

Call to Worship

Psalm 107:1-3, 42-43

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

**Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.**

The upright see it and are glad; and all wickedness stops its mouth.

**Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.**

Prayer of Invocation

**Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth.**

**O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations, through Christ the Lord, Amen.**

The Word

Psalm 65

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; **and to you shall vows be performed.**

To you who hear prayer all flesh shall come because of their sins.

**When our transgressors prevail over us, you forgive them.**

Blessed are those whom you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts!

**We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple!**

By dread deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation,

**who is the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of the farthest seas;**

**who by your strength established the mountains; being girded with might;**

who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples;

So that those who live at earth's farthest bounds are afraid at your signs;

**you make the morning and the evening resound with joy.**

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it;

**the river of God is full of water; you provide its grain, for so you have prepared it.**

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

**You crown the year with your bounty; the tracks of your chariot drip with fatness.**

The pastures of the wilderness drip, the hills gird themselves with joy,

**the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.**

Living the Word

A Time for Personal Thanksgiving. We are all offered time to thank God for the good in our lives, for the bad that now has past and for the strength through the difficulties we have endured. The closer you are to God, the easier it is to live continuously in thanksgiving, especially in the hard times. As psalm 65 says: "*Praise is due to you, O God.*"

As God is our Creator, and the Creator of all goodness, it is right and a good thing for us to share our gratitude. The Lord supplies illustrations of God's goodness everyday in our lives. I don't know all of your personal stories and personal thanksgiving, so I will share a personal one from my week.

Last week I heard about the 2018 Perseid Meteor Shower at its height Monday night. I often have every intention of staying up to see the night sky. But often it is cloudy or I am too tired or I just plain forget to be present for it. This time for sure! I read the schedule, I planned the event, "Best time to view is just before dawn, yet should be easily seen by 10:30pm. Lay on the lawn and look straight up." The report then said 60 meteors a hour– that is one every minute.

I usually go to bed by 11pm, so I knew I had a good half hour to see this annual event. I went out to find heavy dew on the grass, so I went up on the deck, sat in the chair and before I could look up, I was swatting mosquitos. I went into the house got a large blanket to wrap around me and decided to lie on the deck where I had the best view of most of the sky.

I waited 3 minutes and nothing happened – and the deck was uncomfortable.so I went back to the chair. With my head leaning back, almost immediately I saw the first one. Then 2,3 and 4 came quickly behind. Then it stopped, but now I was determined. I decided I wouldn't quit until I had seen ten. Four minutes later the next one came.

Then the greatest thing happened, better than even the meteors: God called my attention to the vastness of the sky and the multitude of stars. A Holy Spirit moment, one that made me almost burst with joy. Wow, God! Thank you for this moment to concentrate on the universe by laying it out before me. Gone were the distractions and found was a peace and assurance of the immense wonder and expanse of our Creator.

Number 6 meteor was larger and burned longer through the sky. My personal thanksgiving was expressed through a connection without words, just a calm and joy-filled heart. I counted 7-10, and then stayed for two more, reluctantly going to my bed. I awoke at 3:30am and quickly grabbed the blanket ran out into the dark to see more.

My scurrying woke the dog, and then Bob, who came looking for me and shook his head mumbling something about my sanity. He turned to go back to bed and I decided I had already received the nights blessing and I followed him back into the house and to bed.

Those moments with God in praise and thanksgiving are still in my heart. The universe is still out there, though the meteors may be gone for another year. I am going to visit that place more often.

Psalm 40:1-3

*<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup>He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. <sup>3</sup>He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.*

Another personal story: When I moved to Hayward back in 1979, I was warned of the dangers of the drive north to Ashland. As you have to go across 'The Bibon Swamp.' I was told that people had been know to go off the road, never to be seen again as they sunk into the bottomless Bibon Swamp.

Life sometimes seems like a miry bog or desolate pit and we are afraid to step out for fear of never being seen again. Yet looking back we can see God's hand in our rescue, setting us on solid rock. It is never too late to look back in thanksgiving.

Psalm 41:3-4, 8-10

*<sup>3</sup>The LORD sustains them on their sickbed; in their illness you heal all their infirmities. <sup>4</sup>As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you." <sup>8</sup>[My enemies] think that a deadly thing has fastened on me, that I will not rise again from where I lie. <sup>9</sup>Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me. <sup>10</sup>But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up...*

Jesus came to teach and remind us that we are never so bad that we cannot be saved. In great thanksgiving I share this personal insight: My young adult years were a time of breaking free from the rules and regulations I had been raised with. Can anyone else relate with this?

I know now that God had a plan, way beyond my imagining, but then I thought I was free to be what I thought I wanted...That freedom brought me many heartaches and headaches. It was really years before I could appreciate all the times and ways I was watched over during those years. I personally have thanked God many times for the deliverance that I received.

Psalm 67:5-7

*<sup>5</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. <sup>6</sup>The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. <sup>7</sup>May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.*

After college I married a dairy farmer and I well understand what it means when the earth yields an increase. For us, and most of northern Wisconsin, we are receiving a bounty this summer. But not so for others: as we drove through Holland we saw corn crops to make us want to cry. It isn't easy to be thankful when you are looking at a crop that has dried up before it could mature, be it your crop or your neighbors crop.

Psalm 116:1-9

*<sup>1</sup>I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. <sup>2</sup>Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. <sup>3</sup>The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. <sup>4</sup>Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, save my life!" <sup>5</sup>Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.*

*<sup>6</sup>The LORD protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. <sup>7</sup>Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. <sup>8</sup>For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. <sup>9</sup>I walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*

Don't get what you want when you pray? Could it be you are asking the wrong questions? Never satisfied with the results? Maybe you aren't thankful for what you have...Verse 7 says: "Return, O my soul, to your rest." You don't have a thing to worry about if you have all you need.

The psalmist writes in verse 8 that their soul is delivered from death, their eyes from tears and their feet from stumbling. Can you see the times in your life when you have been delivered? Aren't you thankful that God allows you to see where the Holy Spirit is and has been at work in your life?

A statement of thanksgiving may or may not include the word 'thanksgiving', but inward or outward praise as a sign of thanksgiving. God knows what is in your heart; if it is thankful or just regretful. Reading the psalms and discovering a line that speaks to your heart helps you to remember in thanksgiving. Music can do that also:

In the early 1920's, English missionaries, Mr. Stuart Hine and his wife, ministered in Poland. It was there they learned Carl Boberg's poem, "O Store Gud", coupled with the original Swedish melody. Later, inspired by God, Stuart K. Hine wrote original English words, and made his own arrangement of the Swedish melody, which became popular and is now known as the hymn, *HOW GREAT THOU ART*.

The first three verses were inspired, line upon line, amidst unforgettable experiences in the Carpathian Mountains. In a village to which he had climbed, Mr. Hine stood in the street singing a Gospel hymn and reading aloud "John, Chapter Three".

Among the sympathetic listeners was a local village schoolmaster. A storm was gathering, and when it was evident that no further travel could be made that night, the friendly schoolmaster offered his hospitality. Awe-inspiring was the mighty thunder echoing through the mountains, and it was this impression that was to bring about the birth of the first verse.

Pushing on, Mr. Hine crossed the mountain frontier into Romania and into Bukovina. Together with some young people, through the woods and forest glades he wandered, and heard the birds sing sweetly in the trees. Thus, the second verse came into being. "How Great Thou Art" was ranked second, after "Amazing Grace" on a list of the favorite hymns of all time in a survey by *Today's Christian* magazine in 2001.

Let's sing this powerful hymn of thanksgiving together.