

Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon - Extolling The Lord.

Text: Psa: 145:1

Suggested Hymns:

Tan: 563, 566, 454, 290, 565

Ade: 814, 564, 457, 284, 567

- 1) Extolling the Lord
- 2) Thanks for physical and temporal blessings
- 3) Thanks for mental health
- 4) Spiritual blessings
- 5) Appreciation of salvation
- 6) The example of Christ

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 145:1, ***' I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

On this Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday we find that it is a very easy thing to turn to God and say, *"Thank You."* But it is still another thing actually to thank Him in our lives.

Gathering in our houses of worship, we sing our Harvest Thanksgiving hymns, in which we extol the Lord for His blessings upon us. We praise Him for His greatness and for His majesty; otherwise we would not be assembling in His name.

There are so very many things that come into our hearts on a day like this. We think of the words of David. When he wanted to excuse himself from the feast before King Saul, he said, ***"For there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family."***¹ These words of David indicate to us that he, together with his family, observed a yearly feast in which sacrifices were brought to the Lord.

And in this connection we cannot but think of the Feast of Tabernacles, which, in a sense, might be called the Thanksgiving Feast of the people of the Old Testament. And so when we go back into the Old Testament, with its feasts and festivals observed in honour of God and His goodness, we are reminded that not only certain individuals, but entire families assembled in the observance of these festivals and joined in their praise to God.

Perhaps it was this practice that prompted David to speak as he does in the 145th Psalm. Here David sings a song of praise to God. Perhaps he remembers how, as a boy and as a young man, he joined with his family to go down to Bethlehem in order to keep the feast.

And it is a thrilling picture, isn't it, when we see entire families joyfully and happily preparing themselves for the worship in the house of God? What better day could there be for such a consecrated worship on the part of entire families than the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival? As fathers and mothers, as brothers and sisters, as husbands and wives, we want to say with David today, *' I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Extolling The Lord

If it is self-evident that we offer an expression of gratitude to our fellow men when they have befriended us, how much more should we take time to say *"Thank You"* to God! We become impatient with those people who simply take advantage of our good nature and depend upon us to do certain things for them without any expression of gratitude or appreciation on their part.

What if God would come to you and to me right now and say, *"My friend, I am becoming somewhat impatient with you because of your constant demands upon Me, without any show of appreciation"*? David, in our text, directs our attention to our God and King. He is reminding you and me that we have a personal responsibility and obligation to God. It is God who in all of His majesty and all of His glory deigned to look down upon us in mercy and love and to bestow His blessings upon us.

So often we speak of God in an impersonal way. We fail to use the possessive pronoun as David does when he says, *"My God."* Because He is my God, I feel that I must show my appreciation of His kindness. No matter who we may be, whether our position in life be that of a father or a mother, a teacher or a pupil, an employer or an employee, working or retired, we ought to be able to say today, *"I will extol You, my God. I will bless Your name forever and ever."*

2. Thanks For Physical And Temporal Blessings

When I think of the many temporal blessings which God has bestowed upon me, then I must say, *¹ I will extol You, my God.* As I look back, I ask, “Hasn’t God provided me with the necessary things of this life?” Have I ever gone hungry? Have I ever experienced the annoying pains in the pit of the stomach that almost drive to crime or insanity?

Today, especially, we are reminded once again to give thanks to our God for the fruits of the earth, for daily work and His promise that ²² *“While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”*²

Have I suffered hardship or trials because I didn’t have the necessary shelter and protection? And what about my health? Hasn’t God been good to me in many ways when it comes to my physical well-being?

Have you ever asked yourself these questions, speaking in the first person singular? Your thanks to God must be a personal matter. It is not enough simply to be satisfied with a mere statement of gratitude in general terms. It is what God has done for me that must prompt me to cry out, *¹ I will extol You, my God.*

When did you last walk through a hospital? When did you last hear the cry of pain? When did you last see the tears of anguish rolling down the cheeks of a loved one because ill health, like a monster, was sapping his or her lifeblood?

When you walk through the institutions of mercy, you will find that God has blessed you in such a way that you can say with the Psalmist, ¹⁶ *You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.*³ Therefore you will sing with David, *¹ I will extol You, my God.*

There may be some people who are going to say, *“Well, we find very little reason to thank God, for trying circumstances prevail in our world today.”* It is true, there are wars and rumours of wars, and the added pest of terrorism. Fear is gripping the hearts of men, and for that reason some will say that we have no reason to give thanks.

But let us look at the situation honestly. As we look upon the long record of achievement here in our own country, must we not be prompted to say that the Lord God has been good to our land? Hasn’t He given us much prosperity and at

least outward peace? Oh, even in days of trouble, we have reasons to thank God and to say with David, *' I will extol You, my God.*

In our land we have so many opportunities which are not found in other countries. We have so many blessings and our standards of living are so different that when we make comparisons with other nations, we at once realise something of the greatness of the prosperity and the blessings which God has bestowed upon our land.

And yet, despite the prosperity which we enjoy, we know that there are multitudes who are living in cold, comfortless hovels, without heat, without sufficient clothing, and without sufficient food. And because they are hungry and cold and poor, they are living without hope, reminding us of drowning men who clutch at elusive straws.

In so many quarters in our world, despair has come, and hope has gone. When you and I see such a situation, I don't see how we shall be able to say, *' I will extol You, my God* without trying to plant the germ of hope in their lives by loving them as the Master loved them.

You and I must do all that we can in order to make our lives count in such a way that others, too, will be truly thankful.

3. Thanks For Mental Health

Have you ever stopped to say *"Thank You"* to God because He has endowed you with a sound mind? Oh, what an awful thing it is, to live without reason! And when we see how those are greatly afflicted, then I am sure that we are ready to say, *' I will extol You, my God.*

To be able to converse with others, to enjoy the fellowship of friends, to take part in society, surely these are blessings for which we need to thank our God. Think of those who have to be isolated, those who can have visitors only once or twice a week, those who cannot enjoy the fellowship of loved ones because of the peculiar afflictions of the mind.

I mention this blessing of a sound mind because we so often take it for granted, and we seldom realise how appreciative we should be to the Lord, our God, for the mental health with which He has blessed us.

¹ *I will extol You, my God.* These words of David express the spirit of calm exultation in God's glorious government. There is no doubt that David was thinking here of the time when God had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and particularly from the hand of King Saul.

You may say, "Yes, David had many reasons to extol the Lord, his God. He lived an adventurous life and was frequently in danger, and for that reason he needed to thank God for His providence and protection." But isn't the same thing true today of you and me? In this day of high-speed transport on land, on sea, and in the air, we again and again find ourselves in very dangerous situations.

And sometimes we little know how close we have been to death, but some way, somehow, God has preserved us and kept us. He has sustained our lives in the midst of trials, and in great afflictions He has heard the voice of our pleading and our praying, calling us back from the valley of the shadow.

In such moments we are quite ready to say "Thank You" to God, and rightly so because *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High.*⁴

4. Spiritual Blessings

We dare not neglect to praise and thank God for the many spiritual benefits He has bestowed upon us. The Gospel, through which we have the privilege of approaching Him as dear children, must prompt us to say "Thank You." When the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:15, ¹⁵ *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*, he calls attention to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus.

And you and I would hardly be here today, in the house of God, if we did not appreciate the great work of Jesus in the redemption of souls. We must say with David in the words of the text, *I will bless Your name forever and ever*, when we realise what it means to have God's unspeakable Gift, our Saviour.

You and I have deserved nothing but wrath and displeasure because of our sins before God. And yet God looks upon you and me with tender compassion, and He proclaims to you and me, ¹⁶ *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*⁵

Appreciating the work of our redemption and receiving Christ into our hearts by faith, we shall, as grateful parents and grateful children, leave our houses of worship today and go home thanking God for the gift of salvation in Christ, our Lord, saying, "I thank You, Lord Jesus, that You have redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with Your holy, precious blood and with Your innocent suffering and death; that I may be Your own and live under You in Your kingdom and serve You in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."

Surely, if we go into our homes and thus express our gratitude to God for the gift of salvation, the blessings of our Lord will continue in our lives for time and for eternity.

5. Appreciation Of Salvation

Do I appreciate God's gift of salvation? Do I appreciate what Jesus has done for me? Am I grateful to Him for His bitter suffering and torturous death? If I am truly penitent, if I am heartily sorry for all my sins, and if I trust in the merits of Christ, my Saviour, then I am ready to show my appreciation for what Jesus has done for me.

And then, and then only, can I say with conviction and with determination, ***I will bless Your name forever and ever.*** Then I know that my gratitude will not be mere lip service, but something that will flow from the very depth of my heart. Then I shall really mean it when I say, ***' I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever.***

And in order that my gratitude may flow from the depth of the heart, I will make every effort to join in the hymns of praise sung in public worship and in the prayers offered at the family altar. Yes, then I will not hesitate to make confession of my Lord Jesus before the world. I will show my appreciation by speaking of Him to others, and in that way I will really be blessing His name forever and ever.

Have you ever stopped to consider that the finest way for you to show your gratitude to Jesus is by trusting Him implicitly? By being obedient we show our love to Him, and in such demonstration of love there is always the essential element of appreciation. Trust Him for His many promises, and you will be all

the better for it. Believe Him when He says, *be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.*⁶ Heed His call when He wants you to walk with Him. Cling to His Word, which will inspire you and encourage you in time of trouble and in distress.

I will bless Your name forever and ever. When you read the many Psalms of David, you will see, by the expressions of gratitude that flow from his lips, David, too, was a man who gave of his earthly substance in appreciation for what the Lord had done for him.

He never hesitated to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving. How is it with us? Are we willing to give of our earthly substance so that the world may know that we are *“blessing the name of the Lord forever and ever?”* Think of the many others who are going to bless and extol Him because of the sacrifices we are making to send forth the Gospel.

6. The Example Of Christ

And now look to the Lord Jesus. We see Him thanking God when He fed the hungry in the wilderness and again when He restored Lazarus to life. Also on other occasions we see Him turning to God in gratitude. And what a wonderful example of gratitude He, the very Son of God, is!

Hear Him pray just before Lazarus was restored to life, *“Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.”*⁷ Whenever we celebrate the Holy Supper, we see how the Lord Jesus gave thanks. Are we emulating the Master?

Let us pray to God for a thankful spirit so that we always may be ready to share with others the blessings He has bestowed upon us and show our gratitude by a real, active participation in the work of the Church.

Praising God’s name forever and ever, you and I will, with our lips and with our lives, help spread the Gospel of Christ for the saving of many souls.

Sincerely penitent because of our sins and deeply conscious of our own limitations, let us come to God with the song of triumph in our hearts and sing with David, *‘ I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever.* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Samuel 20:6

² Genesis 8:22

³ Psalm 145:16

⁴ Psalm 92:1

⁵ John 3:16

⁶ Matthew 9:2

⁷ John 11:41