

Christ-Centered Thanks

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I just want to kind of start in a New Testament focus this evening to make a couple of statements. New Testament preaching is Christ-centered preaching and there's no avoiding that and I can't imagine why anyone would want to. The Apostle Paul said, "We preach Christ crucified," 1 Corinthians 1. A few verses later he said, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Then later in 2 Corinthians he said, "We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord." And so Paul makes it plain that a New Testament preacher, a New Testament pastor is one who is focused on the Lord Jesus Christ and one of the ways to measure a man's ministry and to know whether he is a man to follow or not is to listen to a number of his sermons over the course of time and have your ear tuned for that emphasis on Christ, and that will be a basic measure of discernment for many. But as we think about the New Testament and as we think about proclaiming Christ, it's important to remember this, that centuries before the coming of Christ, the writers of the Psalms laid a prophetic foundation for his life and ministry. Jesus himself said this when he said in Luke 24, "All things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

So the Old Testament was anticipating Christ from the very beginning. The Old Testament was laying the foundation. There is a continuity between the Old and new Testaments relating to the person of Christ that should never be missed and it's important to understand, it's a topic for an entire message or series of messages, that the character of God, the attributes of God are the same in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. It's not that the Old Testament God was a God of wrath and the New Testament God by contrast was a God of love. No, these are eternal attributes of the one true God and there could not be any change between the Old and the New Testaments about that.

Now along as we contemplate this prophetic foundation of the prophets and of the Psalms in particular, I wanted to remind you also of a passage that is in Peter's letter, 1 Peter 1:10 where he says this, that, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." As these men wrote in Old Testament times, they knew that there was something about the coming Messiah that was being revealed through them and they longed to know it, and they studied what their own writings were, seeking to understand it better. But it goes on, Peter goes on to say in verse 12, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves," in other words, the

endgame was not the prophets and the psalmists themselves, "but you," those of you in the New Testament era, "in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angels long to look."

I hope that you and I trust that you have a sense of great privilege as you open a Bible and as you hear the word of God taught because there were countless people better than us in Old Testament times who wanted to know and hear the things that we teach and that we speak about with each other, and it was not given to them. Angels longed to look into the things of which we have free and abundant access in the Scriptures and in the preached word. So this is a great privilege that we have and the privilege of gathering around the person of Jesus Christ, the privilege of gathering around the written word of God is something that we should never take for granted, and it is something to which everything else in our lives is subordinate by way of importance and privilege. You know, we have things that prophets wanted to know. We have things that angels longed to look into and Scripture says that God reserved the blessing for those of us who were living in the aftermath of the first advent of Christ. What a privilege we have.

Now with all of that said, it gives us a good perspective as we come back to Psalm 118 tonight. Psalm 118 is a very important part of that Old Testament foundation that was laid for the coming of Christ, and so let's turn to Psalm 118 and read it yet again as this is our final message on the Egyptian Hallel, Psalms 113 through 118, celebrating the goodness of God and giving thanks to him because of the mercy that he shows to disheartened and small people, so to speak. He is good to those who come to him in repentant faith and he was good to the nation of Israel in Old Testament times. This is just who God is. He's just good to his people. God is just good to his people and because we are slow to believe that and because our hearts are hard and because we tend to view God through the lens of our circumstances rather than our circumstances through the lens of the goodness of God, we tend to lose sight of this. So we need to come back to this again and again and again and if you are disheartened, if you are disillusioned, if you are discouraged here tonight, you need to come back to these fundamental things that are revealed in the Old Testament and we are going to see were fulfilled in the Old Testament unto the end, unto the goal that we would walk out tonight with our hearts full of Christ-centered thanks for the goodness of God to us in his Son.

Psalm 118:1,

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Oh let Israel say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." 3 Oh let the house of Aaron say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." 4 Oh let those who fear the LORD say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." 5 From my distress I called upon the LORD; The LORD answered me and set me in a large place. 6 The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me? 7 The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I will look with satisfaction on those who hate me. 8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in man. 9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD

Than to trust in princes. 10 All nations surrounded me; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. 11 They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. 12 They surrounded me like bees; They were extinguished as a fire of thorns; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. 13 You pushed me violently so that I was falling, But the LORD helped me. 14 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. 15 The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. 17 I will not die, but live, And tell of the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD has disciplined me severely, But He has not given me over to death. 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD; The righteous will enter through it. 21 I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And You have become my salvation. 22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. 23 This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25 O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. 27 The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. 28 You are my God, and I give thanks to You; You are my God, I extol You. 29 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

And as a prefatory statement here this evening, what you and I should understand as New Testament believers in Christ is that Jesus Christ is our primary reason for giving thanks to the Lord and that will be evident as we go through the New Testament usage of this Psalm, but our reason for giving thanks to the Lord is because he has sent his Son in order to be our Savior, our Master, to redeem us from sin. The goodness of God is seen and expressed preeminently in the Lord Jesus Christ, not in our material circumstances, not in our physical health or the coming and going of people in our lives, the preeminent expression of why we give thanks to the Lord, why he is good, is seen supremely in Christ and it is in Christ where the loyal love of God is everlastingly on display for us. And so this Psalm brings into focus the entire point of our spiritual existence, the entire focus of our prayers, of our aspirations, of our affections. They are all found and they are all fulfilled in Christ and in Christ alone. He is transcendent to the believing heart and everything else is secondary by comparison. And so we're looking at Christ-centered thanks as a result of the way that we'll see the New Testament uses this Psalm as we go through it here this evening.

So we saw last time that this Psalm is preeminently a call to thanksgiving. The opening verse and the closing verse are all a call to give thanks to the Lord. Israel, the nation of Israel, owed thanks to the Lord because of the kindness that he had shown to them in delivering them from Egypt and establishing them in the land and protecting them from

their enemies, giving them temple worship as a picture of the coming Messiah and the sacrifice that he would make, and so as we saw last time, Israel from the perspective of an Old Testament saint had all the reason that they needed to give great thanks to their God. Today, now and I mean today in 2021 and today in the New Testament era, we give thanks to the Lord for Christ-centered reasons. Christ is ever preeminently in the focus of the reason that we give thanks.

And let me just pause for a little pastoral word to you here. If you're struggling with being grateful here tonight, if you find yourself in a spiral of ingratitude and negative perception on life, let me encourage you to just honestly before the Lord, humbly before the Lord without giving any answer to anybody in the room around you, it is almost certainly the case that somehow, somewhere along the line you have lost Christ as the central focus of your heart affections. You've been distracted away from your focus on Christ because I ask you, how could we look at Christ crucified, how could we look at Christ buried, how could we look at Christ resurrected, how could we look at Christ ascended into heaven, interceding for us at the right hand of the Father, how could we look at Christ and know that he's coming again for his people, how could we look at Christ and know that we are one day going to see him face-to-face and be made like him because we will see him just as he is, how could we look at Christ and know that our eternal destination is wrapped up in Christ and that there will be an eternal blessedness without end that is ours, and when we've been there 10,000 years, we'll have no less days to sing his praise than when we first began. How, I ask you, could anyone have those things that belong to them and know them to be true and to possess them by faith, and not have a fundamental disposition toward life and toward God that is one of giving thanks? I realize this convicts us all that the word of God convicts us and the word of God, as it were, wounds us with our shortcomings and with our ingratitude, it wounds us in order to heal us. It wounds us in order to make us better. It's the surgeon's scalpel taking out the cancer from your heart and replacing it with healthy flesh that is beating and throbbing with gratitude and, you know, look, that's just a better way to live and it's certainly a way of living that is more pleasing to the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

So an ungrateful heart, a complaining, bitter, grumbling heart, is not a minor matter that can just be dismissed because circumstances are not to our liking. No, a heart that has fallen into a pattern of grumbling and discontent is a heart that is in need of some serious repentance because Christ is worthy of our praise, worthy of our thanks, worthy of honor and gratitude for all that he has done for us, all that he is in his person, in his majestic work, all of the riches that he has stored up for us. You know, there's just no other reason and there's no other response that is right and proper than to be grateful to him and I think that that is unavoidable and the fact that we live short of that glory is no reason not to embrace it and to aspire and to look to live in a better spirit of that going forward.

So with those things said, Psalm 118 plays a surprisingly large role in the New Testament. It is quoted in at least 12 different New Testament passages. As we've said for many weeks now, Psalm 118 was likely the last Psalm that Christ himself sang before his death when he left with the disciples as they closed up the last Passover, the first Lord's

Supper, and so there's much about this Psalm that is just throbbing waiting to be explained to us about the person of Christ. So we ask this question here this evening: what does this Psalm teach us about our Lord in light of the way that it is used in the New Testament? The New Testament makes it very plain that this Psalm is preeminently about the Lord Jesus Christ and that's just in keeping with what Christ said, what I quoted earlier, Luke 24, "Everything about Me that is written in the Psalms must be fulfilled." So what does this Psalm teach us about our Lord? We're going to see three different aspects, three different insights into our Lord that contribute to our thanks for him tonight as we bounce from passages in Psalm 118 and then see how they're used in the New Testament and we'll just take these in sequence as they appear in the Psalm itself.

First of all, we see this, we see that Christ is the cornerstone. Christ is the cornerstone. If you're taking notes tonight, that's the first heading: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. And Psalm 118 speaks about, uses that illustration to point to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 22 of Psalm 118, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes." The cornerstone, as we said last week, was the most important stone in the entire building, it set the lines and the balance for the entire building that was constructed around it, and what we find as we look to the New Testament is that that picture is used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ and his rule and his role in the church. It is in Christ that all things in the church hold together. It is in Christ that everything about your salvation holds together. Were it not for Christ, none of us would be saved. And if you think about it in pre-eternal through chronological to post-eternity or future eternity matters, you see how much all of this holds together.

Scripture tells us that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Before the beginning of time, in Christ we were chosen by God to receive salvation during the course of time. Step into time, step into 2,000 years ago and it was Christ who offered himself at the cross as the substitutionary penal sacrifice for our sins. He suffered the penalty on our behalf 2,000 years before you and I were ever even born. That's pretty remarkable to think about, how much this was placed into motion before we ever existed. Then you think back if you're a Christian and you think back to the moment of your salvation, you were saved as God worked in your heart and produced in you faith in Christ for your salvation. Your conversion, your justification is premised on the fact that you put your faith alone, in Christ alone. And now as we continue on in the Christian life, it is the Spirit of Christ working out sanctification in us, conforming us to the image of Christ, making us more and more like our Savior over the course of time, and then when either when the Lord returns or when we die and enter into his presence, we die and we're absent from the body and we're home with the Lord. So there is this bright royal ribbon that is woven from eternity throughout all of time and into eternity future, all wrapped around the glory and the work and the person of Christ that we benefit from. So he is the cornerstone to our salvation individually, and as a result, he is the cornerstone for the church as well, and we see Jesus in the New Testament applying this passage to himself in response to the Pharisees.

Turn to the gospel of Mark 12. I've suppressed this thought a couple of times already and I'm just going to say this. To you young men that are on the front end of your life or maybe you're a little older, you're in your 20s or early 30s, I want you to seriously consider whether it wouldn't be worthwhile for you to give the rest of your life aiming to be able to be in a position to preach the glories of Christ. That is a great call and an aspiration and it is worthwhile of your attention to seek the Lord and to see whether that is something that he would have you do. It's not enough for us as a church just to have one or two or three guys that are preaching Christ and then, you know, the next generation doesn't have anything like that. One of the goals is that there would be another generation of men coming up afterwards saying, "That's what I want to give my life to as well." And it's a lifelong pursuit. It's a lifelong devotion of study and prayer and seeking after Christ and doing the hard work to come to things. All I'm saying is, young men, it's a worthwhile object for you to consider and to see if the Lord wouldn't grant that to you. To preach Christ is an amazing thing to be able to do and whether you give your life to it or whether you just seriously serve in a lay capacity in a church in a Christ-centered way, Christ is the cornerstone, Christ is that royal ribbon that runs through all of time for the benefit of his people, and we need to be thinking about giving ourselves over more to the proclamation of his glory with whatever breath and whatever strengths and whatever resources the Lord gives to us. That's just the way it is.

So now that I've said that, I can discharge that responsibility and direct your attention to Mark 12:7. You know that the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees who were the religious leaders in the day when Jesus came to earth, they were opposed to his ministry. They were jealous of him. They were hostile to him. On multiple occasions they were plotting his death before they were able to achieve it at that hands of the Roman government. And Jesus is telling a parable to them that we'll pick up in the middle to warn them and to warn them against what they were doing and also to set forth his preeminent position in the kingdom of God. So in Mark 12:7, I know I'm picking it up in the middle for the sake of time, "those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!'" Jesus was telling a parable about a man who planted a vineyard, verse 1, and he sent workers to do it, and the people who came would beat his workers, send them away empty-handed, they wounded them, and now finally as a climax, he sends his son, verse 6, "He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'" Jesus making a point about himself there but in the parable the vine-growers said, "Let's kill him and we'll get the inheritance."

So verse 8, they took out the owner's son, they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard and Jesus asks this penetrating question, "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others." And he says in verse 10, "Have you not even read this Scripture," and he quotes Psalm 118 to them, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Jesus says, "You Pharisees are fulfilling Psalm 118. You are rejecting Me. I am the chief cornerstone and you are rejecting Me." And Christ applies the concept of the cornerstone to his own person.

In Acts 4, this motif is picked up again. In Acts 4, Peter is preaching and if possible makes the application even clearer. He says in verse 10 as he's speaking to the Jews, Acts 4:10, now he's speaking after the crucifixion, after the resurrection. Jesus applied this Psalm to himself before the crucifixion, Peter applies it afterwards. It's locked up with bookends so that it cannot be missed. Acts 4:10, "let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead by this name this man stands here before you in good health." And speaking of Christ it says, "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders." You Jews rejected Christ, but he is the stone "which became the chief corner stone," as Psalm 118 set forth. So the Jewish leaders rejected Christ, preferred their position over submission to the God who was manifest in front of them. They knew what they were doing. They knew they were rejecting him. They knew he was sinless. They knew that his miracles could not be denied and they still rejected him, and what Scripture tells us is that this, and using this analogy, this precious stone, this chief cornerstone that they rejected becomes the basis upon which all of spiritual salvation is built. All of the church is built on this very one that the Jewish leaders of the time wanted nothing to do with. That's marvelous. That is a matter of God overturning the wisdom and judgment of men in order to accomplish his own purposes. What men rejected, God set forth as the most important center of it all, and now what we find is this, is that the church against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, the church is built on Christ, the cornerstone.

Look at Ephesians 2 beginning in verse 19 as the apostle uses many different pictures to show forth the great reality of the church and the people of God that are being built by the Spirit of God in response to the crucifixion of the Son of God. So he says in Ephesians 2:19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household." That's a blessed message to Gentiles who were separated from God and without hope in the world, now you've been brought into Christ by the great work of the Spirit. And he says in verse 20, "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," here it is, "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." How high and how lofty is the church of Christ? How high and how lofty is this work that the Spirit is doing to conform us to the image of Christ and to form us and to build us into being a dwelling of God in the Holy Spirit? This is remarkable. This is highly exalted. This is highly noble. This far transcends anything that is happening in the world around us, these spiritual realities to which Scripture testifies and that the Spirit of God is working out in our midst and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of it all.

So if I can switch metaphors here, we see the centrality of Christ in the building of the church and we remember what Christ said. He is our bread. He is our spiritual bread. He is our spiritual drink. We feed off of him. We live off of him. We must have him nourishing our hearts and causing us to grow, and yet we never outgrow our need to grow in him and to abide in him. You see, Christ is the goal, Christ is the ultimate end of salvation. It's not that you get saved and then you move on to other things away from Christ, Christ saves you and then you move on to have a healthy and prosperous life and

all of your dreams get fulfilled here on earth, you know, and Christ recedes into the background once the initial work of salvation is done. No. No, no, no, no. We cannot think that way. Christ saved us in order to become the preeminent object of our affections and the preeminent object of that which we love and that which we aim toward. We are built in Christ and Christ is our goal. We started in Christ, we finish in Christ, and everything in between is about Christ.

That is true salvation and I would want to say in kindness and in a word of earnest caution to those who have pictured salvation as something else and you've been rooted in thinking that it's something else about Christ making your life happy or giving you exactly the family that you want, or giving you exactly the earthly circumstances you want, you know, and that's your idea of salvation, friends, you may not understand the gospel. If that's what you think it's about, it's about earthly attainment and Christ being the axle grease which makes your car move, no, no, Christ himself is the focus. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." Christ alone is the object of our affections and that's what true salvation produces in the heart, and so I ask you whether that's what's in your heart. Is knowing Christ, loving Christ, is that the preeminent affection of your heart? Even if you stumble around and, you know, we all stumble in many ways, at the end of the day what is it that you love the most? What is it that you want the most? Where is Christ, I ask you, where is Christ in the control room, in the mission control center of your heart, where is he in relationship to that because it's his glory that we preeminently love if we are in Christ.

Isn't that what the Apostle John meant when he said in John 3:30, "He must increase, I must decrease"? And yet we have multiple generations of Christians that have been conditioned to think about Jesus being the one who helps fulfill their earthly ambitions with no regard of loving him, obeying him, longing for him, and seeing him face-to-face. Oh, no wonder Scripture warns us that there will be many on that day that Christ says to them, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." These things are glorious in their application to the believing heart as we embrace these things but, oh, what a warning and a caution they are to those who have their life focused on something other than him. Christ is the cornerstone. Christ is at the center of it all for the true believer and for the true church.

Secondly, let's go on and see how this Psalm is used elsewhere. Christ is the King. You'll remember that in the Old Testament God elevated David to the throne of Israel and in 2 Samuel 7 he promised David that he would have a son to sit upon his throne, and what Scripture tells us is that Jesus Christ is that greater son of David. He is the King of Israel. And going back to Psalm 118, we'll see how this plays out in New Testament times, but grounding this in the original prophetic Psalm, Psalm 118:26, we see the psalmist saying this. Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD." What you find as you read the gospels is that the people were quoting this Psalm as they hailed Jesus at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Look at Matthew 21 with that little bit of background in place. Matthew 21, and in verse 6, I'm assuming that you know some of the surrounding context for the sake of time. Verse 6, "The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats." This itself was in fulfillment of a prophecy that Zechariah made, as you can look later at verse 5. And in verse 8 for our purposes tonight, this is what we want to see, "Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!' When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?' And the crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'" Now as we know, they hailed Jesus one day and basically crucified him the next, but their shouts of praise during his prophesied entry into Jerusalem were in fulfillment of this recognition that Psalm 118 speaks of.

Look down in chapter 21 to verse 42 and you'll see how these link together, what we were saying in our first point and the second point. "Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes"?' Then in verse 45, you see this, "the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them." The crowd rejected Christ because he was not giving them the earthly deliverance that they wanted and the Pharisees stirred up their fickle emotions against him a few days later. They didn't realize it at the time. Christ came as a King but he came in his first advent in order to give spiritual deliverance to his people. He came in order to give his life and he was like a seed that had to fall in the ground and die in order that life might come forth, the inherent life in the seed could come forth and bear fruit. At his second coming, he'll come and establish his throne in Jerusalem but we see in the usage of Psalm 118 how the Scripture ascribes to Christ the title "son of David." We see that the praise given to him is rooted in the Psalm and we see that Christ is this King that was promised. He is the greater son of David as you see even in the genealogy in Matthew 1, you see the line of Christ being established showing that he was entitled to the throne of David by genealogical descent, and one day still future to us, Israel will greet him in his rightful capacity as King.

Look at Matthew 23:37, and in this text which ends with this quote from Psalm 118, and in this text you see the majesty of the Lord who ordained and elected people to salvation and yet somehow there is also this genuine desire for the salvation of all. Scripture does not resolve those two things into harmony that satisfies our minds, but we teach them both because it's what Scripture teaches.

Matthew 23:37, Jesus says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." He attributes the moral cause, the moral culpability for their loss of salvation was with them and their unwillingness, not with the God who ordained salvation.

So there were consequences for their rebellion. Verse 38, "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" Verse 39, "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" They ascribed that to him in his first advent, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." When Christ returns to earth, there is going to be a conversion of Israel, there will be a supernatural saving of Israel and they will look and they will see their Messiah and he who they once rejected, they now will welcome. "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" And God will manifest his great faithfulness to the nation of Israel by producing a national conversion, a national repentance at the second coming of Christ when they embrace him like they should have the first time around. And at that second coming, Christ will reign as King over the earth and the majesty of his people welcoming him, saying, "Blessed is He who comes," the second coming of the Lord, there is going to be this reception of Christ, this recognition of this King, and this glad reception and submission to him, "Blessed is He! Praise God, He is the one who comes in the name of Yahweh!" So Christ is the King. We see this from the way that the New Testament applies Psalm 118 to his person.

Thirdly and finally, we see this, we see that Christ is the sacrifice. Christ is the sacrifice. He's the cornerstone, he's the King, he's the sacrifice. Look back at Psalm 118 one final time where it says in verse 27, "The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar." In Old Testament times, the animal was tied to the altar and then slain. In Christ, what we have is not the sacrifice of an animal but a sacrifice of the Lord himself. He wasn't strapped to an altar, he was nailed to a cross and offered up as the sacrifice which would atone for the sins of his people. It was there at the cross where he paid for our sins with his precious blood.

Look at Hebrews 10 with me. Hebrews 10. We'll read an extended portion of this passage. Hebrews 10:4, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.' After saying above, 'Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will.' He takes away the first in order to establish the second." This is not a direct quote of Psalm 118 but the principle of sacrifice is what I want you to see here as we're wrapping up our consideration of Psalm 118 here this evening.

So then in verse 10, it says this, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Verse 11, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." Do you see it, one offering, one sacrifice, doing the work for all time for those who believe in him? Do

you see how climactic, how expansive, how comprehensive the cry of Christ on the cross was when he said, "It is finished!" The animal sacrifices were done. They were shadows pointing to the ultimate reality of the sacrifice of Christ. The repetition over and over again of the Old Testament sacrifices is done away with in the New because Christ is the sacrifice, he is the ultimate sacrifice, the fulfillment of all of the shadows that those other sacrifices were pointing to but had no efficacy of their own.

So think about this with me. Think about the majesty as we consider these things together. Christ is the cornerstone, Christ is the King, and Christ is the sacrifice? How can that be? This is utterly contrary to everything that we know earthly about what people with power do. They don't do this to themselves. They don't sacrifice themselves. They use their position to accumulate wealth and power to themselves. This is the testimony of 6,000 years of human history and yet what we have here pointed to us in Psalm 118 is something that is utterly contrary to normal human experience. You have the cornerstone, the one who is the royal thread that runs through pre-eternity to eternity future, eternity past to eternity future, and he is the bright royal purple robe, the purple ribbon that runs through it all. He is the center of human history. We measure time by him. And he is the King, and yet this King humbled himself, coming down from heaven to live in human flesh, giving himself as a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of his people, his guilty people. What do you make of that? What kind of unique otherworldly character is this, that one of his exalted majesty would step down like that in a Philippians 2 kind of way? "Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard His equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

This King gave his life for us. Amazing. Well might we all take our shoes off because we're standing on holy ground here. Christ the King humbled himself to be the sacrifice for his own people to secure their well-being. He gave himself up for our well-being. We who were not looking for him, he was looking for us. We who rejected him, he was looking to accept us and to purchase us for his own. And through the cross and in his own person, he is the cornerstone upon which a people for his own praise is built. We are part of a great plan but the glory of it all belongs to Christ. We have received great mercy but the glory of all of that belongs to Christ.

So as we look at Psalm 118 through New Testament eyes, as we understand something of the greatness of who Christ is and what he has done for us, what do we do? What do we do in response to this majesty? Go back to Psalm 118 and we come full circle. What else can you do but simply to acknowledge the rightness of the call of Psalm 118 and respond in obedience to it from the depths of your heart. What are we to do with this Christ who is the cornerstone, who is the King, and who is the sacrifice? What are we to do? Verse 29, "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting." You see, our thanksgiving is always rightly a Christ-centered thanks. It starts with him. It ends with him. It is to his glory.

Steve Lawson said this and I quote, "God has delivered all believers from His own wrath through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. Here is the greatest deliverance of all, a divine rescue of undeserving sinners from the final judgment and eternal damnation. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His great salvation through the cross. Let them give thanks to Him who also develops and deepens them for His glory."

My friends, are you thankful to God in Christ this evening?

Let's pray.

Father, we keep our response simple as we close tonight. Individually and corporately we give thanks to You, O Lord, we give thanks to You, O Christ, for You are good. Surely, surely, surely Your lovingkindness is everlasting. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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