## The Lord Has Made Us Glad

Psalm 92: 1-15
Key Verse: 9:4

“For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord; I sing for Joy at what your hands have done. ”

This week we celebrated Thanksgiving and gave thanks to God. We ate a lot and enjoyed the company of our family and friends and afterwards relaxed. Most likely, in your contentment you took a nice cat nap on the couch. After eating a lot of pumpkin pie one person said they are thankful for elastic waistbands on their clothing. I supposed that is one thing to be thankful for. But we want to go a little deeper than that when we study this passage, and learn from the thankful heart of the Psalmist (likely David) who understood the deep profound thoughts of God - as mentioned in verse 5. With a deep understanding of God and what he has done for us, we can be truly thankful. We can be thankful in good times and in bad, and we can have a thankfulness that is not based on temporary conveniences or comforts, but based on things that are eternal. It’s not automatic, so we have to focus and pray and read God’s word.

**First, It is Good to Praise the Lord (1-3).**  This passage is a Psalm written for the Sabbath, as it says in the title at the top “A song, For the Sabbath.” Worshipping God, singing praises to God, and giving thanks are all expressions of our appreciation and love for God. And when we are truly thankful, we want to worship and keep the Sabbath holy. We please God by keeping this commandment. Being thankful can be something we do once a year as a holiday, of course. But that’s a little limited. In Leviticus chapter 23 God gives the Israelites a list of appointed festivals to be observed, most are observed annually. But one of them is at the top of the list in chapter 23, it is an assembly which is to be observed every week – it is the Sabbath day, which is more often than just once a year.

Verse 1 tells us, **“It is good to praise the Lord, and make music to your name, O Most High.”**  During our worship service we praise God’s name in song, we listen to deep meaningful words while singing. I like the lyrics “Savior he can move the mountains, our God is mighty to save, he is mighty to save!” We can sing contemporary music and traditional hymn music both. In melody or in rhythmic rhyming/ hip hop which we are graced with on occasion during a special music solo. When music praises God, it is good. Some of us like to blend in with a chorus and harmony kind of hiding a little, and some are gifted as soloists. Some are off key and some are on key. Either way when sung from the heart our cacophony of music pleases God. The wonderful thing is we can do so all week long, all year long. The phrase “It is good” is repeated elsewhere in the Bible. We are reminded of this phrase from Genesis Chapter 1, after God saw all he made he said “it was very good.” It is the same thing as saying, “this is the way things should be”. It is the natural order of things. In his creation there is such a variety and the world is so colorful, and lots of different kinds of music and ways to express ourselves in praise to God. It is good to praise the Lord, it is the way we were made. When we are thankful, we resonate with God’s creation and are in harmony with it. We become strongly rooted like strong trees, not like chaff that is blown away. So often when we think about God’s love our praise just comes out as song, but it can also be expressed in the spoken or unspoken word or in prayer. When we are unthankful however, there is dissonance darkness and chaos. We find ourselves feeling lost and unhappy, and this is not good.

There are a number of things we know about the Psalmist. One thing we know is that he told us to give thanks and to be glad 30 times in the Psalms. Ironically another thing we also know is that he did not always have it easy. He recounts many dark times of his life and quite a few trials. Perhaps even an abnormal amount of suffering and trials. There are Psalms that describe being pursued by enemies, being falsely accused by liars, being overwhelmed by the grave, and walking through “The valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23). Yet he always found gratitude and understood that dark times are temporary. He wrote in Psalm 30, **“Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”**

Studies show that how much we choose to be thankful is closely related to our emotional well being. Being thankful is a discipline, just like keeping the Sabbath holy is a discipline too. We direct a certain amount of our time and energy to be closer to God, rather than choosing to be cynical or negative. So we have two extremes to choose from thankfulness or unthankful. One of the dangers of allowing unthankfulness in our hearts is we can fall into a negative loop. In other words, even if we have a legitimate problem, as many people do have, in our dark thinking we create even more problems, and more problems and more problems…... And as we know Satan is like a roaring lion and does not spoil a chance to catch easy prey who wandered from the fold. On the other hand, if we are thankful and wait on God for the rejoicing that comes in the morning, which will come to us, we experience his protection and blessing. When we are in our despair we have nothing to lose that we have not already lost. Even if it is scary or sad, we must choose thankfulness and choose to see the good things God has done for us. Zechariah 13:9 says **“I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them..”**

God tests us because he has a blessings waiting for us. It is good to praise the Lord, we can stay positive, and we can pass difficult tests buy doing so. Verse 2 says we must “*proclaim his love in the morning and faithfulness at night*”. Metaphorically this could mean that we should praise God in all circumstances, even in the night when we have doubts and we do not see what God is doing. This reminds us of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, **“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”** Paul tells us here we should not give up, we should pray continually, even though it is not always easy to do. We cannot do it by our own strength but by only through strength in Jesus. We should remind ourselves to pray, even ask Siri to remind us to pray continually everyday, if necessary. During our study of Genesis last week I was encouraged by the perseverance of those who shared their testimonies, and how they face challenges but continue to follow Jesus. They overcome because they face their challenges with thankfulness, and by praying continually.

**Second, God’s Great Works and Deeds (4-11).** Look at verse 4 (read together), **“For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord’ I sing for joy at what your hands have done.”** Here the Psalmist expresses his gladness. We are glad when we think about what God has done in our lives. God wants to have a personal relationship with us and is leading each of us day by day. And always we get reminders that he is with us and loves us. This brings us joy. He puts people in our lives who pray for us and build us up, and we are not alone in a community of believers. There is a book called, “It’s a God Thing.” It has many personal testimonies and many stories have so much irony it would be hard to deny that God is always at work, doing both small and big things, all the time in so many people’s lives. When I was reading the book I thought about one of my own experiences as I was entering a four year university to study engineering. I knew I could not afford an apartment on campus all by myself so I prayed for the right roommate. And missionary Gideon knew someone and introduced me to him. Ironically he was starting at the same university, wanted to live on campus, and was going to study the same major, and was also a Christian. The odds seemed too small to be a coincidence. Over the next few years we helped each other a lot through difficult school studies, and also helped each other spiritually and prayed for each other. We remain friends to this day many years later and both thank God that we were the perfect roommate for each other, helping each other to graduate. We scratch our heads at the irony and laugh about it, yet know it was Gods good works looking out for us.

I believe God is with each of us and working in our lives in a similar way. And when we pray to him he answers our prayers. God has given us a Christian community, spiritual friends and family members. He has helped us on our career paths, he provides for us and gives us each day our daily bread and we are not lacking anything. He has helped many of us be sustained during times of health issues. He has raised people among us to life who were almost physically dead, and spiritually dead. He taught us painful lessons and disciplined us so we can grow and have a stronger relationship with him. He has helped our church grow from just a few people to, more than just a few people. I realized even just helping us to remodel our church and pass all the inspections is also one of God’s good deeds. We had just one day until we were hosting a big event here with all church elders, and the inspection was the day before. If we did not pass it we would not have been able to occupy the space with people. A few of the inspection items were missed that we did not complete, but thank God he blinded the inspector and he did not notice the things we missed so we passed. So we could still go ahead and host the special event. And also begin having services here too and begin to grow our ministry and help many people accept the Lord Jesus. We are glad, thank God.

At times we may not feel glad however. What should we do? Lets look at verse 5, **“How great are your works O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep.**” The Psalmist reminds us that God’s works are so great and his thoughts so deep that it is often beyond our understanding. We do not always understand God, but God always understands us. And God is always in control. Holding onto our pride, anger or pain hinders us from accepting this truth. By faith we pray God will help us to believe that his works are great, and his ways and thoughts are so deep. One godly Christian couple had an intuition that their time with their daughter on this earth would be short so they made sure to enjoy every moment with her. One day as a teenager she was killed in a car accident. They decided to donate her organs which saved the lives of 3 people who were desperately waiting for a transplant. Her mother and father keep in touch with these people and they are reminded of the bigger picture that God has which is much deeper than our understanding. They are saddened by the loss of their daughter but at the same time thankful for God’s higher purposes.

At the core of all the great things God has done and will continue to do, is his love for the world. His love is unfathomable, he loves the whole world so much. As God he has the opportunity to destroy the world, but he does not. He has chosen to love the world, and sent us his Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. We were lost and separated from God, but God came to this world so that he could know each one of us. That we can have a personal relationship with almighty God, and inherit eternal life is indeed very profound and deep. It is hard to understand such great love because we struggle to love others. But God loves us each so much, more than we understand.

Then on the other hand there is the foolish person described in this passage. We can’t learn much from them. Well, actually we can. We can learn what we should not do. They do not try to understand God. Unbelieving people seem to prosper and are arrogant. But according to this passage those that live a wicked life will be destroyed. Their time is short.

The wicked and evildoers are also called God’s enemies. Look at verse 9. “For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered.” God’s enemies are those who oppose God and tear down his people. Once, during the reign of King Hezekiah, the king of Judah, the Assyrian army marched up against Jerusalem. The situation was dire. All the surrounding nations and peoples had been swallowed up by the Assyrians. But this wasn’t only about politics and land. It was a spiritual battle between God and an arrogant, idol-worshiping man who mostly worshiped himself. The king of Assyria taunted the Israelites and God. Hezekiah told the Israelites to trust in the LORD their God. But the king of Assyria told the Israelites that doing so was foolish. He was overconfident in his own ability and arrogant before God. Then God promised Hezekiah that the Assyrians would not enter Jerusalem. God himself would save the nation. That night God sent his angel and struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their camp. Soon thereafter, the king of Assyria was assassinated. God’s enemies perished. God’s enemies were scattered. The king of Assyria, enjoyed prosperity for a while but it was a mirage and did not last. Especially from this lesson, we learn that a lack of humility and unbelief combined can make a person very foolish and a byword.

**Third, the Flourishing of the Righteous.** Though the wicked may flourish in the world for a little while, the righteous flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Both palm trees and the cedars of Lebanon can grow to a very old age. The palm trees referenced in verse 12 are date palms. When cared for properly, these date palms can produce an abundance of sweet dates, year after year, for many years. Cedar trees in Lebanon can grow as high as 130 ft. and have massively thick trunks. They are good for structural engineering and are resistant to parasites and do not deteriorate easily. This is yet another beautiful analogy in the Bible of how God is with those who serve him and makes them prosper, throughout our whole lives. The Bible uses many good examples of plants and gardening, and in this case trees, to illustrate to us how beautiful our life with God can be. With God’s blessing and care, the righteous produce fruit to an old age.