

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 29:1-22

Text: 1 Chronicles 29:10-20

Message: Who Are We to Give Thanks to God?

October 9, 2017; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON Thanksgiving Day

Pastor Jack Van de Hoef

Our Scripture reading begins with the words "David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly." And why not?! He had good reason to praise the Lord. David wanted to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem. But God would not let him. God told David that his son, Solomon, would build the temple. David did what he could for the temple. He gave the architectural plans in much detail for how the temple and its furnishings were to be built.

Then he added much of the materials that would be needed. And not just a little bit, either. According to vv. 2 and 4 of this chapter, David supplied gold, silver, bronze, iron and wood, and precious stones, all in large quantities. Then he added to that amount his personal treasury, his savings: 100 tons of gold and 250 tons of silver. Not a bad retirement fund.

With that gift or donation he challenged the people to also give. The leaders responded with gifts of another 190 tons of gold, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. As well they added a large gift of precious stones.

With a treasure like that, with generosity like that, anyone would praise the Lord!
Anyone would be thankful!

But what is revealing in David's expressions of praise and thanksgiving is his humility and the way he gives credit to God. He identifies himself and the people as strangers in God's sight. They were just like their forefathers.

Like Abraham. Abraham knew very well what it was like to be a stranger in the land. In Genesis 23:4 Abraham, as a stranger in Canaan, must make a request to buy some property so that he can bury his wife, Sarah, who had died.

The stranger in the land had no property. Their position was very insecure. They were allowed to live in the land only by permission of the present owner. They could be sent away at the whim of their overseer. Strangers were to be made to feel welcome, but they had no established place. There is a sense of rootlessness in the life of a stranger. They could not demand protection or deliverance. They could only rely on the kindness and mercy of those to whose protection they had entrusted themselves.

What a strange thing for David to say! He is king of Israel. The people have settled in Canaan. During his 40 year rule over Israel, he had defeated many enemies and brought the people to a time of peace. The Israelites had control of most of Canaan. Non-Israelites who

still lived in the land or in surrounding territory were made to be servants or had to pay tribute to the royal treasury.

Strangers in the land? *They* were the ones in control of their country. *They* owned the land. *They* decided who the strangers were. And yet in God's sight David considers himself and his people strangers. They were dependent on God's mercy and kindness for protection. They could not demand anything from God. They could only receive what God graciously chose to give. What they had on this earth was really not their own; it belonged to God, and God let them make use of it.

More than that, David says "our days are like a shadow." Despite the establishment of the nation of Israel and the firm establishment of David's family on the throne, David sees himself as a pilgrim. This life is but a temporary step in our history and our lives.

Yet see how richly God has blessed us! David rejoiced and praised God that he could give as generously as he did. v. 14: "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." From having very little to having great wealth. From the position of nomadic, wandering strangers with no place to call home, these people have received great wealth, a wealth they can give to God.

If now they enjoy a prosperity which they had not known before, it is only because they have inherited what God promised their forefathers. They received the promise of land and they enjoy God's protection against their enemies. Thus they were no empty words of David when he acknowledged all things come from the Lord, and of that which belongs to God we have given to Him.

Who are we to give thanks to God? "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (Ps. 8:4) As people on this earth we are small in the eyes of our great God. He is the Creator, we are creatures, the works of His hands. He is the almighty God, who was and is and always will be. We are but a shadow, like the grass of the field which is here today and gone tomorrow. Like the leaves of the trees which are green in summer, but in the fall they die and blow away.

Who are we to give thanks to God? We are strangers in His sight. We have no claim to anything on this earth as our own. We depend on God's kindness and mercy.

Yet, by God's grace, we *are* His people! He is our God! He has made a covenant with us. He has promised His blessings to us, to those who trust in Him. He has promised His blessings to those who are part of the new covenant, the covenant of Jesus' blood. In Jesus

Christ, we become God's own children. In Christ, God treats us as His own sons and daughters. Who are we to give thanks to God? By God's undeserved grace we are His children, precious in His sight.

And so we give thanks for all our blessings. We don't deserve them; we haven't earned them, but God in His grace is so generous. We have so much! Sometimes we wish for more. Sometimes we wish for life to be a bit easier. But today is a good day to stop and celebrate the blessings we do have.

We can also learn how to give thanks from the actions of David and the people. They expressed their thanks to God in song and prayer. Together the people praised the Lord in all His greatness and majesty. They praised God as the Lord over all, and as the source of all good things.

And they put their money where their heart was. They gave, and not just a little bit. They gave in abundance. They gave in the knowledge that what they gave was actually not their own in the first place. It really belonged to God. God was letting them borrow and use it and enjoy it for a while. And so as David and the people gave so much, there was no place for self-exaltation, for boasting in themselves. All the praise goes to God and to His glorious name.

Now some people think that it was easy for David to be generous. After all, he was king. He was rich. And for all the people to give so much gold and stuff, they must have been rich. It's hard for a poor person to give a lot.

But thankful living is not about giving a lot. It is about having a right perspective on what we have. "It's all yours, O Lord." Our time and talents and treasures and trees or the world around us. All this we have received from God. We have been given responsibility to make proper use of our time, talents, treasures and trees. As we have been blessed so richly, let us also be generous with what the Lord has entrusted to us. Let us not be selfish as if it is mine; it is the Lord's, to be used for His glory.

Who are we to give thanks to God? We are strangers before God. We depend on God's mercy and kindness. We are like a passing shadow. Yet, by God's grace, we are His children, loved and blessed by Him.

Enjoy the favour and blessing of God. Give praise and thanks to God, who is the source of all that we have. Share generously, for what we have is not our own, it belongs to God. In all our thanks, may God receive all the praise.

Amen.