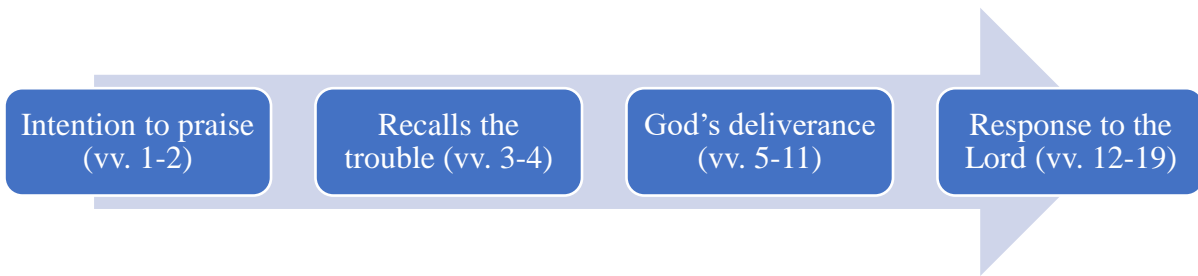


Thanksgiving Leads to Worship

Psalm 116:1-19



| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>¹I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.</p> | <p>³The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow.</p> <p>⁴Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!"</p> | <p>⁸For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, ⁹that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.</p> <p>¹⁰I trusted in the LORD when I said, "I am greatly afflicted"; ¹¹in my alarm I said, "Everyone is a liar."</p> | <p>¹⁵Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants. ¹⁶Truly I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains.</p> |
| <p>²Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.</p> | <p>⁵The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. ⁶The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me.</p> <p>⁷Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.</p> | <p>¹²What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me?</p> <p>¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. ¹⁴I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.</p> | <p>¹⁷I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD. ¹⁸I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, ¹⁹in the courts of the house of the LORD— in your midst, Jerusalem.</p> |

Red: the psalmist's cries to the Lord

Green: the psalmist's trouble and how the Lord delivered him from trouble

Black: about God's attributes, his goodness

Purple: the psalmist's response to God.

Introduction: Intention to praise (vv. 1-2)

¹ I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.

² Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.

- The psalmist starts with proclaiming that the Lord has heard him, his cry for mercy during his trouble, and the Lord rescued him. He is moved with thanksgiving; and it leads him to respond in love and adoration.
- Because the Lord has heard him, the psalmist trusts that the Lord is listening to his prayers, and he declares that he will call on the Lord as long as he lives, he will look to God and worship Him.

1. Recalls the trouble (vv. 3-4)

³ *The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.*

⁴ *Then I called on the name of the LORD:
“LORD, save me!”*

- We are not told about the specifics of the trouble, but we are given an imagery of death and grave, which gives us a picture of the agony that the psalmist experienced in his trouble. The lack of specifics in the psalms is intentional so that the psalm would not just be applicable to the people who went through the exact same trouble as the psalmist, but to all who has been through trouble.
- Distress and sorrow drove the psalmist to cry to the Lord for salvation, we should learn from the psalmist and allow our distress and sorrow to drive us to cry out to the Lord.

2. God’s deliverance (vv. 5-11)

⁵ *The LORD is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.*

⁶ *The LORD protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.*

| |
|--|
| Gracious: It was not that the psalmist deserved to be saved, but God was gracious to save. |
|--|

| |
|--|
| Righteous: God brings vindication to the righteous and judgment on the wicked. |
|--|

| |
|---|
| Full of compassion: This is the same word used to describe Jesus, when he had compassion upon the 5000 that led him to feed them by multiplying food. God is moved by the distress and sorrow that the psalmist goes through. |
|---|

| |
|---|
| Protects the unwary: The Lord protects those who are unable to protect themselves. When the psalmist was brought low to a place where he was weak, unable to save himself, unable to rely on anything or anyone else, the Lord saved him. |
|---|

As we reflect on our troubles and God’s deliverance, we too can recognize the attributes of God. All it takes is a little reflection to see who God is, as he saves us from our trouble.

| |
|---|
| ⁷ <i>Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. (NIV)</i> |
|---|

| |
|--|
| ⁷ <i>Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. (NKJV)</i> |
|--|

God gives us more than we need, more than we cry for. He blesses us in abundance. So, we can rest not only because God saves us out of our trouble, but God has been good, God has been providing more than we need, bountifully, in abundance.

⁸ For you, LORD, have delivered me from death,
 my eyes from tears,
 my feet from stumbling,
⁹ that I may walk before the LORD
 in the land of the living.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Me from death | ³ The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. |
| My eyes from tears | |
| My feet from stumbling | ⁹ that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living. |

¹⁰ I trusted in the LORD when I said,
 “I am greatly afflicted”;
¹¹ in my alarm I said,
 “Everyone is a liar.”

- Trusting God and acknowledging our afflictions are not contradictory. The psalmist could say he was greatly afflicted, and yet trust in the Lord at the same time. It is very important for us to recognize that it is in praying through our troubles, that we can derive in the place of trusting the Lord.
- The psalmist’s distress led him to distrust everyone else, calling them liars, but the one person he trusted was the Lord. He knew there was no one he could put his hope on, except the Lord.
- This is not to say that we should isolate ourselves from people. But, it means that even with the help of people, if we do not wrestle with God about our problems, it will resolve to nothing. There is only so much that people can do to help us, but it is in the Lord’s presence that we can find hope that sustains us, peace that surpasses understanding, strength that lifts us up. We need to walk with the Lord alone. We need that secret place, that hiding place with him. We need to wrestle in his presence, we need to be determined like Jacob in wrestling with the Lord, until we find that hope in him.

The thanksgiving psalm helps us to reflect on God’s deliverance in our own lives. We are forgetful beings. In our “forgetfulness”, we are guilty of taking God for granted. We feel that it is God’s job to deliver me, we think we deserved to be delivered because we are his children, and we are good people. Or we take credit for the deliverance, thinking we are the ones who saved ourselves. On top of that, we are prone to remember the bad things more than the good things, the times we suffered more than the times God helped us.

In Luke 17, Jesus healed 10 lepers, but only one came back to thank him. If we are not careful, we can be like the 9 lepers. We can forget God. We can become ungrateful of God if we do not put thought into our relationship with him, into what he has done and is doing for us. It is our meditation of the Lord, of his word, our reflection of who he has been to us, what he has done for us, that leads us to a place of thanksgiving, of gratitude, of love and adoration, of worship.

3. Response to the Lord (vv. 12-19)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>¹² <i>What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me?</i></p> | <p>¹⁵ <i>Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants.</i> ¹⁶ <i>Truly I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains.</i></p> |
| <p>¹³ <i>I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.</i> ¹⁴ <i>I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.</i></p> | <p>¹⁷ <i>I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.</i> ¹⁸ <i>I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,</i> ¹⁹ <i>in the courts of the house of the LORD—in your midst, Jerusalem.</i></p> |

The psalmist's response to God:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>- I will lift up the cup of salvation (v. 13) - and call on the name of the LORD (vv. 13, 17)</p> | <p>- Hold on to God's deliverance - Worship and trust Yahweh</p> |
| <p>- I will fulfill my vows to the LORD (vv. 14, 18)</p> | <p>- Our words and commitment to God matter</p> |
| <p>- I will sacrifice a thank offering to you (v. 17) - and call on the name of the LORD (vv. 13, 17)</p> | <p>- We are living sacrifices - Worship and trust Yahweh</p> |
| <p>- in the presence of all his people (vv. 14, 18) - in the courts of the house of the LORD—in your midst, Jerusalem. (v. 19)</p> | <p>- Community: to encourage one another, to keep each other accountable in our commitment to God</p> |

(i) I will lift up the cup of salvation (v. 13)

And call on the name of the Lord (vv. 13, 17)

- The psalmist was saved by God. He knew it was not his own strength or effort that brought him to this place. It was a gift from God. Salvation is the opposite from what we deserve, yet God chose to save. The psalmist owes his life to God, his life belongs to God.
- Christ has saved us from sin and death. That is the foundation of our faith. We must remember the saving grace that was obtained through the cross. We have more to be thankful for than the psalmist does.
- Remembering that it was God who saved us lead us to worship and trust Yahweh alone. There shall be no other gods or idols that would take the place of Yahweh.

(ii) I will fulfil my vows to the Lord (vv. 14, 18)

Deuteronomy 23:21-23, ²¹ *If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.* ²² *But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty.* ²³ *Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.*

- In the Old Testament, vows were taken very seriously. Making vows was voluntary, but after a vow was made, it must be fulfilled. To not fulfil a vow is to break the law, which is a sin. Making a vow to God is sacred. Therefore, vows were to be made only after serious and careful consideration.

- In thanksgiving for his deliverance, the psalmist declares that he will fulfil the vows that he has made to the Lord. We need to be careful to not misunderstand that because the psalmist made vows, the Lord delivered him. It is not a transactional exchange between God and the psalmist. The Lord heard his cries and delivered the psalmist because God is gracious, righteous, and full of compassion. God is not manipulated by the things we do. And because of that, the psalmist gladly fulfils his vow to serve the gracious and righteous God who saved him.

Matthew 5:33-37, ³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷ All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

- In the New Testament, Jesus speaks about taking our words seriously. Jesus said there is no need in making vows because the words that we speak should be equally binding with the vows we make. We should be genuine and honest with our words and action; we should mean what we say. We should not use our words lightly by saying things that we don’t intend to fulfil or saying things we would later regret.
- Our words and commitment to God matter. Let’s learn not to take God’s goodness for granted. Let’s learn to love him with our words and actions.

(iii) I will sacrifice a thank offering to you (v. 17)

- In the Old Testament, the people sacrifice an animal as a thank offering to the Lord.

Romans 12:1-2, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.* ² *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- Now, we are the living sacrifice. We offer ourselves to God as a response of gratitude towards his deliverance and goodness to us.
- Verse 15-16 speaks of the psalmist being God’s faithful servant. He offered himself as a sacrifice. In verse 15, the psalmist is assured that God cares for his people, that he would not simply allow his faithful servants to perish in death, because the lives of his servants are precious to him. The Lord has done that for the psalmist, the Lord has saved and freed him from the chains, the cords of death that entangled him, and he will continue to serve the Lord. He is God’s servant.

(iv) In the presence of all his people

- The psalmist says that he will do all these things (lift up the cup of salvation, call on the name of the Lord, fulfil his vows, sacrifice a thank offering) in the presence of God’s people, in the courts of the house of the Lord.
- Thanksgiving is not merely personal, but also communal. Giving thanks and praising God for what He has done for us is a testimony of God’s goodness, and it encourages the body of Christ.

- It is also in the setting of a community that we learn to fulfil our commitment to live for Christ, as living sacrifices, spurring one another in our race, straining forward to the goal, and to keep each other accountable to be on the path of righteousness, as we walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

We live in a time where there is just not much time to stop and reflect. But, it is precisely because of that, we must make time to reflect, to recall our troubles and remember God's deliverance. It is when we learn to reflect, we recognize the goodness of God and our need for him, and that leads us to give thanks, to learn to be grateful for who God is, and to be able to put our trust in Him, because He has saved us, and He will continue to save us.

Prayer Items

- We will reflect on the goodness of God and give thanks.
- We will meditate on the significance of God's salvation in our lives.
- We will respond to God's goodness by offering our lives as living sacrifices, to live for God.

Church

- Thanksgiving of God's faithfulness the past 10 years.
- We will hunger for God, through prayer and the word.
- We will not be distracted by the temptation to pursue worldly treasures.
- Transformative work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.
- We will be faithful to welcome and minister to all the people that God sends to us.
- We will be a place of healing, restoration and reconciliation.
- Unity based on God's love and truth: breaking barriers between people from different groups.
- Workplaces: we will respond to our calling in the harvest field, representing Christ to the world.
- Compassion and wisdom to help those who are in need.
- Salvation for our loved ones.
- Ministries:
 - Open doors
 - Wisdom and discernment to reach out and minister
 - Sensitive to the needs of the people

Covid-19

- Healing and deliverance
- Government: wisdom and compassion
- Economy
- Mental health
- Church: to bring hope with the Gospel

Healing

- Aunty Rachel (Tabitha's mom): surgery on the 29th of June

Malaysia

- Leadership: righteousness, integrity, compassion for the people
- Unity: between all people group
- Justice and mercy: care for the neglected group of people (the poor, oppressed, widows, orphans, marginalized, foreigners)
- Salvation
- Church: instruments of love and unity, prophetic voice to the nation