

Bless the Lord, O My Soul
Psalm 103:1-5,
Thanksgiving Day Service, November 27, 2014

Beloved of the Lord.....Because we are flesh and blood, we Christians spend much of our life in worry and fear. Today for example is Thanksgiving, but who among us does not harbor within secret fears and worries. Fathers and husbands might be fearful and worried about their daily bread, for we must provide for wife and family. Likewise mothers worry often about their children, or just how to be a good mother and faithful to God. We also have various fears about our own health, or we have lost a loved one and the hurt is still there. When all this assails us we are sometimes very afraid of God's wrath and anger on account of our sins. He has great power to do whatever He wants in our life. After all this, how can we be thankful?

Yet we can be thankful, and here's how. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." God is found, God is understood, God is heard, God is cherished, when we read and hear the words of Jesus our Savior. Can you be afraid of God, when God says to you, "Fear not, only believe.....Peace be still." Can you be afraid of God when God says to you, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise". Can you be afraid of God when God says to you, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This God above us all who is the ruler of the world, is a very gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. If you know Jesus died for you and rose again, it is also evident He also lives for you now and reigns in heaven above. You should thus be comforted knowing GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOU, and it is a good plan for the salvation of your soul. Therefore "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." Psalm 100

Let us now begin with the first question..... How does our soul bless God, when God needs nothing from us? We all know and are familiar with the idea of God blessing us. If a young man takes a bride, he recognizes her as a blessing from God. Proverbs 18 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." Children likewise are blessings from God and it is sinful to try and prevent this blessing from being conceived. Psalm 127 says, "Children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Likewise God's blessings include "clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods, that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life." Likewise God's blessings include "that He defend me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of Fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true."

When we therefore thank God for these innumerable blessings, let us ever remember because of our sins we are not worthy of even one blessing at all. They come to us freely by Gods' grace alone, through the holy name of Jesus. "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Our real question then today, is how do we bless God, for to bless is to give, and God has given us all things. What could we possibly give back? Truthfully there is only one way man can bless God, and that is with the fruit of his lips, namely praise and thanksgiving. To bless God is to say "Thank You Lord for all You have done!" Hebrews 13:15 thus says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." To praise God then, to thank Him from whom all blessings flow, that is what it means to bless God, such praise is the fruit of our lips. This is the very thing David is doing when he says "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." We therefore bless God, namely our soul blesses God, when we pray to Him and inwardly thank Him for His abundant mercies, and we also outwardly praise Him by our words sung in songs or hymns of praise. Indeed every time we sing a hymn in church, and we are thinking upon the words by faith, we are blessing God with the fruit of our lips. Likewise in our daily life, whenever in conversation we speak with our neighbor and we give glory to God for all He has done, this too is blessing God "from whom all blessings flow."

Praising and blessing God, is an activity of the soul and a matter of faith alone. "Bless the Lord, O my soul" David says, "and forget not all His benefits." David thus is in the midst of prayer. His soul within himself by faith, is meditating upon all that God has given David, and his response is one of faith which is always directed upward to heaven. Even as David thinks about all the wonderful thing God has done for Him, he cannot but look upward to heaven in prayer and thank God. This is something we do too, right? We look around us in our life....we see all that God has so graciously given, and we cannot but help sigh and say "Thank You Lord, for I am unworthy of all these blessings and I know it. Everywhere in my life there is evidence of Thy grace and love, and I thank You Lord for it, with all my heart....with all that is within me." Note that phrase "all that is within me".....namely when we praise God our entire body should be like a musical instrument which is continually employed in making melody to the Lord. It matters not to God whether we can hold a tune, but He is pleased with every song of our heart sung in faith.

That is why we have hymns like "O that I had a thousand voices; To praise my God with thousand tongues! My heart which in the Lord rejoices; Would then proclaim in grateful songs, to all wherever I might be, What great things God hath done for me." So it is also to "Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Knowing all Jesus has done to save us from our sins, we have every reason to "rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice!" Psalm 69:30 "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving." Psalm 95:2 "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

Psalm 100:4, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."

II. Forget not all His benefits! But lest we go on and on about praise, let us not praise God without thought, as so many do. "Forget not all His benefits", namely don't forget all the benefits God has given you. Don't let your flesh blind your eyes so that you cannot see. I know for many it has been a difficult year where many have suffered loss and heartache. Likewise by our sins we must always acknowledge we do not deserve better. Nevertheless David rejoices because He "forgiveth all thine iniquities." Imagine the thankfulness of David's heart, for David had committed adultery and murder. How thankful David could be. Forgiveness of sins is by far the greatest benefit God gives all, for Christ is not the Savior of some, but all the world, even all unbelievers. Jesus is thus the Living Fountain of forgiveness, from which all other blessings flow.

But what about this phrase, that God heals all diseases? Many think this passage is not true, for we all have loved ones who were Christians who died from disease. But what is the greatest disease of all, and from where do all diseases come? But the greatest disease of all is SIN, and from sin all other diseases come and that is why we die. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Likewise if all our sins are forgiven (and they are by Christ' blood), it is also true God heals all our diseases. We may die on earth from any number of diseases, but before death Christ has declared unto us healing of soul by the Gospel. No soul enters heaven with diabetes, cancer, epilepsy, Alzheimer's, and the like. Also nobody enters heaven depressed or suffering from anxiety. In a manner of speaking also, no sinner enters heaven, but only holy saints. They were sinners on earth sufferings from the disease of sin, but in heaven there is no sin or evil, only Christ and fullness of joy.

But there are more benefits beyond forgiveness and healing of diseases. He redeems your life from destruction. He crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. How wonderful! How glorious! Do not forget dear believer Jesus truly has saved your life from destruction, for you had destroyed your own life by sin. You once even lived in the darkness of unbelief. You were like a swimmer drowning in the ocean of sin, but your gracious Lord reached down from heaven above, and placed you in His ship of grace, the Holy Christian Church. You were born of water and the Spirit, born from above by the power of the Gospel Word. You were plucked from destruction, and preserved unto everlasting life. Jesus then became a ransom for your soul. He placed Himself, body and soul, between the wrath of God and you. God's wrath fell upon Jesus, not you. Jesus suffered, you didn't upon the cross. Your price was paid by Him, with blood. This blood of Christ opens up heaven before you so that Jesus Himself becomes the door. And all God wants of you, is your faith, nothing else, for He has done all. Jesus said "He that believeth on Me is not condemned."

When God thus gives and grants us faith by the Spirit, He truly puts a royal crown upon our head. He crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies? Even here on earth God has made you kings and queens before Him. You have royal blood, in that you possess and own Christ by faith.

He belongs to you and is dear to you, just as you belong to Him and are dear to Him. Jesus calls you the apple of His eye. The very hairs of your head are numbered. Jesus said “Rejoice because your names are written in heaven. No matter how hard your trials here, He still crowns you daily with “lovingkindness and tender mercies.” He gives you not just love, but loving kindness. His love is gentle, tender. He gives you not just mercy, but “tender mercies” many mercies, and they are all tender. What could be sweeter than these tender mercies of God? “For all which it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.”

Finally beloved of the Lord, He satisfies “thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.” Whatever earthly feast we enjoy today, tomorrow, or this weekend, it is nothing compared to the feast Jesus has given our soul. No matter how sweet the meat, Jesus is sweeter, more gentle and tender, and Jesus promises us a far better feast in the world to come. “Come, for all things are now ready.” “He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.” Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds and faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.