

1 Chron. 15:25-16:34
Giving Thanks for Our God

Sermon Strategy:

To teach God's people the content of David's Song in 1 Chron. 16

Sermon Goal:

To help God's people understand some principle reasons why the Hebrews were so joyful and thankful to God. The post-exilic Jews had reasons to be grateful to Yahweh; we have even more after the coming of Jesus Christ.

Sermon:

On Oct. 3, 1789, President of the United States George Washington issued the following Proclamation:

WHEREAS it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favour; and Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me "to recommend to the people of the United States a DAY OF PUBLICK THANKSGIVING and PRAYER, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God,

... I do recommend and assign THURSDAY, the TWENTY-SIXTH DAY of NOVEMBER ...that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country...

It is refreshing, is it not, to read of a national leader who acknowledges God's almighty power and kindness? Today we will look at another national leader, one from many centuries ago, name King David of Israel, and his call to his people to give thanks unto God for a very special reason: the ark of the covenant would be brought into the city of Jerusalem to rest in the center of the nation.

The ark, you may remember, was a box, overlaid with gold, in which were stored several items, the principal one being the two tablets of stone on which were written the 10 commandments.

But there was much more to it than that. There were two large carved angelic-like figures called the cherubim, whose wingspans touched one another. And what was

so significant about this ark and the cherubim figures is that the very presence of the living God entered there and resided over the ark. God, in essence, lived in the very midst of his people, the Israelites, after they had escaped from Egypt. He lived in this tabernacle, or large tent; his presence was there and this tent or tabernacle was set up in the very middle of the Israelite people during their 40 years of wandering the wilderness of after their escape from Egypt. When they entered the promised land the tabernacle with them and was set up in their midst.

At one point, one of the neighboring pagan tribes named the Philistines, who were the constant enemies of Israel, captured the ark of the covenant, but having the ark in their midst cause them all kinds of problems. They put the Ark of the Covenant in their temple next to their idol dedicated to their god, called Dagon, and it kept falling over every night because of the ark. And then the people were plagued with tumors. Realizing what a liability the ark of the covenant was to them, they tried to get rid of it as fast as they could, because they realized that the God of the Israelites was fighting in their behalf. So they gave it back to the Israelites.

Wherever it resided among the Israelites, however, it brought blessing. After God chose David to be the king over the nation, he called a meeting of the leaders and they were all in agreement to bring the ark into Jerusalem, the capital and center of their nation. Under the previous king named Saul, the ark had been neglected.

So now, David and the people join together to bring the ark, carried by the Levitical priests, into Jerusalem. But before this happened, much planning had gone into the event. David, for example, appointed a large number of skilled musicians and singers to lead out in thanksgiving and worship of God Almighty.

David had captured Jerusalem and made it the capital of the nation. But it lacked the most important thing needed – the Ark of the Covenant where God’s special presence resided. For David and those pious worshippers among his people, what good was it to have a capital and not have God there among his people.

So for years David and others had longed to have the Ark brought into Jerusalem. One of the preparations David did was to set up a tabernacle or tent to place the Ark in. David wanted to build a permanent temple for Yahweh but the LORD would not allow him to – David’s son Solomon was the one whom God ordained to build the temple.

On the appointed day the great company of people went to the house of Obed-edom (15;25) where the Ark had been residing. Verse 25 says they began the

procession with “rejoicing.” The Levites, the God-ordained priests, were carrying the ark with two long poles that went through rings on the ark. The poles attached to the ark were on their shoulders. David and the Levites and all the singers and musicians were all clothed in fine linen – in other words, they wore special clothes - like something people might wear to a wedding.

The trumpets began to sound, the cymbals and harps and lyres and a great sound of music and singing rose up.

David was so full of joy that he was dancing in the street – leaping and turning – something like one of these football players who scores a touchdown. David’s wife Michal despised David. She thought he was making a fool of himself.

As the Ark was being brought down the road the Levites sacrificed 7 bulls and 7 rams. Then when the Ark was placed by the Levites in the tent burnt offerings and peace offerings were made to God. It was a time of great celebration. David had prepared gifts for the whole nation: he gave each man and each woman a loaf of bread, a portion of meat and a cake of raisins.

Verse 34 says “... he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel. One of the commentators (Martin Selman, *Tyndale Commentary*) notes that these 3 verbs “should be understood as a collective reference to the activities of worship, according to the Hebrew custom of expressing the comprehensiveness of an idea by a series of near synonyms...” In other words, the Hebrews here worshipped Yahweh by invoking his blessings, thanking him for all his goodness, and praising him as their God. These special ministers appointed by David were leading out in the worship of Yahweh.

Note verse 7: Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brothers. If we look in the Psalms we will find that 12 were written by Asaph. But what I want us to notice here is that the focus of their worship on that day was on “thanksgiving.” The giving of thanks to God Almighty is a fundamental part of worship. The great sin of humankind everywhere is that they have failed to do this – they have not given thanks to God for who he is and for what he has done.

Some people do thank their gods for their blessings, but they are false gods, not the true creator and sustainer God, not Yahweh himself. So they are directing their worship to different gods than to the true one, so they are engaging in idolatry – the worship of idols, of false Gods.

Thanksgiving to the eternal Creator, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is fundamental to what it means to be a true worshipper of God. Psalm 116, verse 12-14, captures this idea of worship, especially in fellowship with the people of God:

What shall I render to the Lord
 for all his benefits to me?
 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
 and call on the name of the Lord,
 14 I will pay my vows to the Lord
 in the presence of all his people.

What begins at verse 8 and goes all the way through verse 34 is a special Psalm or Song that David and the people lifted up to God. It is actually a repetition of significant parts of Psalms 105, 96, and 106, plus some briefer references to other Psalms.

This Psalm begins with an exhortation to thanksgiving in verse 8 and finishes up with another similar exhortation in verse 34:

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

I think this verse 34 is a good summary of this whole Psalm – verse 34 basically has two ideas: Yahweh is good, and secondly, his steadfast love endures forever.

How do we know God is good? Well, let's look at this psalm in 1 Chron. 16 and see what we find:

Verse 8 says “call upon his name.” What does that mean? It means that he hears the prayers of his people. He is not a distant God. But he is paying attention to us and gives us hope that if we call upon him he will hear us and answer our petition.

Look at the second half of verse 8: “make known his deeds...” What does this mean? It means that God acts among humans. Again, he is not must a distant God who had set the

world in motion and gone off to do something else. No, he is constantly at work in the world among people. He is the living God; he is not a dead God, or an absent God. He is active in the lives of his people every day, leading and guiding them according to his divine providence. Isn't God good to act in our world, to actually do something, to change circumstances, to provide for needs, to comfort and console in sadness and loss. God is good to be with us. As Andrew Peterson's song says, "Is it true that the Father truly loves us? Yes, he does. Does the Spirit move among us? He does."

There is so much in this Psalm describing God and his nature and his attributes and things that he does. If you were person who was completely ignorant of the nature, the attributes of Yahweh God, and you read over this Psalm, would you not want this God to be your God?

Verse 14 says "his judgments are in all the earth." What does that mean? It means he is righteous and he punishes evil and sin. He is holy and pure and he cannot tolerate wickedness and idolatry and rebellion. God will punish sin. It's because he loves righteousness and is repulsed and angered by evil.

Could God truly be good if he wasn't also just and righteous? No, he couldn't. The God who is supremely good over every other supposed god in this world is a God who does not wink at sin. His moral standard is high and holy – it will not be changed, it will not be reduced his its high standards. God is good to be so righteous that sin and evil is so foreign to his nature that he would never embrace it or consider getting involved with it. God cannot be tempted with evil, nor does he tempt anyone else to do evil.

God is trustworthy in his nature; you can depend on him to do what he says. Verse 14 and following says that he "remembers his covenant which he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" in verses 16 and 17. What was the covenant, the agreement, that God made with these three patriarchs of the Hebrew faith? He promised them that they and their offspring would have a land and they would be a great nation and all the earth's people would be blessed through them.

And here it seemed this covenant was being fulfilled they had a rich land, the land of Canaan, and they had a mighty and godly king in David, and they had become numerous. And they were looking for another king, beyond David and greater than David, who would be the Lord Jesus Christ.

David was so happy; he could not contain himself. He had good reason to be happy. He was a sinner; he had broken God's righteous Law. He, for example, had committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for her husband to be killed on the battle field. Yet David had confessed his sins the LORD and received cleansing and forgiveness. His sins were not counted against him.

How he loved Yahweh! The LORD was David's Shepherd and David loved his Shepherd-God. His highest delight was to worship Yahweh. He said in Psalm 63:3Because your steadfast love is better than life,
 my lips will praise you.

One of the major themes of this Psalm is that the knowledge and worship of Yahweh was not to be confined and limited just to the Hebrews. But all the nations, all the peoples of the world are being commanded to worship Yahweh. Look at verse :28-29

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
 ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
 bring an offering and come before him!

Although the will of God was revealed through this and other similar scriptures, Israel did not move out among the nations to carry the message of Yahweh's uniqueness and superiority to all the other gods. It wasn't until the Messiah came, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he rose from the dead and sent his Spirit upon his people, that they had the motivation and desire to carry the gospel message to the other surrounding peoples and nations.

In verses 31-33 we see that nature itself is exhorted to praise Yahweh. Vers 32, for example, says:

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
 let the field exult, and everything in it!

He is so great and awesome that everyone and everything in creation must acknowledge his greatness.

And look at verse 33:

Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy
 before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

We see in this verse not only the fact that Yahweh is the Judge of all people, but we see the fact of his coming – God's appearance on earth among men and women.

Hebrew history was full of instances where God had come to his people. He had spoken to Abraham when he was an idolater in Ur of the Chaldees. He had come to

Moses on Mt. Sinai, he had been with his people in the wilderness wanderings and his presence was seen in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

He has been with them all along in their conquest of the land, as his presence had been above the Ark in the tabernacle, the tent, as it was carried from place to place, but now God comes into the midst of his people once again as the Ark is brought into the capital of Jerusalem.

What does it mean to have Yahweh in the midst of a people, of a nation? It means everything,

Once Moses told the LORD in the wilderness:

“If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?” Exo. 3:15-16

To have Yahweh’s presence was life and peace, it was protection and prosperity, it was to know fellowship with the Creator God. It was to be a people blessed far above any other people.

Think what it would be like, brothers and sisters, to live on in this world without the abiding presence of the Spirit of God who has been with us since the day we savingly believed in Christ. Would life be the same? Would it even be worth living? Wouldn’t we be willing to lose anything else in our lives except his presence and fellowship?

But to have his presence and fellowship is everything. To have the knowledge of who the true God is, of our great need for his forgiveness, restoration, and fellowship, is the most crucial thing to know and experience in our lives. We could lose everything else in life, our political freedom, our health, even our loved ones, but to lose the presence of the living God is something unthinkable. To lose his presence would be to be cast on a sea of despair and lostness and aimless wandering. For those of us who know him, who pray to him, who worship and service him, we cannot imagine life without his presence. But to have his presence, to commune with him, is the most precious gift in life.

David knew all this. David could relate to all this. But he and his people were not left alone to be battered about in this life by the winds of chance

and evil and ungodliness. No, they were receiving the very presence of the living God himself into their midst. In that tent, in the inner sanctuary known as the Holy of Holies, above the Ark and between the cherubim, the presence of God dwelled.

That is why no one could enter that sacred inner room except the High Priest once a year when he took the blood of animals in to atone for his own sin and the sins of the people. If anyone else entered they would be struck dead by the awesome holiness of God. A sinful human would have been consumed by the perfect, shining, burning righteousness of Yahweh God.

But for a sinful people, a people in need of forgiveness, a people who needed to be redeemed and ransomed from their sins, here God had come to live in their midst. Their greatest need in all of life was being met. Their greatest joy in all of life was being met. They were not left alone on this earth, but the living God had come to be among them.

No wonder David and the Levites and the priests and the singers and the musicians, all the men and women and all who were old enough to understand, no wonder they were ecstatic with joy. No wonder David leaped for joy. No wonder he whirled and turned in the street. He had to express his joy with all of his being, with his mind and heart and body.

My friends, David was having a foretaste of something greater that was to come. When Yahweh would enter the presence of his people, not just in his invisible presence above the Ark of the covenant, but he would enter the presence of his people in a visible and physical form, in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Magi from the East came to Jerusalem, looking for him who “had been born, King of the Jews? Where is he, for we have come to worship him.”

Can you imagine what David’s joy would have been like, had he been there to see the new-born King of the Jews, or had he been there to see him teaching the people and healing the sick and raising the dead, or to see him dying on Calvary’s cross for the sins of his people. Or to have been there in one of those closed and locked rooms with the eleven disciples when the resurrected Christ appeared in their midst?

Had David been there and beheld the Son of God in human flesh, if he could have touched him and talked to him, his joy would have been so great that his body would have burst open. His heart and mind would not have been able to contain his joy.

David would have exclaimed in the words of 1 Chron. 16:34:

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

Let's hear that again:

Oh give thanks to the LORD for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

Can you join me in declaring verse 34:

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

Why is Yahweh so good? What is the chief reason? There are many reasons as we have seen in this Song or Psalm of David:

- because he acts in history among his people
- because his wondrous acts of creation and providence are seen everywhere
- because his righteous judgements are in all the earth
- because he made a covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and he fulfilled and is in the process of fulfilling all that he promised to do – to call a great number of people to himself out of all the nations of the earth.
- because the gods of the nations, as it says in verse 26, are “worthless idols.”
- because majesty and splendor are before him

We could summarize all these reasons by this phrase in verse 34, *Yahweh is good*. He had done and is doing all these things. Is there any other god known among man who has done or can do these things? No, none! Not the gods of the other world religions, nor the gods of the cults here in America. Nor the impersonal gods of science and technology. Only the living God, the creator of heaven and earth, the One who sustains all people by maintaining the created order of sun and rain and the seasons and the plants and animals, who keeps the earth rotating on its axis and traveling around the sun. He is good.

And he is good because, as verse 34 also says, “for his steadfast love endures forever!”

“Steadfast love” – there is no greater thing God could do for us weak and sinful humans than to extend to us his “steadfast love.” God’s love for his people is described here as “steadfast.” It does not waiver. It is dependable. He is faithful. He is not fickle.

The Lord Jesus demonstrated the steadfast love of God in coming to earth, enduring the mocking and abuse of sinners against his innocent righteousness, and he endured the

suffering of the cross, because his love for the Father was steadfast – he would not depart from doing the will of this Father.

And his love for his people was steadfast – he despised the shame of the cross as he anticipated the outcome of his suffering – the salvation of his chosen and elect people who he rescued from a corrupt and evil society to be his own beloved children.

What did Christ get out of his suffering and resurrection from the dead? He got his people – he laid down his life for his sheep. He got us!

Let us remember always how good God is, especially in giving us his Son to save us from our sins. Let us always give thanks to him for his goodness and for his steadfast love which endures forever.

May thankfulness to our gracious God be the hallmark of our lives.

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