

'Give thanks' – What! Yes, 'give thanks'

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

26th July 2020

God is good... all the time

Opening Song:

'He has done so much for me'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1MKZkBFH_8&t=20s

Prayer

Welcoming God, we are called together as God's people to worship You, our Holy God. We come together searching for Your strength to empower and to encourage us. We come to worship and praise Your holy name. We gather with thanksgiving on our lips and love in our hearts to sing to Your glory; to be touched and inspired by Your word; to dwell in Your house in unity.

Lord God, forgive the times we choose not to look... Not to look out for those in need, not to look for glimpses of Your glory, not to look for opportunities to share Your good news with others. Forgive us, Lord (**pause**)

Open our eyes to You, O God...
May Your Holy Spirit reinvigorate us.
May we rub our eyes and focus on what You call us to do this day and every day.
Open our eyes, open our hearts, open our mouths, and open our minds - we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 9-13 (NKJV)

Psalm 105:1-11; God's Faithfulness to Israel

¹ O give thanks to the Lord, call on His name, make known His deeds among the peoples. ² Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wonderful works.

³ Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

⁴ Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually. ⁵ Remember the wonderful works He has done, His miracles, and the judgements He has uttered, ⁶O offspring of His servant Abraham, children of Jacob, His chosen ones. ⁷ He is the Lord our God; His judgements are in all the earth.

⁸ He is mindful of His covenant for ever, of the word that He commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹ the covenant that He made with Abraham, His sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁰ which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹¹ saying, 'to you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.'

Hymn: "Great is Thy Faithfulness"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW_-XPE-zec

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou for ever wilt be.

Reflection

"Grandad, I'm really thankful and proud of you," said his granddaughter. "Why are you proud of me?" asked the old man. She replied, "I notice that before you sneeze, you lean forward, then cover your mouth with your hands." "Of course," explained Grandad. "How else can I catch my teeth?" 🤧🤧🤧

Grandad and His granddaughter were thankful, albeit for different reasons. Grandad was happy that he had finally found the best way to 'catch his teeth'. His granddaughter was grateful for the way he used his hands as a mask, to limit the spread of germs. They were happy and thankful.

Our scripture reading reminds us to always be thankful – to give thanks, all the time. It is widely believed that although we have many things to be grateful and thankful for, we spend more time complaining. We complain regularly for example, about bad weather, nuisance phone calls, door-to-door salespeople, Wi-Fi not connecting, noisy eaters, noisy neighbours, people pushing into queues, supermarket self-service tills, bad customer service, lack of funding for NHS, bad hair day and having a runny nose. This reminds me of this 'prayer' I shared with you, last year:

"Dear Lord, so far today I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper, I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or over-indulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot of help. Amen"

The psalmist urges us not to focus on worries, burdens or fears, but on God's faithfulness. Part of this psalm of David was evidently used as a hymn of praise, during the momentous occasion of the carrying of the Ark of Covenant from the house of Obed-edom (where David had temporarily kept it), back to Jerusalem (1 Chr. 16:7-22).

The Ark of the Covenant (*alias* Ark of God) was a symbol of the presence of God in the nation of Israel. So, on its return, David and the people of Israel found it fitting to proclaim aloud the greatness of God and to give thanks to a God who is 'gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love' (Psalm 145:8). They used this time well to remember God and to thank Him for taking good care of them, in good and difficult times.

The words "thank," "thanks" and "thanksgiving" are used many times in the Bible. In the King James Version (KJV), these three words are used 128 times. We read five times in the Bible about Jesus' giving thanks to His Father. Also, Apostle Paul often gave thanks to God. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:57, he said, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And in Philippians 4:6, Paul again asks us to "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, [to let our] requests be made known to God" (emphasis mine). So, it is good to be thankful to God – all the time.

Friends, I know very well that it is easy to be thankful to God during good times, when He blesses us with a new car, a house or His healing mercies. I also know that many find it very difficult, especially during times of trouble, pain, loss and uncertainty, to express our thankfulness to God, in word and through action. Recently, I read a touching story of a church leader who, after going through a tough time, struggled to say 'thank you' to God for His faithfulness to him and his family, over the years. He wrote, "Every time I knelt down on my knees to thank God for His many blessings, I instead found myself asking, "Yeah, but what have you done for me lately? Then God's Spirit led me gently to re-read Psalm 105:5. I obeyed, but I got strangely stuck on the first word of this verse – Remember. I now know that God wanted me to remember; to remember with tremendous gratitude the many wonderful things He had said and done in and through my life, family and work, even lately. He also helped me to remember, again with tremendous thankfulness, that the same God who promised to be mindful of the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - to give the land of Canaan to the nation of Israel (vs 8-11) – had also honoured His promise to send His son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us". He continued, "thanks be to God, 'whose divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2Peter 1:3)".

May Grace and peace be multiplied to us through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (2 Peter 1:2). And for all God's many blessings; for all His continued love, care and friendship – during good and difficult times - we say, Thank You. Amen

Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession

Holy and Faithful God, we give thanks for the blessing of memory, and for the way our memory of God's blessing and guidance has helped us in the past, especially when we have struggled with doubts and fears invading our hearts and minds.

Lord God, we give thanks for the way our forebears in the faith trusted you. They were never disappointed in your guidance, mercy and care. You led and blessed the people you chose be your family; and through thick and thin, you've always been there for them, especially in their times of doubt and fear, and eventually led them to their new home, as you promised. We give thanks that you have blessed and led countless generations through their faith journeys, and we especially give thanks for the people who have prayed for and blessed us throughout our life.

Holy God of Shalom, it is your will that people to know the security and joy of your Shalom - where they can be at peace with themselves, with their world, and especially with you. We give thanks that we too have this gift of your Shalom.

Help us to take the time to be still before you, to receive all the blessings you want to shower upon us – again just as you promised - and to be at home with us so that our whole being is blessed as we live our lives as your true children of grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Closing Hymn: Now thank we all our God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=30&v=Y0dmfmwFLn0&feature=emb_logo

Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

Final blessings

May the LORD bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you His favour and give you His peace. Amen

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