

Selah: Thanksgiving

Job 1:1, 6-12, 16-22, 2:11-13, 42:1-6; Psalm 100, 107, 138:4

So far we have talked about adoration and confession. If you have missed any of this up to this point you can get caught up online. Today's topic will be Thanksgiving.

Adoration vs Thanksgiving:

A lot of us confuse thanksgiving with adoration. What is the difference? Adoration is praise that originates in our hearts and that we pour out on God. It starts with us. We look at who God is and we can't help but respond.

Thanksgiving works the other direction. It's our response to the love, blessing, and compassion that flows from God onto us. It starts with Him.

Thanksgiving is not dependent on circumstances. It's an act of worship. You can be in the middle of a terrible situation, maybe even one you brought on yourself, and still give wholehearted thanks to God. Not because the situation is good, but because of what He's done in the past and what He's doing right now...even when you can't see it.

That's a hard truth. So let's dig into the language of Scripture to see where it comes from.

Yada:

There's a Hebrew word behind almost every "give thanks" you read in the Old Testament: *yada* (yaw-DAW). Literally, it means "*to throw, to shoot, to cast.*" But in the context of worship, it means "*to give thanks or praise.*" Interestingly, it can also mean "*to confess sin*" which tells you something about how closely thanksgiving and what we talked about last week, confession before God, are connected.

Yada is related to the noun *yad* or "*hand.*" Think about that. When we raise our hands in worship, we're doing yada with our bodies. We're throwing our praise toward heaven, thanking God for who He is and what He's done, and declaring in faith what we believe He'll still do.

Yada shows up 114 times in the Old Testament, and 64 of those, more than half, are in the Psalms. This is the beating heart of Israel's prayer life.

Psalm 100:

Psalm 100 is an invitation to enter joyfully into God's presence, and a reminder that His faithfulness extends to our generation and beyond.

Read Psalm 100:1-5. Notice the structure. In verses 1-2, we get three invitations: praise God (v. 1), serve God (v. 2), and come to God (v. 2). Then in verses 3-4, there are three more invitations: know God (v. 3), enter His gates (v. 4), and give thanks to God (v. 4).

Look closer. We're not just told what to do, we're told how: with gladness, with singing, with thanksgiving, with praise. God doesn't just want the action. He wants the posture behind it.

Psalm 100 belongs to a family of psalms scholars call "enthronement psalms"

Psalms 47, 93, and 95–99 also fit this category. These psalms are directly tied to corporate worship.

I don't know about you, but the last two weeks as Kerry and Jared spoke, at least 7-8 worship songs popped in my head. God's people gather together to declare that the Lord reigns. Thanksgiving, in this sense, isn't a private feeling. It's a public declaration that He is King, no matter what the news, the diagnosis, or the bank account says.

Thanksgiving in the Hard Times:

That's a nice psalm to sing when things are going well. But what about when they're not? Read Job 1:1, 6-12. Satan is trying to tell God that none of his servants actually LOVE or adore Him. That there isn't one person who could possibly love God unless everything was going great. God allows Satan to roam and mettle in Job's business.

Read Job 1:16-22. In the middle of all of that, Job says something remarkable: *"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"* (Job 1:21).

Job is not a simple story and it's not a formula. Job argues with God. Job grieves. Job questions. Job says hard, honest things across thirty-some chapters, he does not hide his grief. And that matters, because remember: *yada* can also mean *"to confess"* to be honest before God. Job's thanksgiving was never fake.

Sit with this for a minute...Selah.

As Christians we think we have to be strong, suck up the pain, and let go of the frustration and hurt, but is that even biblical? Is that natural for us as Christians?

Read Job 2:11-13. Job sat on the ground for a week and said nothing. It was a Selah of lament (We will talk about this next week) of profound sadness over what he had lost. Nobody tried to cheer him up. Nobody tried to make him feel better by giving him generic sayings. They were just with him.

We can still have Thanksgiving in our heart for God and be sad or angry because our adoration for Him has nothing to do with our earthly circumstances.

Read Job 38-41. This is where God lays out who He is and what He is capable of doing. Job has asked God a whole lot of questions and yet God doesn't answer Job's questions. He answers with His power, wisdom, and sovereignty over creation. And Job responds not with more arguments, but with worship.

Read Job 42:1-6. Job's thanksgiving wasn't rooted in getting his life back, though eventually he did. It was rooted in seeing God in the middle of the ashes, before the restoration ever came.

If Psalm 100 is thanksgiving in the sanctuary, Job is thanksgiving in the ash heap. Both are *yada*. Both are worship. And most of us are going to need both in this life.

Ash Heap to the Sanctuary:

How do we get from the ash heap back to the sanctuary? Read Psalm 107. This psalm was written to celebrate the Jews' return from exile in Babylon.

The psalmist is really asking: What has God done for you? How can you tell?

The psalm then gives us four testimonies of God's deliverance: those who wandered in the wilderness (v4-9), those who sat in darkness and gloom (v10-16), those who were foolish and suffered for their sin (v17-22), and those who sailed into the storm (v23-32).

Notice the pattern in every single one. Each begins with a crisis. Each person cries out to God in prayer (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28). And each time, God "delivered them from their distress." Every testimony gives us three things: what God did in the situation, what we're to do in response, and why our lives should overflow with gratitude because of it.

In the second and third testimonies, the people were suffering because of their own sin. Yet God still delivered them when they cried out. Thanksgiving isn't reserved for people who've earned an easy life. It's for people who've been rescued, which is all of us.

Job never got a tidy explanation for his suffering. But he still ends the book restored, interceding for his friends, and worshiping. Psalm 107 gives us the language for that moment, the moment after deliverance, when gratitude just pours out because you remember exactly what you were rescued from.

Psalm 138:

This is thanksgiving for answered prayer, a reminder that God works out His plan for our lives and will bring us through the difficulties we face. Thanksgiving should be woven through our praise for both material and spiritual blessings, but Psalm 138 pushes us further: thank Him for answered prayer specifically.

Think back. When did you ask God for protection, strength, comfort, patience, or love and He supplied it? It's easy to receive God's provision and move on without ever looking back to say thank you. Psalm 138 won't let us do that.

Both verses 1 and 4 of this psalm use *yada*. Thanksgiving here isn't a one-time act. It's a discipline of memory going back and naming what God has already done, so gratitude doesn't quietly disappear the moment the crisis is over. Read Psalm 138:4.

Time of Thanksgiving:

So let's go back to where we started with Job sitting in the ashes. If thanksgiving only belonged in the sanctuary (like in Psalm 100's singing and gladness) then Job would have nothing to offer God but silence or bitterness. But Scripture doesn't leave it there. Job teaches us that *yada*, throwing our hands up in praise, can happen before the restoration, before the answer, before we understand anything at all.

Psalm 107 teaches us to remember and tell others what God has done. Psalm 138 teaches us not to let answered prayer slip by unnoticed.

Put it all together and you get this: thanksgiving is not the reward at the end of your story. It's the response you can give in the middle of it, everyday, everywhere.

You may be in the sanctuary this morning, life might be good, and Psalm 100 fits you perfectly. Sing it. Or you may be in the ashes, like Job. If that's you, hear this: you don't need to

fake gladness. You don't need answers before you can worship. You just need to lift your hands, *yada*, and trust the God who gave, even as you grieve what He's allowed to be taken.

Thanksgiving is throwing your hands up before you've thrown in the towel. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Modeh Ani:

This is a Jewish Prayer called the Modeh Ani. This is a prayer that many people say when they first wake up in the morning, and I want you to notice something about it. The beginning does not say 'I am grateful'. It says 'Grateful I am'. This seems like a weird way to say that, but it puts the first thing coming out of your mouth in the morning 'Grateful'.

The prayer is: *'Grateful, I am, living and enduring King, for You have graciously returned my soul within me. Great is Your faithfulness.'*

Reflection Questions:

- How does the word *yada* help you understand thanksgiving to God?
- What does Psalm 100 teach us about how we should come into God's presence?
- Which of the four testimonies in Psalm 107 do you relate to most, and why?
- Can you think of a time when God answered a prayer or delivered you from a difficult situation? How did you respond?
- What's one specific thing you can thank God for today, regardless of your circumstances?