

UHPC WORSHIP: NOV. 18, 2018

SERMON TOPIC: "O, GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD FOR...!"

The leaves have turned orange-brown and are falling off the trees. We have already had an unexpectedly heavy snow storm. It is beginning to smell like Thanksgiving turkey, pies, corn-bread, macaroni & cheese... This is the season when throughout the U.S., people pause to officially say: "Thank You" to Jehovah God, our Provider. But while food and drink are greatly appreciated, they are NOT the only things for which we need to give thanks.

Throughout the Scriptures and especially in the Psalms we hear repeatedly these words: "Give Thanks" unto the LORD—e.g. Psalm 136, 118, 100, to name a few. In the New Testament as well, Jesus Himself gave thanks unto the Father: -Luke 22:17-19, He took a cup, and after giving thanks... He took the bread and gave thanks..., John 6:11—Jesus took the loaves and when He had given thanks... So, it is not only traditional, but it is Scriptural to give thanks unto the LORD, for the LORD is good and His steadfast love and mercy endure forever. OBVIOUSLY, IT IS PLEASING TO THE LORD TO HEAR HIS PEOPLE GIVE THANKS IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HIS GOODNESS. I would like to remind us that if we are alive, it means we are breathing free air. Let's not take it for granted. It is essential for life, so give thanks. Many of us, if we choose, can drink free water. (--although that is debatable these days.) We who are here probably got up this morning and dressed ourselves, fixed and ate our breakfast, walked, took public transportation or drove here. This means we have a portion of health and strength in our bodies and the blood is running warm in our veins. So, give thanks. Maybe all is not totally well in life. The finances, the job, the family, may not be all that we want them to be. But there has to be something for which each one of us can be thankful. NAME A FEW!

When I look at all the suggested Scriptures for the week, we see in 1st Samuel 1, the account of Hannah and her, sister Pininah, and their husband Elkanah. We hear of Elkanah's High Priestly position and how much he loved Hannah who had no children above his other wife—Pininah, who had children. Pininah taunted her sister Hannah and it grieved her soul. So out of the anguish of her soul, one year, she went with Elkanah to the Temple where he was to serve as High Priest, and she poured out her heart before the LORD. She prayed and made a vow unto the LORD, that if He would give her a son, she would offer him back to God to serve in the Temple all his life. As it turned out, God answered her prayer and she kept her vow and her pledge. Hannah gave thanks unto the LORD for His goodness, steadfast love, and faithfulness unto her. Before Mary sang the "Magnificat" when the angel told her she would give birth to the Messiah, Hannah sang a similar song in 1st Samuel 2: "My soul magnifies the LORD and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." In Psalm 132, we hear another prayer from the anguish of David's soul about all the afflictions he was enduring from all his enemies. David prayed in faith and made a vow unto the LORD, his God. The LORD heard his prayer and made a covenant with him to always place a son on His throne forever. Because of this, we have Jesus, the eternal Great High Priest who came out of the lineage of David. He is now our Greatest of all Great High Priests, enthroned at the Father's right hand forever. No one gives thanks to God more than David throughout the Psalms. Just as parents love to hear their children say: "Thanks" So the Father enjoys hearing His children give thanks. CAN WE TRY TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE? ---IN GOOD TIMES AND IN NOT SO GOOD TIMES... TRY TO MAKE IT A HABIT? "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD and to sing praises unto our God, Most High, to proclaim God's steadfast love in the morning and God's faithfulness every night." (Psalm 92: 1)

Over and over, the Scriptures for this week keep pointing us to the theme of 1. human Great High Priests, 2. David and Hannah crying out in anguished prayer and making pledges and a covenants-- 3. Christ Himself in the Temple talking with His disciples about the huge stones that constructed the building, and about daily sacrifices offered as offerings for sin throughout the ages. I TRIED TO SEE WHERE WAS THE THEME OF THANKSGIVING IN ALL OF THESE? Then it occurred to me by the Holy Spirit, that **our chief rejoicing and gratitude should have to do with our Salvation, our Greatest of all Great High Priest, His sacrifice of Himself for the forgiveness of our sins, and His being our indestructible Temple. It occurred to me that He was the Rejected Stone that became our Chief Corner Stone. Upon Him we are built as little stones into one building of His Body on earth. Then it began to become clear to me, that YES, WE ARE TO HAVE WONDERFUL FELLOWSHIP, GREAT FAMILY GATHERINGS AROUND FOOD AND CELEBRATION. But we should never forget to give thanks to the Father for His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. He is the True Temple that can never crumble.** He is our Solid Rock which cannot be moved. WE GIVE THANKS UNTO OUR GOD FOR THIS OUR SAVIOR OVER AND ABOVE ALL ELSE. WE GIVE THANKS THAT WE HAVE AN ETERNAL INTERCESSOR, MEDIATOR, AND GREAT HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN AND NOT JUST IN AN EARTHLY TEMPLE. THANK YOU, LORD JESUS CHRIST- FOR BEING OUR REDEEMER! THANK YOU, LORD JESUS CHRIST- FOR BEING A COVENANT KEEPING AND PROMISE KEEPING GOD. THANK YOU, FOR BEING THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. THANK YOU **FOR BEING OUR MESSIAH, SAVIOR, LORD, AND KING. THANK YOU FOR ENTERING INTO THE HOLIEST OF THE HOLIES PRESENTING YOUR OWN PRECIOUS AND UNTAINTED BLOOD ON OUR BEHALF TO SATISFY OUR SIN DEBT. THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING OUR ANGUISHED PRAYERS AND ACCEPTING OUR OFFERINGS OF THANKSGIVING; FOR YOUR WORD SAYS THAT YOU ARE MORE PLEASED WITH THE SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING THAN YOU ARE WITH THE FLESH OF BULLS AND GOATS.**

I know that some of us may find it hard to give thanks because of our circumstances. But when you think of the story of the man who complained that he had no shoes, and then he saw a man who had no feet, -- CAN YOU SHOUT "HALLELUJAH" TO JEHOVAH? CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT IF YOU / WE DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE, GOD MAY JUST SMILE FAVOR UPON US BECAUSE **THANKSGIVING IS A SWEET SOUND IN THE EARS AND HEART OF GOD?** I tell this story again: about My mother's brother who came from a family of six children. This past week the last of the oldest sisters passed away. This means that only one brother is left alive. Four older and one younger sibling have passed on. This one brother who is left alive is the one who had what could be called the toughest time in life among them. He has had a serious illness, tragic emotional relationships, abandoned by his children, and his health has been really seriously affected. **BUT WHENEVER ANYONE SEES UNCLE BOISY AND ASK: "How are you doing?"** His answer was and is always:-- "Well..Give thanks nuh!" I believe that these words have caused the LORD, Jehovah our God, to grant him favor and to show him mercy. Of all his siblings, he is the only one left alive and is now living in a Catholic Home.

SO, MY PRAYER FOR ALL OF US IS THAT WE MIGHT MAKE THESE WORDS BECOME COMMON EXPRESSIONS IN OUR DAILY LANGUAGE AND LIFE. LET'S NOT WAIT UNTIL NOVEMBER 22 TO GIVE THANKS. LET US TRY TO AWAKE EVERY DAY WITH THANKSGIVING IN OUR HEART AND ON OUR LIPS. LET US TRY TO FIND SOMETHING GOOD FOR WHICH TO THANK GOD EVERY DAY. WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED TO COMPLAIN, LET US TRY TO REPLACE IT WITH A REASON FOR GIVING THANKS. "GIVE THANKS NUH!" Yes, there is pain sometimes... but Give thanks for doctors, church, prayer, and hope for better tomorrow. Yes, the country seems to be in disarray from the top down... but give thanks that there are still some praying people and some in politics who have some character and integrity left. No,

the family may not be as it should be, but **give thanks that Jesus is a healer, a Mediator, and an Intercessor.** I ENCOURAGE US ALL TO DEVELOP A SPIRIT AND MIND-SET OF GRATITUDE EVEN WHEN ALL MAY NOT BE PERFECT. –GIVE THANKS. Give thanks unto the LORD for He has been good to us!

THIS YEAR ALONE, THE LORD HAS BLESSED THIS CHURCH WITH SO MUCH. MANY OF US NEVER THOUGHT THESE BLESSINGS POSSIBLE. BESIDES OUR WEEKLY WORSHIP AND OTHER SPIRITUALLY REWARDING PROGRAMS... BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER... WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED TO GO OUT TO A DINNER – THEATRE EVENT. GOD BLESSED US WITH AN EDUCATIONAL/ HISTORICAL TRIP TO D.C., HELPED US TO REPLACE OUR OLD BROKEN DOWN SIGN WITH A NEW AND BEAUTIFUL OUTDOOR SIGN, AND GRANTED US A SUCCESSFUL 118TH ANNIVERSARY WORSHIP, CONCERT, AND LUNCH. THE LORD HAS GUIDED US THROUGH THE RE-VITALIZING OF OUR SUNDAY WORSHIP PROGRAM AND HAS IMPROVED HIS CHURCH IN SO MANY WAYS. NO, EVERYTHING IS NOT AS IT COULD AND SHOULD BE, BUT THERE IS PLENTY FOR WHICH TO GIVE THANKS. OUR GOD HAS BEEN GOOD TO US. GOD HAS BLESSED US. AND WE TRUST THAT THIS COMING YEAR WE WILL BE BLESSED EVEN MORE WITH NUMERICAL GROWTH AND INCREASE WITH SOULS COMING TO CHRIST AND INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. THIS IS CHRIST'S ULTIMATE GOAL... TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST FROM THE SATANIC KINGDOM.

THE LORD IS GOOD, HIS MERCY IS EVERLASTING, AND HIS TRUTH ENDURES TO ALL GENERATIONS. SO, GIVE THANKS NUH!

AMEN.

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