible says. That is a consistent picture throughout the Scripture.

If you're thankful to God, here was David being thankful to God to the end of this plague in the land and as the king Jerusalem was suffering. And at the end of that time he's there, he wants to offer to God this gift, this sacrifice of thanksgiving. And as he comes there just north of the citadel of David, the ancient city of David, just north of that is this hill, Mount Moriah. It's where now the Dome of the Rock shrine is. It's where Solomon's temple would be built in just a short amount of time.

David comes upon that land and Ornan or Araunah, two variations of the spelling, like Michael and Mike, in Scripture, he owns this piece of property. It's a threshing floor. Threshing floor because you'd need wind and you need a breeze to get the chaff released from the wheat. So up on this plateau as the Kidron Valley breezes would come he owned this piece of property just north of David's city. And so David goes there and he says I want to buy this. He sees oxen and the sled that was being used to bring all that wheat there. He says I want to buy that. And so it says in Second Samuel that he gives 50 shekels of silver to buy the oxen and the sled. But before he does Araunah says, "Take it. You're the king. I mean, you want to sacrifice to God? Take it."



Not only does David say no, he says I'm going to buy the whole property here from you. And he says I demand to buy it at a fair price. So he pays 50 shekels for the oxen and the wood of the sled and then he buys the whole surrounding area for 600 shekels of gold, not silver, that's the equivalent of over \$500,000 for this piece of property. So \$600,000 he buys the property for, and then he gives that to his son and he says here, build the temple on it. But the thing that he says that's memorable, if you went to Sunday school you might remember this line, he says when Ornan wants to give him the property, he says, "No, I'm not going to sacrifice to the Lord something that costs me nothing." That was so important in his own mind.

I mean, I don't want to re-gift something to someone who I really, really want to say thank you to. I mean, if it comes down to someone doing something great for me, if it comes down to even just me appreciating someone and I want to bring them a present, I mean, I want to go out there and buy it. As a matter of fact, to the extent that I am intensely concerned about expressing my heart, I want to buy something valuable. I want to sacrifice to where it actually hurts to buy this thing. I want to do that for you as an expression of my love and my thanksgiving. I'm not going to go, "Well, let's look through the pile of things I got for Christmas and my birthday that I didn't like, let's pull that out of the bottom of the closet. Here, I'll re-gift this to you." And that's what David thought. I'm not going to give to God something that costs me nothing.

There's always that sense of sacrifice that is tied to thanksgiving. Think of Jonah, Jonah Chapter 2 verse 9. He says, "I will bring my voice of thanksgiving and I will sacrifice to you." Built into that, you might think of the temple and the animals and all that and that's fine, but every animal cost something. And it was important for them to realize that, this was a costly thing for them to bring their gifts to God. That, by the way, the whole expression of the 600 shekels was First Chronicles Chapter 21.

Which, by the way, I talked about buying, you know, overpriced jerseys with Mike Trout's name on it or Steph Curry's name or, you know, whatever. People who love their musicians paying a lot of money for the concerts, they're driving miles and standing in line to get in to see their, you know, pop idol or whatever. All of that is, again, an expression of the devotion is how much they're willing to sacrifice and pay for these things.

By the way, Jonah makes these great statements in the middle of the book in Jonah Chapter 2, and God delivers him. He sends him from Tarshish where he's trying to run away from God to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyria nation, who had been a real pain to the northern tribes of Israel and Jonah. He goes and then he gives the message but he gives it reluctantly. So he is thankful, at least he resolves to be thankful, but then he still serves God but he serves God with a bad attitude. You'd admit that if you know Jonah, right? Jonah Chapter 4, he's there with a bad attitude. God proves that bad attitude when he raises up that plant, sends a scorching east wind, the sun is beating down on his balding head, and as he's sitting there, you know, so relieved that this plant had grown up to give him shade as he's going to watch to see what happens to Nineveh, God sends a worm to kill the vine. Do you remember this? Then he gets angry about it and he says I'm angry enough to die, I just want to die.





And God, again, he comes on the scene and says look at your attitude, look at your attitude. You can't even be thankful for the fact that here these Assyrians, who are a bad people, you know they're bad people because they've caused you guys a lot of pain, that I am now bringing them to repentance. It's not that he's just going to say, oh I'm going to bless them even though they're being a pain in the neck to you guys, he says this, he says, I am going to bring them here to repentance. They're repenting with sackcloth and ashes on their head, the ancient sign of distress over their own lives. They even put sackcloth on their animals. I mean, they put these pelts on them like they were mourning. I mean, they just went all out. He says look at their hearts, look at how they're changing. You can't rejoice in that? But you're going to get mad about you not having an umbrella as you sit here in the hot sun. You don't get it.

In this passage it's more than just serving the Lord, which would be a good thing, driving my thanks to service, it's serving him with gladness. Right? What good is it really, what good is it really for me to do something and yet have a bad attitude doing it. There are people who come, we have a lot of things at our house and people come, thankfully a few people come early to help us set up and stay late to help us tear down. You know, we can have 40 to 50 people sometimes at a meeting in our home. To have those people do that, I mean, it's such a blessing, it's such a help and we're so grateful for that. But if they sat there and all they did was complain about everything, I don't want your service, I'm not interested in that.

And God graciously doesn't zap Jonah dead on the spot for being a, you know, a pill in the middle of this situation where he should be grateful that God is granting repentance to these people. He still wants Jonah to change and he's going to do a lot to get him to change. Stop with that bad attitude. What good is it to serve if we're not willing to serve gratefully? All I'm trying to say is don't tell me you're thankful, ultimately, if you can't joyfully give, if you can't joyfully serve. Don't tell me you're a thankful person to God if you can't do something that's going to cost you in the act of you expressing your gratitude to God. There's joy in paying for the privilege of thanking God, to joyfully do that. Drive your thanks to joyful service and make sure you check the level of your joy in the process.

Third imperative, bottom of verse 2, "Come into his presence with singing!" Now, this is a psalm for thanksgiving and you might say, great, I'm going to get my leather covered Bible and go sit on a rock by myself and be thankful. David did a lot of that. He talked about, you know, his times of solitude, finding strength in God, thanking God. You can picture him there, whether it's, you know, in the desert oasis running from Saul, finding strength and thanking God. You know, I can imagine him returning to his boyhood town, which is basically just a short commute to Bethlehem. I could see him sitting on a grassy pasture feeling the breeze come up the grassy knoll there and just being grateful to God. But that's not the picture of this.

Matter of fact, when David says this and this is a great psalm, Psalm 27, you might remember, verse 4, he says, "One thing I've asked of Yahweh," here's what I want, I want this one thing, "I'm going to seek after this; that I can dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple." Sometimes you think, well the beauty of God is out there somewhere. Let's go sitting on a cliff eating my lunch at the beach or, you know, recognizing the greatness of a sunset, you know, if you happen to be able to see that from your



back porch and say, "This is great. The beauty of God." But he says the beauty of God is where we're congregating here, where people are together in this assembly and in that assembly we're thanking God together.

That's the corporate context of this passage. Look again at verse 4, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise!" Now come there with what? With thanksgiving, blessing. You got to enter his gates with this thanksgiving because you're there in a corporate setting. Of course, I want you to give thanks all the time for everything. That's the will of God. Clearly that's what God wants you to do. Be it by yourself. Do it in solitude. But the context here is corporate worship. Some of you have such good times of private worship you're not interested in the corporate worship and you're sitting here today saying, "Well, we're here, aren't we?" Well you are, but there are people streaming right now who aren't here and I know that some people can't be here. But there are some people who are sitting in their pajamas right now sipping their coffee and they're just saying, "Well, I didn't get up on time and I really, you know, I didn't really make it, but I want a few insights from God's Word." So I guess I'm preaching to the choir to look into your eyes and say, "Hey, you need to be in church. You need to be in corporate worship."

But really the best expression of thanksgiving is when we're with the people of God. So I'll put it this way, if you really want to make this right about thanksgiving, you need to never neglect corporate worship. You should never neglect it. Don't neglect corporate worship. This is key. You should enter his courts, you should come into his presence and all of that in context is being on the Temple Mount and being part of the congregation that's singing and even in the ancient kind of expression, cultural expression, of Judaistic worship and shouting, which is not a bad thing, cheering for the greatness of God, that's the kind of things should be happening corporately. We need to not neglect it.

And if you're expecting me to quote Hebrews Chapter 10 verses 24 and 25, I don't want to disappoint you, so I'll quote it. You should think about... "You should consider," I love that word, it's a very strong word about thinking how I can, "how to stir up one another," to provoke one another, "to love and good works, not neglecting the assembling of yourselves together, as is the habit of some." That's a problem now and it was a problem in the first century. "But," you know this passage, "encouraging one another, and all the more," all the more, all the more, and all the more... And all the less, as you see technology improving. No. And all the more. That was kind of funny because it's true. Right? We think of technology, I can kind of be in church... All the more, physical presence. "All the more as we see the Day approaching." The Day? What day? Capital "D" the return of Christ.

The closer we get to the return of Christ the more we should see the necessity of gathering together. And here's the word provoking, spurring one other on. How do we do that? How do we spur one other on to serve the Lord? Well, because it's all about what we see is the fundamental basics of all worship. That is God is good and we should be thankful. God is good and we should be thankful. And that drives us and motivates us to serve God. How do we provoke one another to that? How do we stir one another? Well here's one thing for sure. Right? We get together and we thank God, we specifically thank God.



Example, and I'm talking about this specifically. When Paul in Second Corinthians Chapter 1, Second Corinthians 1, he shares his problems with the Corinthians. He's thinking historically now, he says, "I shared with you. I did not want you to be ignorant, brothers, about all these trials that we faced." And he says this: "So that I can be helped by your prayers and it will result in many thanksgivings to God." Now if you keep the problem to yourself, then not a lot of people are grateful when God comes through. But when God comes through in whatever the situation might be and the mourning is turned to joy and the sadness is turned to gladness and you're able to say, look at what God did in this situation, the Bible says many people will thank God for that.

There's a synergy, a catalytic nature to us saying one of the reasons we get together more than just sit there and listen to the pastor yack at us with our chairs side by side, but the reason we get up and talk to one another around the doughnut table or the reason we sit in small groups and talk about our lives more than just applying the sermon, one of the applications of the sermon needs to be that we're talking about things that God has done and we're saying thanks to God. And that means there's going to be that synergy, that serendipity of us getting together and talking about, "Well, when would you said that, this made this happen and I was able to say how great God is, to thank God."

Because here's the bottom line. When you're not seeing that happen, perhaps I am, and if you and I both aren't, well maybe that third person is, and if the three of us aren't, maybe that fourth person is. And you know, there should always be fuel for thanksgiving just in the fact that we're engaged in corporate worship, which again is more than bolted seats facing the front. It's about us engaging in each other's lives.

And I love the fact that it says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving." "Coming into his presence with singing." You've got to have that joyful gratitude for the goodness of God as you get in. You know, you come into this building, they give you things. Here's a bulletin, here's a Compass pen, you know. But imagine if they said, "Well, well wait. What's the password?"

Which by the way, when we closed escrow next door as we're starting to formulate this Compass Bible Institute, which is about to get off the ground, which by the way, probably in less than a month, we've got a date, I just don't know exactly when it is, it's within the month, we're going to reveal our details of this project. We'll look at the class schedule that is going to be coming out. The Web site is going to have all the details, all the applications for enrolling in all of this, all this is coming to fruition, it's so exciting.

But when we got the key, we closed escrow at the end of December. And what was great about it is, you know, we didn't have when they gave us, you know, here it's Compass Bible Church's now, and a bunch of us leaders got the key, it's not the key like we have where you stick it in the lock and turn it. It's a key card swipe kind of key. Which again, I know it wears off, you know, once you have it for a while, but we don't have them here, so that was exciting for me to get the swipee thing to get in the door. That was awesome. I know, I know, but cool. I just love pulling the card out and going swipe and hearing it go click and the door opens. It's just awesome. I just love that. It's neat. We got to do that when we get over there, put in our own car key system.



Anyway, it was great to have that, but I'm just thinking about how do I get in? Well, I don't need a traditional key to get in. Well, you don't need a traditional key, here's the picture, of getting into corporate worship. What you need is to swipe the card, which is here's what I'm thankful for. Here's what I'm joyfully thankful for. Now can you imagine the ushers at the back, instead of handing you a bulletin and a pen they go, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait, what's the password? What can you tell me that God has done? What are you thankful for?"

Remember when you were a kid, maybe you had a godly dad who sat around at Thanksgiving trying to make everyone around the table share what, you know, "What are you thankful for?" Right? And you kind of felt the obligation to sit there and come up with something. I mean, what if that was what it was like. You got to enter his gates with thanksgiving. You better come in here with something to be thankful for.

Which by the way, I talk about everything getting right when you're thankful. You know, secular psychologists and social scientists are always showing us, I mean, it's like duh, we don't need, you know, federal grants to do studies on this, but they do studies and from 8 to 80, I remember this one study, they made people in two control groups simply at the end of the day write down five things they were thankful for. And over here in this control group they had them then say five things that you did not like about your day. Now again, I don't need data to prove how this is going to go whether you're 8- or 80-years-old. Right? What happens when you spend at the end of the day writing down the five things you didn't like about the day versus the five things in your day that you were grateful for.

And I'm thinking isn't that the default mechanism of our own flesh at the end of the day? What do you talk about at the dinner table? It's not like "here are the five great things that happen at the office today, honey." Right? It's usually here are the five terrible things that happen. We want to commiserate around the bad stuff. It changes your life. And these are people who are not grateful TO anyone. Think about that. At Thanksgiving I get so mad, you've heard me say this so often, with the TV broadcast with everyone going, "Oh, it's Thanksgiving. Be thankful. I'm thankful. Are you thankful? Well I'm thankful." I'm thinking what are you thankful for and who are you thankful to? Well, even in these controlled studies with these psychologists and social scientists, at least they get the first part right. "What are you thankful for?" And that's transformative.

And if you really start to say I realize as the source of all good things, James Chapter 1, is this God of the universe, from God, this great provider of all things. Every good and perfect gift comes from him. If you start thinking that way, that he's the one who causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, sends his rains on the crops, that everyone coming out of Costco with baskets full of food, that God is ultimately a provider of all those things. Even if you think it's your great smarts and your brain that gives you that job and that's why you make so much money and you can afford, you know, the big box of goldfish or whatever, the reality is this, the Bible says, God gives you the power to make that wealth so that you can enjoy the fruit of the land. God is the God who does all that. To recognize those components, it's transformative. We need to come to church, all of us, thinking those things. What are we thankful for? Who are we thankful to?



Corporate worship helps that in so many ways. It's about us noticing those, it's about us recognizing those, it's about us directing those things.

If you think you have nothing to be grateful for, that's one thing we come to worship to do together. We recognize that even if all of us had the worst possible week, if we're in China and we're all being persecuted and your pastor's locked up in prison and they're tearing our churches down, even in the worst situations around the world, we could still sit around and engage in what they call the Eucharist. Right? Now, I know it's been perverted in a lot of churches with bad theology. But what is that? Paul calls it "the cup of blessing," the cup of thanksgiving. If nothing else we all share, even if we all bearing the scars of governmental persecution, that we are forgiven people "giving thanks to the Father in this, that he's qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Colossians Chapter 1. I'm qualified to be in God's family. I'm forgiven. The forgiveness of sins. Corporate worship reminds us of that, whether it's our thanking that is catalytic because I'm thankful for what other people are experiencing, and when they're not experiencing maybe I've got something to be thankful for that they can piggyback on. And then the fundamental underlying foundational things that all Christians should be thankful for if there's nothing else on the temporal table, the cup of blessing. The participation we have in the blood of Christ.

There are three imperatives: make, serve, come. Make a joyful noise or cheer, shout. Serve the Lord with a certain disposition of gladness. Come into his corporate presence there. The echo is in verse 4. I probably should put that next to the point. There's the echo of it. "Enter his gates giving thanks, bless his name." The rest of it, which is really verses 3 and 5, is this: it's knowing. "Know that Yahweh, he is God." It is him who made us. We are his. Now there are all these things. Then again in verse 5, you got to remember: "The Lord is good, steadfast love." These are all things that we are to know. This is the fuel that fuels all the thanksgiving.

That's why in a sense this all works backwards. Right? We can shout and get to that place, because we serve with gladness, because we're corporately catalytic forcing and stimulating one other to that right kind of thinking about God. But it's all based on us being aware and knowing and knowledge and noticing the greatness of God. And so it's all about us thinking.

Number four. Fill your thanks... Right? It is not just, okay I'm going to be more thankful and say thankful things, it's with content. "Fill Your Thanks With Content." I'm thinking about the specifics. And if there's nothing else let's start with Genesis 1. And that is God made us. God is God and "he made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture." Which by the way, if you have an old translation you might have the textual variant, which we don't have too many, really, certainly in the Old Testament Masoretic text, but we have one here. In the old translation King James talks about, "it is he who made us and not we ourselves." Like, oh, we didn't make ourselves.

Unfortunately, the Hebrew word "Lo" is the word "no" and the Hebrew word "Hu" is the word "his" and the vocalization of those led to that easy confusion. That's why there's a textual variant here. I think it makes sense to translate it the way that you're translating it here, or at least buying the variant that is not the "lo" in terms of "no" we didn't make ourselves but "hu" in terms





of "he" or "his." We didn't make ourselves, that's not the point. It's that we are his people, because it's echoed in the next two lines. Right? "We are his people, we're the sheep of his pasture."

So God made us and that makes us his. And I illustrate that all the time from the platform anytime we talk about creation. Matter of fact, when we share the gospel, we start with Genesis, Genesis 1, he made us. One of the problems with evolution is the detachment from the responsibility and authority of our Creator, because once I make something I own it. I have the copyrights to it, I'm in charge of it. I make something, it's mine. And so the problem with us thinking about that we're just, you know, some kind of primordial slime that came together somehow and some, you know, big bang that follows none of the laws of physics because there was a special law of physics that govern the infinitesimally small singularity that turned into something, because they really can't explain that because there are no rules, well rather it's explained by saying there are a different set of rules. All the nonsense of that kind of fantasy is that ultimately it divorces us from recognizing that God owns us. So we are accountable to him, that he's in charge.

And the point is here that's how it starts. Yahweh is God. God is God. God is the one in charge. God has authority. In that sense, God is great just because of his position. It's like David coming into the camp and then the Israelis cheering, not just before we even think about anything that he's done but just because of who he is. He's in charge, he's the king, he's the boss. And the Bible says that one day every knee will bow and that's not because people are blessing God for all the things that he's done for them. Even the lost, the Bible says, Philippians Chapter 2, "will bow down before him and every tongue confess that Jesus" is really good and a really good giver of gifts. No, these are people headed to the Great White Throne and heading to the Lake of Fire. They will confess with their lips that Jesus is what? "He's Lord." He's the boss, he is in charge. And at the very end even the people who have spurned his authority will eventually say he's the boss, he's in charge, he's the chief. And that's the point that we start there. It's good for us to know he owns us.

If you lend me your really nice car this afternoon, I would hope you'd want me to remember that it's your car when I'm driving it around. You'd want me to keep that in mind because, "It's not your car, Pastor Mike, you can't afford this car. This is my car and I want you to treat it very carefully because it's my car. I mean, don't go spilling Coke. As a matter of fact, I don't want you eating in my car and I certainly don't want you just jamming it into a small parking space so I might get door dings, don't do that. It's my car." So you want me to drive it in a way that reminds me that it's your car because I'm going to hand it back to you and it's going to be yours at the end of the day, but I get to drive it today.

And so it is with your life. You're driving your life around but it isn't yours. It's not yours. It's not yours because God made you and if he made you he owns you, he's in charge, he's the authority. And you are not the owner of your life. Evolution is great in that regard. When we divorce ourselves from a personal creator, not only do we divorce ourselves from the authority of that God but any accountability. I don't think I'm accountable. That's why non-Christians LOVE the theory of the fact that we are just a product of chance plus time, which all the chance in the world



and all the time in the world is never going to get us to where we're at now, by the way, against all the laws of physics and that's a different sermon. But the point is you cannot divorce yourself from not only the authority but the accountability of that God.

And so it is as you drive your life around remember this, he made you therefore he owns you. But secondarily, because you got the car impounded because of sin, now I'm really stretching this illustration, the Bible says if you're a Christian he got you out of the impound lot and you're driving your life around today, if you're a Christian, doubly indebted to God, because God not only owns you by virtue of him being Creator, he owns you by virtue of him being Redeemer. He redeems you out of the penalty of your sins.

And here's how it's put as Paul talked to the Corinthians who are very free-wheeling about their view of autonomy and being libertine, doing whatever they want with their lives, he said this: "Remember this, you were bought with a price, you were bought with the price, therefore glorify God with your body." Drive this life around carefully. You can't just get in a ship and go to Tarshish if you want. You need to submit before God has to put you in the belly of a whale to redirect your life that whatever he's doing in sending you to a place you don't want to go is that you're going to recognize his greatness. And you're going to say, "You're in charge," and I'm going to say, "You own me and if you want me to do this I will do that, even if it's not what I like or what I want. Fill your thanks with content, know that God is God, know that he's Creator, know that he's bought you, know that he owns you.

And then this. Verse 5, "Yahweh is good." That's the subtitle of our message this morning. He's good. And the one thing that's underscored here that's then echoed with a parallel line is his "hesed." His hesed, "his steadfast loyal," as some translators put it, his royal love, his continuing kingly love for his subjects, "it endures forever." If you thought, well, it can't mean the other side of the planet, you know, in the 21st century after Christ, well of course, 3,000 years later, "his faithfulness to all generations." Faithfulness is a good summary of his hesed, his faithful, steadfast, persevering, doggedly tenacious love for his creatures.

That, of course, in the covenant context are the people who are forgiven, the people who he does not impute or count transgressions against. He releases them from the penalty and he says, you're mine, you're forgiven, and all of that is the faithfulness of a tenacious God who's going to love you when you don't deserve it. You want to talk about the goodness of God? Fill your thanks with content, not only the personhood of God, the character of God, the supremacy of God, our dependency, our indebtedness, you need to just stop and consider his provision. His provision in the goodness of what he has done and how he loves.

This phrase, how many words? Six words: "for his steadfast love endures forever." It's hard to find a phrase with six words in it in English in our Bibles that are repeated as many times as this is. Forty-six times in the Old Testament the phrase "for his steadfast love endures forever," that is repeated 46 times. And you might know this from Psalm 136, twenty-six of these times it's found right here in this one passage. I'd like you to turn there real quick. Psalm 136. Twenty-six times this very same phrase is used reminding us that God has a love, a faithful love, for his people that is never going to stop. "That faithfulness will endure to all generations."



It's almost comical to read this out loud. Have you've done it before? Psalm 136 just sounds funny. It's like you're stuttering like the record is skipping. For you young people that means that the line keeps repeating over and over again. Verse 1. "Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good." Sounds exactly like Psalm 100 verse 5. And then for the same reason, for his hesed. "His steadfast love," it keeps on going, "it endures forever." Yes. Express it. Matter of fact, you could ruwa about it, you could shout about it. "Give thanks to the God of gods." He's in charge. Yahweh is God, he is in charge and, you know what? His faithful, covenant love, it keeps going, it continues from one generation to the next.

Verse 3, "Give thanks." Give it. Express it. Express it, make sure you know, "to the Lord of lords," the boss of bosses, the Chief of the chiefs. A lot of people have a lot of power in this world but none of them have inherent power, they're all derived power. He is the Lord, the key, the King, the Chief of all the chiefs. "Because his steadfast love continues on." His covenant loyalty to the favor and good of his people forever. "To him who alone," verse 4, "does great wonders." Well, people do some pretty neat things, but God does things that suspend natural law, the great wonders of God and you ought to think about those. They're all underlined and undergirded by the steadfast love, the hesed of love, the loyal love of God that keeps on going from one generation to the next.

"To him who by understanding," he designed the cell. Remember Darwin talking about the cell being so simple and if it were complex this theory couldn't be true. I mean the cell itself, so amazingly complex. And here is the architect of the cells and the dark matter of the universe, the black holes. This God who designed all of the laws of physics. Right? Who out of his brain and understanding made everything, made space, made the heavens, that's the use of the word "Shamayim" here, the vastness of space. For his covenant love, his faithful love, his benevolent love, "it endures forever. To him who spread out the earth above the waters," we got land here, we've got sea there, over there we've got this earth that is there and it's inhabitable and it's fruitful as producing food for everyone. "It's his steadfast love," his faithful love, "it endures forever."

And he made the lights. "He made the great lights." We're talking about, as you see in verses 8 and 9, we're talking about the sun and the moon and the stars. "He made the great lights, his steadfast love endures forever. The sun," this ball of fusion, he made that to keep this planet perfectly warm for us and he did that "to rule over the day. The steadfast love," just in looking at the reality of the warmth of the ball of fusion that warms our planet, how loving God is. "The moon and the stars." We've talked about the moon and what an amazing satellite this is. It's an incomparable satellite in terms of what it does for our planet. And the stars and that reflector, even the reflective nature of the moon dust that makes it just perfect for what God designed it to be. And the stars up there in the sky "to rule over the night, his steadfast love even" in the night sky, it shows his covenant, faithful love "endures forever."

Look at the things he's done, not only in creation and Genesis, let's keep moving through the Bible. How about in Exodus? "He struck down the firstborn of Egypt," those taskmasters who said we're not even going to give you straw to make those bricks, those taskmasters who were so



cruel and mean to our families that were killing our firstborn sons, they were making the males among us to go extinct. I mean, that group of people, God said I'm done, you're going to kill our kids, you're done, we're going to strike you down and break your bow of commitment to killing us and stamping us out. We're going to snap that and we got out, all because of "the steadfast love of God," verse 11, "and you brought Israel out from among those Egyptians," plundering the land, by the way, "because of his faithful, steadfast, loyal, generation after generation, love for his people" with a strong hand, ten plagues, by the way, "and an outstretched arm." That sense of God going before them "his covenant steadfast love endures forever."

Then he divided the Red Sea. Think about that. I mean, talk about suspending natural law. Hydrology and then physics and nothing makes sense. This has to be a God-thing. "The Red Sea was split in two," and they're going across this and it's not even muddy for them. It's like dry land at the bottom of this seabed. He brings them across because of God's steadfast love, even in that act is seen enduring to that generation. Verse 14. "He made Israel pass through the midst of the sea." There they were, even little children and all the cattle and all those carts with all the stuff they plundered from Egypt that God gave them, all of it coming across with, you know, the trailers and U-hauls and Winnebagos, all going through there, if you can picture that. "Because God steadfast love was upon them" and it endured to that generation and beyond.

"He overthrew Pharaoh," the most powerful leader of the ancient world "and all of his army in the Red Sea," they got drowned there, by the word of God, that collapsed upon them "because God's steadfast love endures forever." Verse 16. "He led the people," with Moses as his chosen vessel and his understudy, Joshua, "through the wilderness, and provided manna and provided quail and provided water out of a rock and sustained all of those people "because his steadfast love endures forever." "He struck down great kings," all the enemies and said, "Okay great, here's this nomadic tribe, there's so many of them out there, we're going to snuff them out. And whether it's King Balaam trying to hire Balak to curse them and snuff them out, it couldn't happen, it didn't work. "The steadfast love of God upon his people, it endures forever."

"You killed mighty kings," people who said we're going to take them out really easy. Nope. "God steadfast love protected them." "King Sihon of the Amorites," who Moses defeated north of the Dead Sea as they were coming out of the wilderness, the Sinai, and they were about to go into the Promised Land and cross the Jordan. Here was this king that stood right in their way, crossed his arms and said, "You're not getting across." And here he was, this nomadic tribe, led by this bearded old guy named Moses defeated Sihon, the king the Amorites.

And then Joshua, his understudy, takes on Og, the king of Bashan, all that land east of the Jordan become, you know, Manasseh's tribe there that would settle there. All of that done. Og said you're not having my property. God said yes, "because of the steadfast enduring love that endures forever." He gave them the land and Joshua divides it up, the 12 parcels into the Twelve Tribes. "All of that is a heritage for them to have forever because of his steadfast love," his faithful, loyal love, "that endures forever." "A heritage to Israel his servant," his people who down to today still go there now and walk the shopping malls with Israelis there behind the counter there giving you your lunch, you know, your signor falafel or whatever, it is a picture here of God's faithfulness to his servant and giving him that land as a heritage.



Verse 23, "It is he who remembered our low estate." He's coming in for a landing here. Now he's got it up to the middle monarchy of Israel when this psalm was written, he's remembered us, we don't deserve it. "Because his steadfast love endures forever, he's rescued us from our foes," and it could be a countless list of enemies. "And his steadfast," faithful, loyal, covenant "love endures forever." "He," by the way, "who gives food," not just to us but, "to all flesh." Every animal, as the Psalmist says, even the deer in the wilderness, the mountain goat, he gives them food to eat, "because his steadfast love" over his creation "endures forever."

How does it end? It ends the way it started. "Give thanks to the God," the sovereign God of all things. Why? "Because his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 100 verse 5 says, "The Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever," and then it reminds us with that great parallel line, "his faithfulness to all generations." That's the invite to go to verse 27 and verse 28 and verse 29 and verse 30. But you don't have any those verses there because you're supposed to write them.

Think about the secular psychologists who say just writing down five positive things that you notice in the day and "being thankful" I guess to, you know, the thin air, is going to make your life markedly improved. I mean, they chronicle stuff like lower blood pressure. They chronicle things like better relationships. Having all of these physical actual responses to you simply noticing good things. I'm saying Christians should be giving God thanks all the time about everything and in every circumstance, Philippians Chapter 4, First Thessalonians Chapter 5, for all things, that's God's will, that's what he wants for you. Giving thanks, not just for noticing the things, but expressing those things. And that faithfulness extends to our generation.

Habakkuk Chapter 3. The bad, bad day, much like Jonas' day, only it wasn't just Habakkuk who was struggling it was his whole nation. Listen carefully as I close with these words. He says everything goes wrong. "If the fig tree doesn't blossom," we need those figs to feed our families. "If there's no fruit on the vine," got to have the fruit. It's a good thing, got to feed our kids. "If the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food," if your stomach is wracked in pain because you're starving tonight, if the flocks that you need and all the wool to make your clothes to warm your family, "if all the flocks be cut off from the fold and there are no herds in the stalls," Habakkuk said I got it God.

A lot of injustice, that's how it started. Babylon, I can't believe that they're going to rout the southern tribes of Judah, I can't believe it. He says even if all that happens, and it would by the way, it's going to be a bad day when Nebuchadnezzar rolls into town. Yet, here's his resolve, much like Jonah, "Yet will I rejoice in Yahweh; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. Yahweh is the Lord, he is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer."

Do you ever notice how the deer, you've seen them? I mean, we're not outdoorsmen here, Right? Well, at least I'm not. "Speak for yourself, Pastor Mike." OK. Well you are, but I'm not. But I've seen videos of those deer running through the forest at night. I mean, how do they do that? It's like it doesn't matter how rocky the terrain is, it doesn't matter how uneven, doesn't matter, like it's just you should trip and fall. But those deer make it around pretty well. "Makes my feet like the deer." It doesn't matter if it's a level path or rocky path, doesn't matter if there are trees





down, you've got to jump over, doesn't matter if there are rocks that should twist your ankle. Like a deer, I'm going to plow through this, I'm going to run through this.

"He's going to make me tread on high places." A lot of us miss this. But that's not the end of the verse. You know, the verse, there's a little white space between it, it says, "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments." The whole thing's a song. The whole thing's an expression of how we should be singing to God about the greatness of what God's provided. You say, "Well, Pastor Mike, we should sing right now." Well we should but it's two minutes after the time so we're not going to do it. You're going to have to go get in your car and sing on your way home after you stop at the donut table and share a couple of things you are thankful for to the people who you talked to this morning.

Let's pray. God, help us please to be much more thankful. Help us to be able to even cheer, like we often see at a sporting event, in our own hearts to feel that sense of yes, God is with us. God is good. God is good and I should be thankful. God, every good gift comes from you and it's easy for people to sit back when things are going well, to look at my family, look at my relative good health, look at the fact that I got food in the cupboard, got a car in the garage. And yet if all that were taken away as Habakkuk 3 says let us still find that resolve to be thankful and joyful and rejoice in you, give us strength in that. As Nehemiah said, we recently read it. Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord is our strength." It's that expression of the goodness of God. So help us do that much, much better in this week ahead.

In Jesus name, Amen.