

THANKFUL Podcast – Week 1

In the run up to thanksgiving, we spend our days living in gratitude and learning the way of thankfulness to God. This first week we will look at the stories of thanksgiving in scripture.

Monday, November 9 - Morning

Deuteronomy 26:5-11

⁵ “And you shall make response before the LORD your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. ⁶ And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. ⁷ Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. ⁹ And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. ¹¹ And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you.

Comments:

When I was in grade school, my family set off on a trip through the south. It was about this time that the series of Alex Haley, entitled *Roots*, came out. Haley’s story begins with Kunta Kinte, a man living in Gambia, Africa in the year 1750. Haley traces the story forward through the forming of the new nation, through the civil war and afterward. My family roots experience involved going back to where the family began. The progenitor of our family in North America arrived, from the best of our knowledge, in 1683. Our summer trip through the south involved a simple mission. We wanted to learn our family history. In the process, we visited the first farmland and homestead owned by the family and went to family burial plots stretching from North Carolina to Virginia and South Carolina. This experience gave me a sense of history and a deep sense of connection to my forbears. For the first time, I began to think about where I had come from, how the country came to be and what the future might hold. Now, our text today is something of a history lesson for the people of God. In this text, God tells his people that when they come to worship, they need to remember where they came from. My father was a wandering Aramean, in other words, he was a nobody. He had no roots and no promised future. He and his people ended up in slavery in Egypt without hope. Egypt was the most powerful kingdom on earth at the time. They were huddled masses, without a land of their own. Talk about a situation that was a dead end. They were a faceless and nameless workforce, there to build the projects of Pharaoh. Nothing more. How could they ever become free? How could they have an identity as a people and have land of their own? Here’s how: God loved them and remembered his covenant to Abraham. He rescued his people from the land of their bondage. They were formed into a nation against all odds. You see, upon coming into worship, God told Israel to remember that what they had was all gift. They were living a dream. This is where gratitude comes from, remembering your story and seeing all God has provided to you. *And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house...* This is what this time of the year is for. What is your story? How did you or your family come to this country? How has your story been shaped by the

goodness and the grace of God? You see, Abraham did not deserve God's gifts. God didn't choose to bless him because he was better than others or because there was anything special about his family. God loved him because he chose to love him. It was all of grace. This is what we celebrate in worship. Indeed, this is why we worship. God has brought us to himself in Christ and given us a place in his kingdom, in his family.

Let us pray:

Lord God, forgive us for forgetting. We receive grace upon grace from you. You have given us life, precious freedom, a place with you, and an identity. We so rarely look back to see the story we have lived and your goodness across our lives. Help us to see and rejoice. For we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday, November 9 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Lord God, I praise you with all my inmost being; I praise your holy name. Lord, I will not forget your gifts. You have forgiven all my sins, healed my diseases and redeemed my life from the pit. You have crowned me with your love and compassion. You have satisfied my desires with good things. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is your love for those who fear you; as far as the east is from the west, so far have you removed our transgressions from us. We thank you for your grace and pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday, November 9 - Evening

2 Chronicles 29:27-30

27 Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. 28 The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. 29 When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. 30 And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped. Then Hezekiah said, "You have now consecrated yourselves to the Lord. Come near; bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the Lord." And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings.

Comments:

It could have been a horrible tragedy for our friends. One of their cars was in for repair, and after the work was completed the couple and their kids all went down to pick it up. On the way back home, the husband followed his wife and kids home. He was behind them on the highway when the tragedy began to unfold. He saw a wheel spin off of a huge truck and head straight toward the car with his wife and kids inside. It was large enough and going fast enough that it could cut the car in half. There was nothing he could do but cry out to God for his family. The tire struck the car in the front and split the front of the car. The car skidded off the road, and he pulled off the road preparing to call 9-1-1. However, when he got to the car, no one was injured. Somehow the engine had blocked the speeding wheel. The car was totaled for sure, but everyone was safe. Right there on the side of the road, my friend Mark

thanked God for sparing his family. Now, as we read this section of scripture, we are given a glimpse into a mighty celebration that king Hezekiah prepared for his people. Here's what had happened. When Hezekiah came to the throne, his people had wandered far away from the Lord. The king before Hezekiah had been unfaithful to God. The Syrian army conquered him and hauled him off to Damascus. There he turned to the gods of the Syrians hoping they would come to his aid. He shut the temple of the Lord and even stole the holy vessels for his own use. It is difficult to imagine how much he led the people of God astray. When Ahaz, the evil king, died, the temple was left in disrepair, and the people were worshiping other gods right there in Jerusalem. Ahaz's son, on the other hand, had an experience of the presence and goodness of God. He started a project to renovate the temple and to rededicate the priesthood. He understood that as far as the people had strayed from the Lord, God had been good to them. Though the people were faithless, God was faithful. The passage we read comes from the service to rededicate the temple. But it ended up being more than a temple renovation. Hezekiah wanted the people to rededicate themselves to the Lord. After all, what would it matter if the temple was restored, if God's people failed to worship him there? As we read the story of Hezekiah, we reflect on those times when God renewed us and restored our faith. Let me tell you what my friend did. After the accident was cleaned up, he asked if he could keep that wheel. He hauled it to his house and built a little monument in his backyard so that his family would never forget the way God spared them.

Let us pray:

Lord God, may we never forget your goodness and faithfulness. You have kept us secure in your love. You have provided us with every good gift. Help me to remember your faithfulness today and to give thanks to you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, November 10 - Morning

2 Chronicles 33:14-16

¹⁴ Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, and for the entrance into the Fish Gate, and carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah. ¹⁵ And he took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. ¹⁶ He also restored the altar of the LORD and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.

Comments:

When I was in college, I was invited to be part of a team to bring a series of worship services to a country Baptist church. Each member of our team was assigned to live with a family that was part of the church. When I arrived at the home where I would be staying, I saw something striking. In the driveway was a car with the words painted on the side, "God's Car." I'm not making this up. I wondered what the story was behind this car and what it was like to drive this car through town. I didn't have to wait long to hear the story. The owner of the house was a man in his sixties that had lived for one thing all his life, his business. He came to faith in Christ as a young man and spent years telling God that he'd have time for him when the time was right, when he reached success. But, before then, he was just too busy. He was in his fifties when he had a massive heart attack, and death was knocking at the

door. Now, God had his attention. It was then that he realized he had gotten everything wrong. His life had always belonged to God, and indeed everything he had, his home and successful business was God's. This is why he had those words painted on his car. This became the theme of his life. He didn't divide his life between his business and God. No, he saw that God was engaged in everything in his life, and with him fully. Now, the scene we read from the book of Chronicles tells what happened after Manasseh came to faith in God. Though he was Hezekiah's son, and though Hezekiah walked with the Lord, Manasseh had his own plan. Manasseh took the throne at age 12 and did everything he could to make it his own. Indeed, he even recrafted worship at the temple and set up his own idol there in the place of God. We are told that Manasseh did far worse things than his pagan neighbors. Now don't think that God didn't speak to Manasseh. He did, but Manasseh and the people would have nothing to do with the Lord. Then came Manasseh's fall. The Assyrian army showed up, captured Manasseh and put a hook through his nose, shackles on his arms and legs, and led him like an animal to Babylon. That's when Manasseh had his chance to repent. When he was playing the game by his own rules, he wanted nothing to do with God. But, in the darkness of an Assyrian prison, Manasseh experienced a genuine conversion. We are told that God heard his prayer and freed Manasseh, and Manasseh "knew that the Lord was God." Wow! Talk about a turnaround. In this one man, we see the worst sort of idolatry and then the most beautiful repentance. He was never the same. That's what happened to the man I met that day. Everything was going fine in his life. He had no time for God, and then he found himself in the ICU clinging to life. It was there his perspective was changed, and his life too! He told me that his car was not the only thing that was God's. His house, his business, and everything else. Lock, stock and barrel. Most important, he had become God's man. That's what happened to Manasseh. He shows us how far we can stray from the Lord, and how willing and ready the Lord is for us to return to him.

Let's pray:

Gracious heavenly Father, your mercy is surprising. We so easily become impatient, but you are patient, waiting for us to come to you for life. Thank you for never giving up on me. Help me to see the magnitude of your mercy so that I never give up on others. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, November 10 - Midday prayer

Let's pray together:

Lord God, I do not have anything that has not been given to me. Yet, I often feel little gratitude. I do not see how blessed I am. You have given me life, health, and an amazing family and community. Forgive me for taking so much for granted and for missing the joy of celebrating your goodness to me. Provide, I pray, fresh insights into your goodness that I might give thanks to you. For I pray in your name. Amen.

Tuesday, November 10 - Evening

Psalm 54:4-7

⁴ Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. ⁵ He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them. ⁶ With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good. ⁷ For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Comments:

Our first child, Rachel, has always loved singing. When she was a young child, we struggled as all young parents do in getting our daughter on track to do the things she needed to do. These were simple things like going to bed on time and brushing her teeth. In the midst of sometimes very frustrating evenings, we hit upon a practice that worked wonders. We made up a song with a catchy tune that led her through the steps of getting ready for bed. Actually, we called it the going-to-bed song, and we told her she was supposed to do the things she was singing about. The song led her on a journey from putting her pajamas, to crawling into bed and saying a prayer. Now, many of the songs of scripture are story songs. They tell us what happened when enemy armies were defeated or when God brought physical healing. These songs take you on the journey through the event, with all the emotions, into the presence and care of God. This psalm of David does just that. It tells of a time when David was hiding in the wilderness, and the people that lived there set David up to be captured by King Saul. Saul and his soldiers showed up in force, and it seemed that all was lost. But, something unexpected happened. Just as they were ready to close in on David, Saul got a message telling him that the Philistines had attacked the land and that he better go and face them, or the moment would be lost. So, imagine David. He's cornered without hope of escape, and then God provides an unlikely reprieve. That is when David wrote this song. He explains what it's like to celebrate a victory you did nothing to win, to have a safety provided by God. He says God is his helper, and that he will give thanks to the Lord. As I read David's songs, it makes me think of the songs we would write and how they would tell of God delivering us from danger and from every trouble. You see, we need songs too. Not just ones that lead us through the chores of our lives, but ones that remind us God cares for us and has saved us and given us a secure place to stand through Jesus Christ. We can all rejoice in that today.

Let us pray:

Our gracious and loving heavenly Father, for the many times we have not seen the danger but you have protected us, for the constant outpouring of your grace and mercy, for your faithful love that is with us in season and out of season, for your patient goodness and your readiness to save, we give you thanks and worship you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday, November 11 - Morning

Ezra 3:10-11

¹⁰ And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. ¹¹ And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Comments:

In Luke 15 Jesus tells three parables. The first involves a shepherd who loses one of his hundred sheep. He leaves the ninety-nine to search for the one and rejoices when he finally finds it. The next story tells about a woman who loses one of her ten coins. She turns the

house upside down until it is found, and when she does find it, she invites her friends and neighbors to celebrate with her. The final story is about the prodigal son who leaves his father's household and loses everything in a foreign land. He eventually returns, and the father receives him with love and joy. We don't have to guess about what these parables teach; Jesus tells us plainly that God and the heavenly angels rejoice when a person who has been lost is restored. Yes, we are like that coin and sheep that God has brought back to himself. And if God is so joyful to bring us back, shouldn't we feel joyful as well? We should, and we should be thankful too! In fact, restoration might be the thing that prompts thankfulness more than anything else. Restoration reminds us that what we have cannot be taken for granted. It gives us a deep appreciation for the things that we lost, which have now been returned. Today's passage from the book of Ezra gives a great illustration of the thanksgiving that comes from restoration. The book tells about the return of some of the Israelites to Jerusalem after they had been exiled in Babylon for several decades. Before that their nation had been nearly wiped out by the Babylonians. Their cities were razed; many of them died in battle, and the temple of Solomon which had stood for centuries was looted and completely destroyed. The survivors were taken to a foreign land, and many wondered what would become of their nation. Could they continue to exist after such annihilation? Ultimately some exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem, and there a small group of leaders including Ezra and Nehemiah led a ragtag group of survivors to rebuild and repopulate the city. Let me tell you, it was hard and dangerous work, and for a long time the people of the surrounding land threatened to attack them. Workers rebuilding the city wall, for example, wore swords and were ready to fight at any moment. Finally, the people were able to lay a foundation for a new temple, and this was the first moment they could rejoice and celebrate. In those days, God's temple was so important because it was the place they were commanded to worship. Restoring the temple meant not only that they had reached a milestone in reconstructing the city, but it was also a symbolic restoration of their relationship to the Lord. He had punished them for their idolatry by sending them into exile, but the new temple showed that he was still their God. Ezra writes, "And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.'" Their thankfulness came from being restored into relationship with God. It came because they had come to know deep down, through their loss and suffering, that these words were true: God is good, and his steadfast love endures forever. I hope we can take a moment to reflect on those words and to be grateful for God's steadfast love toward us.

Let's Pray:

Lord, when we are secure, we take your steadfast love for granted. When we are secure, we get distracted by things that don't matter. We come up with desires for things we don't need. Help us to remember that we have already received the most extravagant and valuable gift – your enduring love. Lord, we thank you that your love is steadfast, and even when we wander away from you, you bring us back. Amen.

Wednesday, November 11 - Midday prayer

Dear Lord, as we enter the season of Thanksgiving, help us to remember just how much you have done for us and the kindness you show us every day. Our life comes from you, and in Jesus we are able to know you and to love you back. We are so thankful to have relationship

with you. We know that you are trustworthy and true, and the good things you have given us are just the beginning of what you have planned. Thank you. Amen.

Wednesday, November 11 - Evening

Nehemiah 12:27-31a

27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; 29 also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall. 31 Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks.

Comments:

Tradition has it that the first Thanksgiving celebration occurred 399 years ago at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Puritan colonists, known today as pilgrims, had a fall harvest meal about a year after their arrival to the new world. And it had been a brutal year. About half of the Pilgrims, including all but four of the women, had died the previous winter. The survivors were helped by a Native American tribe called the Wampanoag, who showed them how to grow food in their first summer. The crop, which likely included things like corn and plums, was successful, giving the colonists a chance to survive the next winter. To celebrate, they held a three-day feast with the king of the Wampanoag and ninety of his men, who we are told brought five deer as a gift for the governor of the colony. Perhaps it is because we know how poorly relations between Native Americans and Europeans went in the following centuries, that the story of the first Thanksgiving paints a picture of almost-too-good-to-be-true harmony. The Pilgrims had been through such trauma and were in such a vulnerable state that they were inclined to be friendly to the local people. And the Wampanoag probably had not yet learned to fear the Europeans. And on top of this, both groups were celebrating a year of good harvest when a good harvest was what they needed most. The rare moment they shared together with seasoned with gratefulness. The story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile marked a similar moment of shared thankfulness. Nehemiah gives us an account of the reestablishment of the city that runs parallel with Ezra's. Much of the book concerns the rebuilding of the wall around the city, and Nehemiah goes to great length to document every family who worked on the project. There were Israelites of all tribes and backgrounds who labored side by side. Like the Pilgrims, their recent past was tragic, and the world they now lived in was dangerous for them. And like the Pilgrims, these returning exiles reached a critical milestone in their efforts to survive in a new home: the completion of the wall around Jerusalem. This meant they could be safe from their enemies and begin to rebuild the interior of the city. Nehemiah says, "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres." He says that singers from all the surrounding villages congregated for the celebration. The Levites performed a ritual purification, and then the city leaders went up onto the wall and led choirs around the city, giving thanks to God. Gratitude brought them together, and they came together to give thanks to the Lord. They did it together. It was a public

celebration, a party, a feast. I'm glad that our American holiday of Thanksgiving is still about this. It's a time when many of us are with family and friends, when we share our best food, when we reflect on how much we have to be grateful for.

Let's pray:

Lord, it's easy to take our blessings for granted. As this difficult year comes to an end, help us to celebrate Thanksgiving with gratitude. And I pray that each of us would take the opportunity to share our thankfulness with others, whether family, friends or neighbors. Amen.

Thursday, November 12 - Morning

Isaiah 12:1-4

You will say in that day: "I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. ² "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." ³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴ And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.

Comments:

When our first child Rachel came into the world, we lived with expectation for a long time, a very long time. After the first of the prenatal doctor's appointments, we fixed on the due date. Later, when we got a little black and white scan from the ultrasound to put on our refrigerator, we named our child Buckwheat. No, that wasn't the real name we would give our baby. That was a way to talk about the child that was coming. We didn't know to expect a boy or a girl, but we had a date. The problem was that date came and went. Nearly two more weeks passed after the due date before the labor pains started and we went to the hospital. Waiting is a difficult thing to do even when you know the timing. The prophet Isaiah was told about a time in the future when God would bring about a second exodus. It would be like the first, in that God would come to rescue and save his people. But it would be different in that the scope would be much larger. It wouldn't simply be about bringing his people from bondage to safety. It would mean a changing of the old order of the world and the bringing about of the messianic kingdom. Here's how Isaiah describes it: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.* (Isaiah 11:6-7) Now, as the people of Israel were scattered and Judah was taken into exile, the people clung to this hope. They were waiting, but they had no due date, no indication of God's timing. How difficult is that? Many of us feel like we are waiting. We are waiting for COVID to end, for the kingdom of God to come in all its fullness. We are waiting to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That's why passages like our text for today were so important to the people of God. They were a reminder that though the waiting is long, you can know that the day is coming. God will redeem his people. He will bring the fullness of his peace, his shalom, into our world. The good news for us is that we know God has already begun this work in Jesus. That is one reason we give thanks to God and rejoice. That's our call this season, to remember God's promises and rest in him.

Let's pray:

Lord God, our loving heavenly Father, the political season has been filled with such rancor and division. You have told us that the day is coming when true peace will come to our world. We thank you even now for what we know is coming in the future because we know you are faithful and good. Enable us to rest in your promises for we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday, November 12 - Midday prayer

Let's pray together:

Abba Father, through the day I seek your face. Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my prayer. You are my king and my God. I taste and see that you are good. I flourish when I look to you. Remind me this day that you are my hope and shield and that every good gift comes from your hand. For I pray in your name. Amen.

Thursday, November 12 - Evening

Daniel 6:10-13

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

Comments:

Some years ago, I remember a remarkable conversation between worship services at Granada. A younger woman shared with one of our older saints that she had just learned she had cancer. The older woman stepped closer and said the most surprising thing. She said, "God must really love you that you are going through this." What the older woman said caught me off guard. How could getting cancer be a sign of God's love? How could anything good come out of that? But the older woman knew. She herself had been through a cancer battle, and it was at this time that she experienced the most profound closeness of communion with God. The thing she feared most had become God's gift to her. Now the passage we have for today is a favorite bible story for children. Before the chapter finishes, we will find Daniel in a den of lions. But before that happens, we need to see how he got there. Daniel was distinguished among the leaders to the kings of Persia. The other administrators envied Daniel's position so they concocted a plan to get Daniel killed. They prompted King Darius to punish anyone that recognized any other god but him. In those days, many people practiced emperor worship. It must have been gratifying when these servants came to Darius and told him that he alone should be recognized as god. He was so pleased with the idea that he signed a royal decree threatening death to anyone that broke this law. In Persia, such laws could not be retracted. Of course, this was all a set up to eliminate Daniel. Now, here is what we are told about Daniel. When he heard about this new

law, he went home, he opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and he lifted up his voice to the Lord in thanksgiving. He didn't complain to God about the new law. Nor did he hide so his prayers to the Lord would go unnoticed. He kept praying as he always had. Why did he do this? He knew that the Lord is sovereign, in control of all things. He would worship the Lord no matter what happened to him. As we read the story, we can see how we can always be thankful. Gratitude is not based on our circumstances which change moment by moment. No, our gratitude comes from knowing the Lord, being his people, and being grateful for his loving rule. However, the winds of history blow, we know that God is good, and he is working out his loving purposes in our world. Now, we know what happened to Daniel. He was arrested and thrown into the lions' den. But the next day, Daniel was alive and well. God protected him. The result was that King Darius came to recognize the power of God. Daniel had even more to be thankful for. I think that older lady at church was right, God really loved Daniel to let this happen to him. He had the privilege of experiencing the presence and protection of God.

Let us pray:

Lord God Almighty, give us the gift of gratitude, especially when the way forward is tough and painful. We easily forget your sovereignty and your goodness. Thank you that you are always faithful, that you work as the winds of history change, and we can always trust in you. For we pray in your name. Amen.

Friday, November 13 - Morning

Jonah 2:7-9

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. ⁸ Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. ⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!"

Comments:

Two summers ago, I took my four-year-old grandson fishing from a bridge catwalk. Fishing with him requires giving all of my attention to him and his effort to catch a fish. It's work to keep his hook baited and his line from getting snagged. That day, I had a rod of my own, and I decided to bait the hook and let it sit while I helped my grandson. He caught a few small fish, nothing worth keeping. And, at one point, he called to me, "Hey, pops, there goes your rod." A large fish had taken the bait on my rod, and the rod flipped right over the railing into the water. I could see the very tip of the butt of the rod as the fish was pulling the whole rig away. All I could do was watch as my rod disappeared into the distance. Now, the book of Jonah is a fish story, but the story is not actually that much about the fish. The purpose of this incident in the life of Jonah was to teach him and all Israel that God loves the people they consider their enemies. It's true. Nineveh was the archenemy of Israel, but God told Jonah his prophet to go to the great city and preach a message of repentance to the people. Now, Jonah refused to go and instead took a ship to get as far away as possible. That's how Jonah ended up swallowed by a fish. A storm developed when the ship was at sea, and Jonah was thrown overboard to save the lives of everyone on board. This entire chapter tells us what Jonah learned when he was in the belly of the great fish. What did Jonah learn? He learned his pride in his nation was idolatry, and his idolatry had kept him from enjoying God. What seemed like the end of his life became the beginning of a whole new life trusting in God and

learning about God's mercy and compassion. What we have in our text today is part of Jonah's song of thanksgiving. Notice that he discovers God's unconditional love far outweighs any significance or security his idols could give him. It is in the belly of the fish that Jonah gives thanks to God. This is where he discovers God's grace, that he is loved. Jonah has the simplest statement of the gospel that we can find anywhere in scripture. He says: *Salvation belongs to the LORD!* That means it is all of God. It is all gift. There is nothing else that can save you or give you life, a living hope or a secure place.

Let's pray:

Lord God, it is in the darkness where we come more to cherish the light. In is in our weakness that we discover the power of your grace in our lives. You are the God that brings life from death, and hope from despair. Enable me this day to look to you in the joy of knowing your unconditional love. I lay aside my idols and give thanks to you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday, November 13 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Ever faithful God, without Jesus I would be afraid to approach you. In Jesus, you tell me that I can come boldly to your throne of grace and make my requests known to you. I ask that you provide a deep confidence in your care and a deep humility in my need. Another day is passing. Let me know your presence with me and give to me, I pray, a glimpse of your kindness. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday, November 13 - Evening

Psalm 118:19-24

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Comments:

Growing in youth group, each summer we would go to camp in North Carolina. Imagine a busload of kids singing songs for hundreds of miles. *Do Lord, O, do Lord, O do remember me. O You can't get to heaven on roller skates...Give me oil for my lamp keep me burning burning burning...It only takes a spark to get a fire going...* Ok. I'm dating myself, but those songs unified us by providing a common experience, and also taught us how to listen to each other. Israel had festival songs that were much like our old camp songs. When God's people went up to Jerusalem for the festivals, they sang the songs of ascent that we find in the book of songs. The one before us today would be sung as the people arrived at the city. "This is the gate of the Lord" refers to the gate at the temple where the people would enter. At this point a priest would welcome them and invite them in. Now the amazing thing about this song is that, first, it was sung as Jesus rode into the city on Palm Sunday. He is the stone referred to in the song, that the builders rejected, that has become the chief cornerstone. Second, though it was written hundreds of years before Jesus entered the city, it tells the story of Jesus' arrival and his rejection by the religious leaders. But, notice this statement in the song:

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. In the midst of this ancient song is the proclamation that God is sovereign and the day belongs to him. God planned it all to be accomplished in Jesus that he might redeem a people for himself. For hundreds of years before, the Jewish people sang this song not realizing that it meant their messiah would fulfill the promises here. They missed the grace of God. This is why Jesus wept over the city even as this song of joy was being sung by the people. Now, we have the perspective of knowing how God fulfilled his plan. Jesus was rejected by the people, but he is the one God chose to bring light and salvation to us. This is why we can rejoice, and this is where our gratitude comes from. It doesn't come from the emotion of the moment we are living in as much as the celebration of our God that is sovereign in all things.

Let us pray:

Our heavenly Father, our expectations are easily dashed. We can easily become discouraged and cynical about life. We know loss so very well. Give us the grace of gratitude because we know you and what you have done for us in Jesus. Remind us not to lose our joy in what has happened to today, but to have our joy always rooted in you and your faithfulness. For we pray in the name of the chief cornerstone, Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, November 14 - Morning prayer

Today we will use Psalm 37 as the basis for our prayers.

Let's pray together:

Lord God, we so easily fret. We easily become upset when injustice seems to win the day. Enable me by your grace to trust in you, to do good and dwell in the place you have given to me. Lord, I delight myself in you knowing that you provide the desires of my heart. I commit my way to you knowing that you act in my life and in history. Yet, in all these things I am still before you. I wait patiently for you, and I refuse to give my heart to discouragement or despair because I trust in you. Amen.

Saturday, November 14 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Faithful and loving Father, your goodness keeps me from anger and from fear. Remind me that life comes as I wait upon you. You teach me that the meek inherit the land because they trust in you. I rest in the truth of your justice that has come into our world through Jesus, and I look to you for the future. You are the one, O Lord, that establishes my steps, that keeps me from falling because I am held by your mighty and powerful hand. Enable me by your Holy Spirit to delight in you and your ways. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, November 14 - Evening prayer

Let us pray:

God, our great provider. Fear tells us that we may not have enough. You tell us about your unfailing love. You provide generously, and then you call us to be a blessing to others. We know we can trust in you. Salvation comes from you alone. You deliver us from every trouble because we take refuge in you. Let gratitude come from the overflow of your goodness in our lives. Thank you for life and all things. Thank you for those you have placed around me to walk together with me. Thank you for your word that is a light to my path. Thank you for your

lovingkindness that never runs out. Thank you for your mercy and patience. Teach me your ways, O Lord. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

SUNDAY, November 15 – Worship

When you are ready to return for worship, we are taking RSVPs on a first come, first served basis. RSVP here: <https://granadachurch.com/rsvp/>

9am - Heritage Service

11am – Contemporary

1pm - Spanish Worship

Our services may also be accessed at one of these platforms:

granada.online.church

[Facebook Live](#)

[YouTube](#)