

Jesus Gives Thanks For The Cup

I want to consider what may be the greatest “*Thanksgiving*” text of the Bible. It’s found in Matthew 26:27 and 28, and reads, “*And He [Jesus] took the cup, and **gave thanks**, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*” Is there any “*thanksgiving*” that is comparable to this one?

Jesus gave thanks for this “*cup*” that represented His blood, which He was soon to shed for the sins of the world and, He gives thanks for it. In the shadow of the cross, He thanked God, His Father, for the “*cup*.” Crowded into the cup were the sins of the entire world, the wrath of God upon man’s sins and the sacrifice of Himself. All this was represented within that cup and yet, instead of shrinking from it, Jesus quietly bowed His head and “*gave thanks*.”

A critical hour had come upon Jesus. It was the time for which He was born, the event for which He was brought into this world. All the agonies He was to experience as He hung a bleeding victim on Calvary’s cross, - all this was represented in the cup – yet, “*He gave thanks!*”

A HEBREW LEGEND

There is an old Hebrew legend that deals with the origin of praises. It states that after God created mankind, He asked the angels what they thought of the world. They answered, “*There is only one thing lacking. It’s the sound of praises for the Creator.*”

So, the legend continues, God created music in the voice of the birds; the whispering winds – the murmuring brooks and streams ocean – the mighty roar of the ocean – and – He planted a melody in the hearts of men – all, just to bring Him praise!

It’s only a legend, but it certainly has a hint of truth – a truth that is emphasized by the Psalmist. Look at Psalm 105:1-3, “*O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works. Glory ye in His holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.*”

Psalm 106:1-2, “*Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all His praise?*”

And, one more, Psalm 107:1-2, “*O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.*”

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Psalms is easy to turn to because it comprises the very center of the Bible. Isn’t it significant that the book of Psalms occupies the very center of the Bible? It’s as if it holds the Bible in its hands, standing in the middle and reaching out in both directions. A note of praise bind together all of God’s divine revelation. Just think of it, the very center of God’s revelation to man is *praise!*

Thanksgiving should be in two directions, toward God and men. The Apostle Paul gave thanks to God – praised Him – and thanked the brethren for their fellowship, suffering and

service. Our praise to the Lord is nothing more than pious chicanery, if we are ungrateful to one another. No one is going to have anything worth calling a harp in glory who has not already “*heaped*” music in his own soul while here on earth.

Jesus played often on His “*Thanksgiving harp.*” In fact, He was continually playing the “*Harp of Praise to His Heavenly Father.*” He taught the importance of Thanksgiving in the Sermon on the Mount. Thanksgiving was a principle characteristic of His life.

Henry Ward Beecher wrote beautifully, “*As flowers carry dewdrops, trembling on the edges of their petals, ready to fall at the waft of wind, or brush of bird, so the heart should carry its beaded words of thanksgiving and at the first breath of heavenly favor let down the shower, perfumed with the hearts gratitude.*”

Let’s look at how Jesus, in His life on earth, used the harp of praise.

1. JESUS WAS THANKFUL FOR THE COMMON NECESSITIES OF LIFE

In the miracle of the feeding of 5000 Jesus gave thanks. John 6:11 says, “*He took the loaves and **when He had given thanks**...*”

We are prone to take the common things of life as a matter of fact and confine our thanksgiving for special things, however, we see Jesus praising God for the “little” things of life.

He who said, “*The earth is Mine and the fullness thereof,*” yet was grateful for a few loaves of bread. He had to power to transform rocks on the hills into a full course dinner, yet He gives thanks for bread.

God help us to be thankful for even “*crumbs,*” instead of grumbling.

2. JESUS PLAYED ON HIS “HARP OF PRAISE,” A NOTE OF THANKSGIVING FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

What would the world be like without the laughter of little children?

No one appreciates little children more than Jesus did. Children were never a nuisance to Him. He said to His disciples, “*Suffer the little children to come unto Me.*” We are told that “*He took them [little children] up in His arms and blessed them.*” Jesus was thankful for them.

We talk about “*underprivileged children*” in other parts of the world. We see a picture of some poor, little half-starved, youngster, and it wrings our heart, but what about those living in spacious homes here in America – that have never heard about the Good News about salvation in Jesus Christ – does our hearts go out to them?

3. JESUS SOUNDED ANOTEHR NOTE ON THE HARP OF THANKSGIVING – FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

John 11:41, “*Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.’*”

Prayer meant everything to Jesus. It was a most important thing in His life. Prayer, to Him, was real – vital as breath itself. He never met a circumstance when prayer was not appropriate – and neither will you!

Thank about – What if prayer, and its privileges, were denied you. Let's be more thankful to God for the privilege of prayer.

4. JESUS WAS THANKFUL FOR OPPOSITION

We sometimes complain and grow rebellious when trials come our way, however, God can give us a triumphant spirit that can enable us to “*always be able to be thankful,*” knowing that, no matter what happens to us, “*all things will work out together for good.*”

Whenever Jesus was confronted by opposition, or misunderstanding, He would “*lift His eyes heavenward, and give God, His Father, thanks!*” When He was rejected by Jerusalem, on His fourth tour of Galilee, Matthew 11:25 states, “*At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘**I thank Thee**, O, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.’*” Jesus knew that, in spite of how things appeared, His Heavenly Father was still in complete control of everything.

Jesus faced daily situations that could bring discouragement – For instance, He faced a barrage of stones hurled by angry men. – There were those who called Him, “*Blasphemer*” – and those who were plotting His death – still, He was always had a thankful attitude! Whenever circumstances that to us would seem be difficult to be thankful, He *never* failed to thank God.

The Old Testament is abundant with God's command to “*to sacrifice unto God with the voice of thanksgiving.*” That's what Jonah finally did, in the belly of the whale. He cried to God, “*I will sacrifice unto Thee the voice of Thanksgiving, I will pay that which I have viewed.*” When that note of praise was sounded, the whale got sick and cast Jonah out upon the seashore.

There is a connection between the voice of thanksgiving and deliverance. There was for Jonah – and there will be for you! You can overcome opposition with a note of praise!

5. JESUS STRIKES THE HARP OF THANKFULNESS EVEN IN HIS DEATH

Our text in Matthew 26:27, says, “*Jesus took the cup and gave thanks.* In the presence of the very emblem of His supreme suffering, He gave thanks!

The sacrifice lambs, when brought to the altar, would go bleating and bellowing, but not the Lamb of God, He gave thanks!

Paul said, “*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*” We need to remember God's wonderful gift of salvation – and thank Him for it. The highest thanksgiving we should have is for the death of Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for our sin.

