NOVEMBER 2019

TODAY IN THE WORD™

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
Psalm 118:1

THANKS AND PRAISE

A ministry of MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE™

TODAY WITH MARK JOBE

President of Moody Bible Institute

What Are You Thankful For?

Thanksgiving at the Jobe home is a festive event. Since my wife, Dee, has a large extended family, we often crowd as many as 30 people around our table. But before we carve the turkey and enjoy the delicious meal, we gather in a circle to pray. Family members and guests share the things for which they are thankful. And it probably doesn't surprise you that this often ends with many of us tearing up. Giving thanks touches everyone!

What you may not know is that giving thanks has physical benefits! Two psychologists did a study where one group of participants was asked to journal every day, listing things for which they were grateful, the other group wrote about irritations. After 10 weeks, those who expressed gratitude felt more optimistic and better about their lives.

But more than just feeling good, giving thanks has great spiritual benefit because it puts our attention back on God. It turns our hearts and minds away from our preoccupations, our own false sense of control, and recognizes the fact that everything we are and all we have come directly from Him.

Psalm 136 begins with a phrase repeated in the Bible: "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*" The Psalm goes on to detail God's work in Israel's past, guiding and protecting His people. Living in a constant state of thanksgiving is challenging but important for us as well.

Turning our attention to praise fights off our tendency to worry. "Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases" (Ps. 103:2, 3). What are you burdened by today? When you turn your attention to God, and give Him the praise He deserves, you will become more aware of His presence and start to discover peace that only He can bring.

Thanking and praising God give voice to our dependence on Him. Praise invites God to be present in the now of our lives, whether joyous or difficult. It makes room to recognize God's goodness. This should not just be a one-time-a-year thing but a defining part of life: "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live" (Ps. 63:3, 4).

May our Thanksgiving continue long after the last morsel of turkey is gone. May thankfulness and praise become a natural overflow of our grateful heart. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

True Worship

In many churches, the phrase "praise and worship" describes a certain style of music. Although worship certainly includes music, it also involves much more. One definition of worship might be "any act of devotion which is offered to God." In His conversation with the Samaritan woman, recorded in John 4, Jesus outlines some of the most important features of true biblical worship.

Not all worship is considered "true" worship. The kind of worshiper God seeks is one who worships "in the Spirit and in truth" (v. 24). Jesus contrasts this with worship that is only external or, as we might say today, worship that is just "going through the motions." The Jews and the Samaritans disagreed about the location where God should be worshiped. According to Jesus, the Jews were right (v. 22). However, Christ's coming signaled a change. Instead of worship being centered in Jerusalem and requiring a priest and sacrifices that pointed to a coming savior, true worship would now celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus Himself (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26).

True worship reflects God's nature. Since He is spirit, He is not confined to any particular geographic space. He does not dwell in temples and does not have needs as we do. God does not need our offerings or the affirmation of our praise to be happy. Instead, true worship recognizes our complete dependence upon Him (Acts 17:24–25). We usually think of worship as our gift to God, but, in reality, it is the other way around. When we offer praise and thanksgiving to God, we are the ones who benefit.

God seeks this kind of person to worship Him. Not all worship is acceptable. This was one of the first lessons humanity learned after the fall. God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's (Gen. 4:4–5). The fundamental difference between the two offerings was a matter of faith (Heb. 11:4).

In the same way, our worship is acceptable to God when it is offered by faith through Jesus Christ. Those who have placed their faith in Christ offer their lives to God as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). We do not do this to earn a righteous standing before God but as an expression of thanksgiving for His mercy. If you know Jesus as your Savior, your whole life is an exercise in praise and thanksgiving. ■

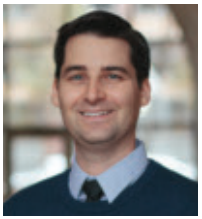
FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more about the true nature of worship, read *Tozer on Worship and Entertainment* by A. W. Tozer and James L. Snyder (Moody Publishers).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Jamie Janosz

Meet This Month's Devotional Writer: Dr. Chris Rappazini



Dr. Chris Rappazini serves as associate professor and program head of the BA/MA in Pastoral Studies at Moody Bible Institute and Moody Theological Seminary.

What inspired you to write this month's issue on Thanks and Praise?

As a former student at Moody Bible Institute, I will forever be thankful for the men and women who have donated and partnered with Moody to help students, including me, to graduate without the burden of excessive debt. Every time I think of my Bible and ministry education, and the opportunities I've had to serve the Lord, I can't help but thank God for the countless people who gave to make my Moody education possible.

What did you find God teaching you personally through this month's study?

As I spent time in the Word, I realized I did not give enough thanks to God or to the people in my life. It is easy for all of us to get to a point of routinely expecting things from God and others. As a result of my research for this month's devotional, my appreciation for the people God has placed in my life grew tremendously. I learned to change my perspective and turn my inward attitude of gratitude to an outward expression of thanks and praise.

What do you love most about teaching?

I am a millennial who believes the Bible is still relevant, the Church is not just for previous generations, and God isn't out to lunch or on vacation. I hope to inspire my students to mature into the men and women God has called them to be, to grow as critical thinkers, and to become ambassadors for Jesus around the world.

When you are not writing, preaching, or teaching, what do you love to do?

I like to explore new places or return to the white sandy beaches and emerald green waters of Destin, Florida, where I grew up. I love to spend time with my wife, Ashley, a 2012 Moody Spokane graduate, and our three children, Adeline Jane (3 years old), Thomas Gibson (1 ½ years old) and Graham Haddon (4 months old). I also enjoy cooking and trying out new recipes. While I am on sabbatical from teaching at Moody, Ashley and I currently live in Texas, where I am a post-doctoral fellow at George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. ■

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

Thanks and Praise

This season of Thanksgiving is a wonderful background to study this month's topic, *Thanks and Praise*. We at *Today in the Word* are especially grateful for you, our friends and readers across the country and around the world. It's a special privilege for us to study the Bible together and to encourage each other in our journey with Christ.

This month, we'll read about gratitude and praise, grace and hope, forgiveness and blessings, resting in God and making things right. We'll see how our "attitude of gratitude" opens our hearts to God's love, His grace, and His Word. We'll explore the connection between thanking God and praising Him, and we'll trace the way from praising God to bringing glory to His name. Finally, we'll see that a life of humble service is an act of glorifying God.

We pray this month's study with *Today in the Word* will fill you with thankfulness. May you experience God's grace, love, and joy as you serve Him. Thank you for being a part of our work for Christ! Thank you for reflecting God's goodness and grace by your support of this ministry. Happy Thanksgiving! ■

—Elena Mafter, Senior Editor

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READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50–58

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER
1

I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High.

Psalm 7:17

Thanks and Praise

"Don't forget to say thank you!" If you are like me, when you were a child you probably heard this phrase often. If you are a parent, you have probably given this advice to your children. But if we are honest with ourselves, most adults—yes, even Christians—need to be reminded to give thanks.

God teaches His children the importance of living a thankful life. As His sons and daughters, we have many reasons to be thankful. He gives us breath in our lungs, people in our lives, and most importantly, victory over the grave! Our reading today from 1 Corinthians 15 frames this month's theme, *Thanks and Praise*. After explaining his belief in Jesus' resurrection and the renewal given to those who are Christians, Paul encourages the believers in Corinth to be hopeful about their eternal future.

He states that they will be "changed." Notice that he uses the word *changed*, which could also be translated as "transformed," in both verses 51 and 52. We are changed from perishable to imperishable, from mortal to immortal, from death to life.

After quoting Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 (vv. 54, 55), Paul pauses in the midst of his theological lesson. It is almost as if he cannot control his excitement. Bursting from his pen, and probably his mouth, are the words, "But thanks be to God!" (v. 57). Why are Christians to be thankful to God? Paul states it is because we have a transformative victory through the Lord Jesus Christ! Our victory in Christ ought to lead to a life overflowing with thanks and praise. This month, join us as we examine what the Bible says about giving thanks and praise.

APPLY THE WORD

Paul concludes with an appeal to stand firm, knowing a believer's work and commitment to the Lord are not in vain. As we begin this month's study, why not start a list of reasons in your life to give thanks and praise? Let this be a daily reminder to stand firm in Christ because of His transformative work in your life.

PRAY WITH US

Thank you for joining us for Bible study and prayer with *Today in the Word* this month. We ask the Lord to bless our time together and draw us deeper into His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise.

Psalm 96:4

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER
2

Thanks and Praise Are Contagious

A hamburger and french fries. A weekend and ideal weather. Each one is pleasing on its own, but they are better when paired together. Yesterday we talked about giving thanks; today we'll discuss the second topic of this month's study: praise.

Giving thanks is an act of gratitude and appreciation. A person expresses thanks because of the things someone else has done. Praise is an expression of admiration and delight. Typically, worship follows praise because praising God gives us extreme joy and deep satisfaction. When we combine thanks and praise, we glorify God and help others see His glory in worship.

The blind beggar in today's text had a transformative encounter with Jesus that changed his life forever. All he wanted in life was to see. If you have a problem with eyesight, you know how difficult and discouraging it can be. Just imagine what it would have been like for this blind man in the first century. No wonder he cried out to Jesus to heal him and take away his burden (v. 38).

When Jesus heard the cry, He spoke and immediately healed the blind man (vv. 42–43). Undoubtedly, this man was thankful, but the text explicitly says that he started following Jesus and praising God (v. 43). His thankfulness for what Jesus had done was accompanied by his praise to God.

Not only was the man's sight healed, but those around him also saw the miracle and joined the man in praising God. The beggar's exuberant thanks and praise toward God were contagious. A worshipful moment sprang up outside the city gates of Jericho that day because of one man's encounter with Jesus. The same is true for us today. Thanks and praise go best together, and when they do, it can be contagious.

APPLY THE WORD

Throughout the month, as you add to your list of reasons to be thankful, don't forget to praise God for each of these reasons. When others see and hear you praising God, they will take note and hopefully join you. Remember, *thanks* and *praise* are beautiful on their own, but they are best when they accompany one another.

PRAY WITH US

It's important to pray for the Moody Bible Institute trustees and lend them spiritual support in their service to Moody's ministries. While praying, you can refer to the list of their names on page 5 of this issue.

READ **MATTHEW 11:25–30**

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER
3

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Thanking God for Rest

Benjamin Franklin popularized the proverb: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." However, contrary to popular belief, Franklin did not propose the idea for Daylight Saving Time. The idea came from New Zealander George Hudson who valued extra hours of daylight for collecting bugs after his daily shift-work. Whether you spend your extra hour sleeping, reading, or collecting bugs, I hope it is restful. But if you woke up today still tired, stressed, and carrying a heavy burden, you need more than just an extra hour in your day. Jesus was aware that true rest doesn't come from simply more time in your day, it comes from being in His presence and allowing Him to carry your heavy burden.

In today's Scripture, Matthew records part of a sermon that Jesus often preached. It was Jesus' conclusion that was most memorable for His listeners, for Matthew, and perhaps for you as well. Jesus calls everyone who is weak, weary, tired, famished, sick, burdened, or looking for something different to search no further and come to Him. He proclaims that in Him a person can discover true rest. In verse 29, Jesus uses the metaphor of a wooden crosspiece—a yoke that fastens two animals together for plowing—to illustrate how He gives this rest. In other words, the God of the universe is volunteering to take on our load, teaching us how to live, demonstrating gentleness and humility, so our souls can experience respite.

This invitation was unlike any other that people in the first century would have heard. Similarly, Jesus' invitation to find rest remains true for you and me today. While we ought to be thankful for a good night's rest and an extra hour to our day, ultimately we ought to thank God for the true rest that comes only from taking Jesus' yoke upon us.

APPLY THE WORD

Find time today to quiet your soul, spend time with Jesus, and experience the rest He gives. When you share with others how you spent your extra hour, be sure to thank God for the true rest you find in Jesus. If you are interested in studying this topic further, see our February 2016 issue, *God's Promise of Rest.*

PRAY WITH US

Today we invite you to pray for the MBI faculty in the Pastoral Ministry program: Craig Hendrickson, Laurie Norris, Pamela MacRae, and Winfred Neely. We are grateful for their teaching, mentoring, and ministering to our students.

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

Romans 1:8

MONDAY
NOVEMBER
4

Two Powerful Words

Why do so many of us forget to give thanks? Why do we have a national holiday reminding us to acknowledge our blessings? Perhaps we are too busy. Or maybe it slips our minds because so many other thoughts come first. It is good for us to ponder the importance and unleashed power of these two words: *thank you*.

In our reading today, Paul tells the believers in Rome how thankful to God he is *for them* (v. 8). Perhaps the reason Paul didn't forget to mention he was thankful for them was that his whole life was a life of gratitude for his fellow believers. In verse 9, Paul says that God is his witness, and He has kept him accountable for how often he remembered to give thanks for his friends in Rome. He remembers them "constantly" (v. 9).

Paul and his friends in Rome were able to encourage one another in the faith. They shared a bond as Christ followers that didn't just make them alike but also caused them to grow "strong" (v. 11) in their faith. In verses 11 and 12, we see that Paul longed to see them for mutual encouragement.

We know from Romans 16 that the people in Rome were considered some of Paul's closest friends and family members. In his closing greeting, he names them one by one. Paul was so incredibly thankful to God for them that he makes it a point at the beginning and the end of his letter to let them know how much he appreciated them.

What is more, he is abundantly clear how thankful he was *to God* for them. Even in the midst of his longing to see his old friends, he remembered to thank God, because he recognized that two of the most powerful words in the world are *thank you*.

APPLY THE WORD

Whom have you forgotten to thank recently? Make it a point to have the words *thank you* always on your lips. When you see someone you need to thank, be sure to use the two powerful words: *thank you*. And take time now to express gratitude to God for people in your life.

PRAY WITH US

Please uphold in prayer Moody's chief marketing officer, Samuel Choy, and his team as they communicate to friends, old and new, the vision and message of Moody's ministry through various media.

READ JOHN 6:1–15

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER
5

Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Matthew 26:26

And Give Thanks

"God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food. Amen." It's unclear where this traditional mealtime prayer began, but it does express an important sentiment. We are to give thanks for everything we have, knowing that every single blessing comes from God Himself.

In our Scripture reading today, we see that crowds following Jesus were enormous (v. 2). Talk had spread about His miraculous signs of healing the sick. People had come from all over to witness more. When the disciples considered the best way to feed the thousands of people gathered to hear and see Jesus, the apostle Andrew stepped forward with an innovative plan. He volunteered a boy's small lunch as a solution to their problem. Jesus accepted the five small rolls and a couple of fish the size of sardines, gave thanks, distributed the food, and multiplied it to satisfy all the people.

What we sometimes miss in this story is that Jesus stopped to pray and give thanks. We remember the crowd, the miracle, the disciples, but how often do we wonder about Jesus' prayer? *For whom* exactly was Jesus thankful? For the boy who gave up his lunch? For the apostle Andrew who had come up with the inventive idea? Or perhaps for the boy's mother who remembered to pack a lunch for her son?

The text doesn't tell, but from what we know about the prayers of Jesus, we can be sure *to whom* Jesus gave thanks: God the Father. Jesus paused and thanked the Father before that hillside meal, just as He did when He passed the wine and bread during His last supper before His death. We too can give thanks, remembering that God is great and God is good. Thank Him for the food that sustains us and even more, for His sacrifice that gives us life.

APPLY THE WORD

Do you pray before meals? If not, try pausing today to give thanks before you eat. If you do have a regular prayer time, perhaps extend it by thanking God for the many provisions in your life. Pray for those around the world who hunger for physical and spiritual food. Allow your mealtime prayers to be a reminder to give thanks.

PRAY WITH US

Students' Spiritual Enrichment Week starts today on our Chicago campus. Lift up in prayer MBI's President, Dr. Mark Jobe, as he opens the first session and introduces the speakers. May the Lord bless the teaching throughout this week!

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Psalm 118:1

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER
6

Give Thanks to the Lord

At the time of this writing, there are five major television shows with the word "good" in the title. In case you were wondering: *The Good Wife*, *The Good Fight*, *The Good Place*, *The Good Witch*, and *The Good Doctor*. If King David were to produce a televised show today, he might name it: *The Good God*.

In today's Scripture reading, David bookends his psalm with the phrase, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (vv. 1, 29). Similar to what we learned yesterday from the apostle Paul, David begins and ends his thoughts with thanksgiving in his heart and on his lips. Throughout his psalm, David repeats several times why he believes the Lord is good. Since this psalm was most likely sung to a musical accompaniment, imagine these lines as a refrain. You may have noticed them: "His love endures forever" (vv. 1–4; 29), "take refuge in the LORD" (vv. 8–9), "in the name of the LORD I cut them down" (vv. 10–12), and "the LORD's right hand" (vv. 15–16). The past tense used throughout this psalm may indicate that David penned this poetic song *after* he had gained full possession of the kingdom.

Peppered throughout the psalm, these reoccurring phrases highlight David's attitude of thanks for Yahweh's goodness and the deliverance that the Lord granted him. David makes it clear that anyone who sings this psalm will give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, both individually and corporately. David also emphasizes the goodness of God who brought salvation by shining His light upon us (v. 27). Living on this side of the cross and empty tomb, we know the light is none other than Jesus Christ. David was right: give thanks to the Lord for He is the Good God.

APPLY THE WORD

When you look back at your own life journey, what themes keep popping up? How has God shown you His goodness? He has done some incredible things in your life and has put a burning desire in you to love Him and glorify His name. Thank Him for that passion and His goodness.

PRAY WITH US

As Spiritual Enrichment Week—a focused exploration of biblical truths for Moody's undergraduate and seminary students—continues today, join us in prayer for a fruitful time and a deeper walk with Jesus for every participant.

READ 1 CHRONICLES 16

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER
7

Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

1 Chronicles 16:8

Give Thanks for All He Has Done

If anything of yours has ever been lost or stolen and then found, your first reaction most likely was thankfulness. Perhaps you were relieved to be reunited with your purse, keys, or phone. However, imagine if what was eventually returned was the symbol of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant.

After God enabled David and his men to defeat the Philistine army, there was one more important task: they were to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark was now going to be returned to its rightful home and, for this homecoming, David commits a psalm of thanks to the Lord (vv. 8–36). In this poetic song, David thanks God for the wondrous things He has done for the Israelites with His miracles, His judgments, and decrees (v. 12).

It is often easier to give thanks to the Lord for miracles than for judgments, but David reminds us that both are needed and necessary. Fast forward a few generations. During Jesus' earthly ministry, many people thanked Him for His miracles, but His decrees about Himself made a very different impression on people. His miracles were praised, while His judgments were perceived as threatening.

Even today, we are much quicker to thank God for His miracles than for His judgments. Many people prefer gentle lies rather than hard truths. But God has called us to a life of grace and truth. David reminds his people, as well as us, that we ought to thank the Lord for all the wondrous things He has done. Both His miracles and His judgments show God's presence in our lives. Thankfully, every day God's Word gracefully speaks truth into your life and mine.

APPLY THE WORD

Can you name one miracle and one hard truth God has given you? Remembering what God has done in your life is one of the first steps to fill your life with thanks. Like David, be sure to thank the Lord for all the wondrous things He has done. If you have time, compose your own psalm of praise to the Lord.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Timothy Arens, VP and dean of Student Life, will be grateful for your prayers as he and his staff serve Moody students on our Chicago campus. Ask God to fill their ministry with love, grace, and patience on a daily basis.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER
8

Give Thanks Whatever You Do

I am willing to guess you have already done many things today including waking up, getting ready for your day, pouring yourself a cup of coffee, or reading your Bible. I hope you are starting your day with thankfulness, but if you need a reminder to be grateful, Paul's letter to the believers in Colossae offers us some words of wisdom.

In our reading today, Paul tells the Colossians how to respond to the cultural pressures they faced. At the beginning of chapter 3, Paul encourages the faithful to set their hearts on things above and not on the things of this world (vv. 1–4). Christ-followers have the power of Jesus' resurrection within them; therefore, a radical change in lifestyle and attitudes is possible. Paul challenges them to have the courage to live in the present as the type of people they will one day become when Christ appears. Most likely they had many reasons to revolt against the cultural norms, as well as against one another, and succumb to the pressures of the day. But Paul challenges his readers to reject distorted sexuality and destructive speech (vv. 8–11) and live as new creations with love, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and patience (vv. 12–14). They are to live a life of peace in the midst of an anti-Christian culture (vv. 15–17).

Paul faced tremendous opposition, but he still inspired others to give thanks in everything they did. Following Paul's exhortation, we should do everything in the name of the Lord, with an attitude of thankfulness. Many opportunities and choices come into our lives every day—remember to be thankful in whatever you do.

APPLY THE WORD

Sometimes we find it most difficult to live in peace and thankfulness when we interact with our family members. Read the end of chapter 3 of Colossians. Which category describes you? Remember, God put the people in your household for a reason. Thank the Lord for giving you someone to love!

PRAY WITH US

During your prayer time, please remember Joe Gonzales, Brenda Cuellar, Edward Jones, and Rebekah Kiesling from Student Programs. We thank God for their service with student organizations, as they meet everyday needs, as well as provide spiritual guidance.

READ LUKE 24:13–35

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER
9

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

Give Thanks That He Is Alive!

In almost every home makeover show, the climactic moment comes when the host reveals the newly remodeled house to the owners. The neighborhood is the same, the address has not changed, but the house is completely transformed.

Two disciples had a life-changing reveal while sharing a meal with the resurrected Jesus. For hours, they did not know the true identity of the person they faced. At first they thought their guest was a clueless Jerusalem visitor (v. 17). Yet, they would soon learn it was none other than the resurrected Savior. Today's text says they came to this realization immediately after Jesus broke bread, gave thanks, and began to give it to them.

Did they recognize Christ when they heard Him pray? Or was it perhaps the way He spoke? However, we can guess they realized it was the Lord when Jesus handed them the bread, and they saw His nail-scarred hands (v. 30). Luke tells us in verse 31, "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him."

Their response was as you would expect—they were amazed. When the two returned to Jerusalem, they found the other eleven disciples and gave thanks to the Lord, proclaiming that "the Lord has risen" (v. 34).

The resurrection of Jesus changed everything for those two disciples, and it changes everything for you and me too. The same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in us. Give thanks to the Lord because He is alive, just as He said. He lives in us, and one day we will be more fully alive than ever before.

APPLY THE WORD

Prepare your heart and mind for worship at your church service tomorrow. As you gather with other believers, you will enter into a sacred communion that has been going on for generations—thanking the Lord that He is indeed alive! What can you do today to prepare for your worship at your church tomorrow?

PRAY WITH US

Let's praise the Lord for the lessons in thankfulness we are learning this month. Let us give thanks from our hearts to the living, loving, powerful, and life-giving God. He is indeed alive, and He gives new life to His people!

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Psalm 100:4

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER
10

Give Thanks for Ministers of the Word

Every week, believers across the globe gather to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you have this opportunity today? We may not always appreciate how much planning, preparation, and time go into our weekly church services. This is one more reason to come to the house of the Lord with a spirit of thankfulness.

Our Scripture today reminds us that we are to worship the Lord with joy and give thanks for His goodness and faithfulness. Did you notice that verses 1 to 3 focus on our worship, while verses 4 and 5 focus on giving thanks to the Lord? The Psalmist reminds us to enter the Lord's places of worship with both thanksgiving and praise.

Our focus this month is on giving thanks to the Lord. Let's remember to thank Him for the ministers of God's Word who weekly serve the flock. We are the Lord's people and His sheep (v. 3); the Lord is our Great Shepherd (Ps. 23:1). And He has called many to a special ministry of caring for His people. As you enter into the Lord's gates today (v. 4), remember those who serve the church by cleaning the building, preparing sermons, practicing music, or greeting those who enter. Psalm 100 reminds us that the Lord's faithfulness continues through all generations (v. 5). Thank the Lord for ministers of the Word who pass down the knowledge and truths of God's faithfulness to the next generation.

Around the world—in prisons, refugee camps, hospitals, battlefields, schools, and sanctuaries—ministers of God's Word serve God's people. Thank the Lord for these shepherds of the flock.

APPLY THE WORD

Find a way to thank a minister of God's Word today, whether it is a preacher, teacher, greeter, musician, or volunteer. Thank them for their service in the kingdom. One way you can show your appreciation is to volunteer to work alongside them. The Lord will see your service, and you will be a blessing to many.

PRAY WITH US

Our Stewardship department witnesses God's faithfulness every day. As they reach out to our donors, they thank God for their generosity and His provision for Moody. They ask you to pray that God will grant them peace, safety in travels, and the spirit of teamwork.

READ HEBREWS 11:32–12:28

MONDAY
NOVEMBER
11

For everything that was written in former days was written to teach us, so that . . . we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

Thanks for Those Who Have Gone Before

November 11, 1918, is considered the end of World War I, "the war to end all wars." In 1926, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution for an annual observance of that day. In 1938, Veteran's Day (November 11) was declared a national holiday, representing all veterans who served or are currently serving. Other countries such as Canada, Australia, and Great Britain also celebrate their veterans on or near November 11, naming their holiday Remembrance Day. We remember those who have gone before us.

Early Christians also remembered those who had gone before them in the faith. In Hebrews 11, the author mentions the men and women who kept and carried forward the faith. The author wishes there were more time and ink to continue the list but concludes by summarizing the atrocities committed against the first-century Christians and the sacrifices they made (11:32–40). Just as we must not forget what our country's veterans have done in the name of freedom from tyranny, we must also never forget what our Christian brothers and sisters have done in the name of freedom from sin and death.

This is why the author pivots from remembrances to an encouragement for Christians to "run with perseverance" (12:1). With our eyes fixed on Jesus, Christians can carry the faith forward (12:2–3). Verse 28 concludes the chapter by reminding the readers that no matter what we face, believers everywhere will be "receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Having this mindset leads us to thankfulness. We are to be grateful for those who have gone before us, but also thankful for the day when wars and rumors of wars will cease and we will finally enter into His kingdom. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4).

APPLY THE WORD

Today, if an opportunity arises, thank those who have gone before us. Try to thank both a military veteran, who has sacrificed greatly for our freedom, and a believer in Christ, who paved the way for you and me. The Lord calls us to remember, and when we do, we ought to give thanks to those who went before us.

PRAY WITH US

Another department that has plenty of reasons to be thankful at the workplace is Moody's Donor Resource Management. Please pray for Amelia Mendez, David Kocourek, and Kyella Gilliam as they process gifts from our supporters across the country.

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

Psalm 148:13

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER
12

Let Heaven and Earth Praise the Lord

Reflecting on Psalm 148, Francis of Assisi wrote the "Canticle of the Sun" poem in 1224, that was later paraphrased and set to music. Today, we know it as the hymn "All Creatures of Our God and King." Like Psalm 148, the poem emphasizes heaven and earth praising the Lord.

Did you notice that the expression *Praise the LORD* bookends this psalm? The psalmist is adamant about lifting up praise to the Lord. He calls on those who dwell in the heavenly places to praise Yahweh because He created them (v. 5), and they continue to exist because of Him (v. 6). Then the psalmist invites the created world to join in. All creatures on land and sea, the spectacle of weather, and all of humanity ought to praise the Lord (vv. 7–12).

The psalmist reminds us that God alone is God, and He is immeasurably greater and more glorious than anything on earth (v. 13). The word *horn* (v. 14) may seem out of place, but in the original language this word symbolizes someone strong, such as a king. While the psalmist is most likely referring to the king of Israel at the time, we know that ultimately all of heaven and earth ought to praise the Lord because of the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fast forward all the way to the end of the story. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John paints a stunning picture for us as he recalls his vision of all creation praising Jesus: "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'" (Rev. 5:13).

APPLY THE WORD

How can you bookend your day with praises to the Lord? When you look at the Lord's creation, what makes you shout "Hallelujah!"? Spend some time today enjoying God's creation and praise Him for His glorious work. Slow down and notice the birds, wind, sunset, or storm today. All of creation declares the glory and praise of the Lord.

PRAY WITH US

Will you add these Donor Resource Management employees to your prayer list: Patricia Fletcher, Philip Ramos, Ruth Velaer-Wheeler, and Sharon Cluff? May the Lord give them daily encouragement and joy as they serve Him at Moody.

READ JOHN 3:22–30

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER
13

He must become greater;
I must become less.

John 3:30

God Deserves All the Praise

In the early 1950s, Billy Graham was becoming a household name. He had just returned to the United States from the United Kingdom, where he drew record crowds during his three-month crusade. Dining with a friend, Graham confessed, "I'm scared I'm going to get the credit for what God is doing, and that's just not right."

After a few of John the Baptist's disciples became jealous that Jesus was baptizing people, they approached their teacher and complained (v. 26). John swiftly corrected their grumblings, giving several reasons not to grumble. First, John reminded them that the source of true ministry is heaven (v. 27). God is the giver of gifts and the author of life. In God's economy, He is the supplier, and we are merely the workers.

Second, John the Baptist addressed Jesus as *the* Messiah (v. 28). John's entire ministry centered on preparing the way for the Christ. In John 1:29, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The forerunner to Jesus acknowledged, "The man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me" (1:30). He knew that he was merely a vessel for God to use in order to point His people to the Savior.

Finally, John reminded his disciples how he viewed himself in comparison to the Lord of lords. He likened himself to being the best man at a wedding. He was there to serve the groom. His joy was made complete when he saw Christ coming for His bride. John's purpose was to decrease so that Christ might increase. He could have easily competed with his cousin for the praises of the people, but instead he chose to shine the spotlight on Christ. He made it clear that Jesus deserved all the praise.

APPLY THE WORD

Your ministry, no matter how big or small, should be all about God. Billy Graham wanted his ministry to point to God lest he steal any of His glory. Praise God for the opportunities He has put before you. Whether your ministry is your family, friends, or congregation, remember it is not about you. God deserves all the praise.

PRAY WITH US

Paul Santhouse, vice president of Moody Publishers, welcomes your prayers today. With 3.7 million books sold in 2018, 1,200 titles in print, in 100+ languages, please join the Moody Publishers teams as they thank and praise the Lord.

Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.

Psalm 119:105

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER
14

Praise God for His Word

Julia Child motivated many home chefs in the United States to try French cuisine. Her breakthrough cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, was immensely successful and ranks as one of the top-selling cookbooks of all time. Her words and ways have inspired multitudes to stretch their culinary skills beyond their initial capabilities.

When it comes to God and His Word, we are pushed as well—not in the kitchen, but all throughout our lives. More than just a book, God's Word was held in high regard for early believers and ought to be viewed in the same way today. Scripture serves many functions, such as correcting, convicting, training, and ultimately pointing people to the resurrected Redeemer, Jesus Christ (v. 16).

The main reason God's Word is respected and revered is not solely because of its content but also because of its inspiration. Paul tells young Timothy the Scriptures are breathed out from God Himself (v. 16). While human writers pen them, God is the author. John Koessler explains in *The Moody Bible Commentary* that "God superintended the writing of Scripture by his Spirit without blotting out the human author's personality, style, or vocabulary." Therefore, when we read the words of Scripture, we can be confident we are reading the words of God Himself, written by human hands.

Today's reading reminds us that God still speaks to us today through His Word. If you have access to a Bible, the very words of the Lord are at your fingertips. Out of everything that you could ever possess, God's Word stands as the most powerful, influential, and life-changing. Do not miss an opportunity to read it, study it, and learn from it. While you do, make sure you are praising God for it.

APPLY THE WORD

As you read Scripture, are you praising God for His Word? God's truths have been written, preserved, printed, and distributed so you can fulfill your God-given purpose. Praise God today for His unfailing, inerrant Word. Not only does it give us direction but it also gives us the truth about Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

Our devotional today gives us a wonderful opportunity to come together as a community of believers to praise God for His eternal, inerrant Word. It gives us life; it sheds light on our heart and on our path. We don't wander in darkness!

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies and *Open Line* Host

Q Why couldn't Esau find repentance for what he had done? Was his heart hardened beyond repair, or was his motive unforgivable?

A Your question is based on Hebrews 12:17 which says of Esau, "For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears" (NASB). Other translations make it sound as if Esau sincerely sought repentance and could not find it because he was rejected by God. But that's not the meaning of the verse.

The Greek grammar allows two possible antecedents for the word "it." In English we look for the previous noun to match the pronoun. That's not how the Greek works. Although the antecedent to "it" *could* be repentance, it is more likely that what Esau sought for with tears was his father's blessing. Esau had repented not about doing wrong but only about selling the birthright to his brother. This interpretation is supported by the Genesis account. After Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob, Esau begged his father with tears. Hebrews 12:17 is alluding to Genesis 27:38: "Esau said to his father, 'Do you only have one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!' And Esau wept loudly."

Several modern translations capture the nuance of Hebrews 12:17, but the NIV perhaps does it best. It reads, "Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done." If Esau truly wanted to repent of his sin, God would have responded with mercy and grace, just as He will for us. As Psalm 51:17 says, "a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise" (NET).

Q What does the Bible say about cremation versus standard burial? If a person is cremated, will he or she still have a physical body in the resurrection?

A Many people wonder whether God can raise up a cremated person at the resurrection. The answer is simple—if God can raise a decomposed body or one lost at sea or burned in a house fire, He certainly can raise someone who has been cremated into a pile of ashes. The whole idea of resurrection from the dead is miraculous and beyond our capacity to comprehend.

Although there is no verse of Scripture that absolutely forbids it, Mike Fabarez gives a biblical case in support of burial in his book, *10 Mistakes People Make about Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife*.

The whole idea of resurrection from the dead is miraculous and beyond our capacity to comprehend.

He begins with Paul's commentary on the value of the created body: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, who you have received from God?" (1 Cor. 6:19). Our bodies are sacred vessels and worthy of dignity, even after death.

Second, the Bible demonstrates the concern people had when burying loved ones. These include Sarah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and the Lord Jesus. There was even a serious effort to give a decent burial to the bones of the burned bodies of King Saul and his sons (1 Sam. 31:8–13).

Third, in the Bible, burial was considered a mark of dignity for the deceased. Solomon wrote, "A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he" (Eccl. 6:3). In biblical times, the failure to have a dignified burial was considered a terrible disgrace.

Whatever decision you make regarding cremation, here are a few final thoughts. First, don't worry if a loved one was cremated. God can raise up stones to praise Him and He can resurrect our bodies from ashes. Second, start preparing now for your burial. Save money for the type of funeral you desire. Most important of all, make sure you're ready to meet the Lord today. We need to trust that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, so if God were to say, "This day your soul is required of you," you'll be ushered into His presence and be there forever!

Q I just finished a book on a near-death experience in which a lady died, went to heaven, experienced a number of beautiful things, and returned to earth. What does the Bible say about these types of experiences?

A The Bible says, "It is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment" (Heb. 9:27). There were a few exceptions to this general rule—people like the widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17:17–24) or Lazarus (John 11:1–44) and some others who were resurrected from the dead in both the Old and the New Testaments. Yet, none of these people ever related their experiences after death. Although this is an argument from silence, it seems their lack of any message about heaven indicates that they did not recall their heavenly experience. Only the Lord Jesus, who was resurrected to immortality, could speak of heaven and teach about it.

READ 1 PETER 1:3–7

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER
15

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

Praise God for a Certain Hope

In the classic television game show, *Let's Make a Deal*, contestants competed for the chance to choose a door that concealed a prize. Winners would decide whether to open door 1, 2, or 3. If they chose well, they might receive a dream vacation or a shiny new car. But if they chose poorly, they could end up with a year's supply of chili or a pet goat. Often the valuable prize they hoped for was not behind the chosen door.

The early Christians lived for a certain hope in Christ Jesus. This hit home for Peter, a disciple and close friend of Jesus. After recognizing his failure to stick with Jesus (Mark 14:66–72), Peter moved from the inner circle to the outskirts. That is why three days later, the angel told the women at the empty tomb to go "tell his disciples and Peter" that Jesus was alive (Mark 16:7). Imagine how Peter felt when he heard that not only was Jesus alive but He still wanted to include him.

No wonder Peter started his letter talking about his living hope in the living Jesus (1 Peter 1:3). For Peter, his life changed that Sunday morning, and it changed for you and me, too. Peter wanted those Christians, and us, to know we ought to praise the Lord because of Jesus' power over sin and death. Our inheritance in Christ Jesus is "kept in heaven" (v. 4), and it's so much more than a game show prize. Phil Wickham's song *Our Living Hope* sums it up well: "Then came the morning that sealed the promise / Your buried body began to breathe / Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion / Declared the grave has no claim on me / Jesus, Yours is the victory!"

APPLY THE WORD

Christianity rises and falls on the resurrection of Jesus. Let us praise the Lord, because the resurrection proved that Jesus did not fall . . . He arose! Our hope is not in people or establishments. We have a certain and living hope, the resurrection of Christ Jesus. Put your trust in Him, and you will have a great inheritance waiting.

PRAY WITH US

Today is Day One at Moody—a time when future students and their families get acquainted with MBI and its faculty. Dr. Heather Shalley, VP of Student Enrollment Services, appreciates your prayers for this important milestone for future Moody students.

I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah!"

Revelation 19:1

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER
16

Praise God, Hallelujah!

I don't know about you, but I have started more books than I have finished. I'm just not always able to make it to the end. However, the last five chapters of Psalms are so incredibly life giving that to miss them would be like sleeping through Thanksgiving Day dinner.

These last five chapters are sometimes referred to as The Hallelujah Psalms. This title is appropriate, since each psalm begins and ends with the phrase "Praise the LORD" The word *LORD* is often in capital letters in our English Bibles, because in the original language, this is the word *Yahweh*. It is also important to note that the Hebrew word *Hallelu* means "praise." Therefore, when we put the *Hallelu* and *Yah* together we get *Hallelujah*, which means "Praise the Lord."

In our text today, we see the phrase repeated four times. In verse 2, the Psalmist literally writes, "I will *hallelujah* all my life." But what does the life of praise look like? The Psalmist goes on to tell us that the person who lives this life does not put their trust in princes or moral men (vv. 3–4), but rather in Yahweh, the "Maker of heaven and earth" (vv. 5–6). Verses 7–9 expound upon Yahweh's justice for the oppressed and righteousness for the troubled. The final verse concludes by acknowledging Yahweh's eternal reign for all generations. Then, just as the psalm began, the Psalmist proclaims, "Hallelujah!"

This psalm, like the four that follow, begins and ends with praise to Yahweh. It also goes deep and draws attention to why one should praise Yahweh all of one's life. Let us not forget that God has called us to *hallelujah* all our lives as well.

APPLY THE WORD

When people look at your life, do they see praise? To be more specific, when someone looks at the beginning, middle, or end of your day or week, do they see you praising the Lord? At what time do you struggle most with praising the Lord? Perhaps whenever you don't feel like praising the Lord, read one of The Hallelujah Psalms.

PRAY WITH US

Today, as we study The Hallelujah Psalms with *Today in the Word*, our prayer is that God will help us to praise Him like David did, to permeate our days with the phrase "Praise the Lord!", and to "hallelujah" Him with our lives.

READ 2 CHRONICLES 5:1–14

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER
17

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

Hebrews 13:15

Praise God for His Dwelling Place

Spend a few moments watching the HGTV or the DIY channel and you'll soon grasp that people love creating the perfect place to kick up their feet and settle down. Home is not only where the heart is, it is where we choose to dwell and reside.

For years, the God of the universe chose to dwell with His people in temporary housing. In our passage today, Solomon had completed building the temple, a place where God could reside and where His people would worship Him (v. 1). This was a very important moment for the Israelites. King Solomon wanted the elders and the leaders of all the tribes of Israel to witness this event. In an effort to bring great honor and praise to God, the priests offered sheep and oxen as a sacrifice (v. 6). It was a tremendous gathering, and Solomon wanted to make sure God received all the praise. Voices from all over joined together and sang praises to God.

Can you imagine the atmosphere? The entire place was full of God's people shouting praises to God with their whole hearts (v. 13). Everyone was there for a singular purpose: to praise God because His holy dwelling place was finally being established. In this moment, God Almighty filled the temple with a cloud of glory, which signified that He had taken up residence in the temple while all the people had gathered to praise Him (v. 13).

If we fast forward to the good news of today, the God of the universe no longer dwells in the Jerusalem temple, but through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit He resides in the lives of those who believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:16). Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!

APPLY THE WORD

Today, when you gather to worship with your church family, praise God for all the people you know who have opened their lives and made a home for the Lord in their hearts. Pray for other people in your life who have not yet opened their hearts to God's truth—but do not stop praising Him, for He is still knocking.

PRAY WITH US

Will you join us in giving thanks for the house of the Lord where He dwells with His people? We thank God for the physical church buildings where we gather for services, but more importantly, for the living stones, our fellow believers—the body of Christ.

We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

Isaiah 64:8

MONDAY
NOVEMBER
18

The Foundation for Thanksgiving

Do you have a favorite coffee mug? I have a few that are special to me. Even though they are scratched and chipped, I still pick them first. They have always done their job of delivering my beloved morning coffee or tea.

Near the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul attempts to convince his readers that each one of them has extreme worth, dignity, and value even though they are going through hardship. He compares the earthly body to a jar of clay. Jars of clay were a basic household necessity in the first century, holding provisions such as water, wine, or food. Even if the jars were cracked or chipped, their value was based on the content they held. Paul wants his readers to know the same is true for believers in Jesus, that "this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (v. 7). Even though believers may appear broken and cracked, through the Holy Spirit's indwelling we reveal the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (v. 10).

What does it mean that Christ lives in us? Paul tells us that by the Holy Spirit, who indwells us, we have strength to speak boldly (v. 13). But more so, we can be confident that our broken lives will be made whole because of Jesus' resurrection (v. 14a). When we are presented before the Father, He will not see us as cracked vessels, but instead, He'll see the perfect life of Christ Jesus who dwells in us (v. 14b).

When we carry Jesus inside of us, not only will we live in confidence of our final standing with the Lord, but grace will pour out of our lives so that more and more people will be reached for His glory. This outpouring of grace that reaches others ought to cause "thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God" (v. 15).

APPLY THE WORD

How is grace flowing out of your life today? As you go about your day, perhaps ask yourself, "What is the most gracious thing I can do in this situation?" If our broken lives overflow with grace because of the Lord's resurrection power living inside of us, our thankfulness will be endless because grace is the foundation for thanksgiving.

PRAY WITH US

Employees from Moody's Media ministries belong to different departments, but they form one team serving the entire Institute, with senior vice president of Media, Greg Thornton, as their leader. We ask you to lift them up in prayer today.

READ LUKE 7:36–50

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER
19

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Thankfulness Flows from Forgiveness

Days after my wife gave birth to our third child, I made the mistake of forgetting to bring home ice cream from the grocery store. While I made it home in record time with (almost) everything else on the list, I had forgotten the most important item . . . chocolate brownie ice cream! Obviously, I was in need of forgiveness! If Jesus walked the earth today, this could easily have been the beginning of one of His parables.

In today's text, Jesus told a parable during a dinner party at a Pharisee's home. A woman interrupted the gathering by weeping at Jesus' feet. She then wiped His feet with her hair and doused them with expensive perfume. As the Pharisee watched this generous act of kindness, he could not believe what his eyes were witnessing (v. 39). Sensing the Pharisee's thoughts, Jesus turned this incident into a teaching moment His host and the guests would remember: Thankfulness flows out of forgiveness. He shared a parable about a moneylender who forgave two men's debts (vv. 41–42). Then Jesus related it to the scene that was occurring at His feet.

The woman in our text today would have most likely been well known in that town, but for all the wrong reasons. Luke doesn't tell us exactly what her sin was, but the text indicates that most people knew about it and she was ashamed of what she had been doing or had done (v. 39). This is why her actions toward Jesus took incredible courage. Despite what others thought, she stopped at nothing to demonstrate her thankfulness, perhaps because she knew she was in the presence of One who was not going to demean, take advantage of, or criticize her. She was in the presence of someone who could offer her forgiveness. Her abundance of thankfulness flowed from Jesus' forgiveness.

APPLY THE WORD

Your private life may not be as exposed to your community as that of the woman's in today's text, but it is on display for our heavenly Father. He sees your sins and mine, yet He offers us forgiveness. Today, thank God for His forgiveness. And since your sins are forgiven, be quick to forgive others . . . even if they forget the ice cream.

PRAY WITH US

Join us in prayer for the staff of WFCM, Moody Radio station in Nashville, Tenn. Thousands of listeners depend on Scott Thunder, Michael Powers, Dawn Rae May, and Jonathan Garrison for daily encouragement from the Word. We are thankful for their service!

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER
20

Thanking God in All Circumstances

Sometimes God puts us in situations that make and mold us into the people He wants us to become. It may be easy when those situations don't come with much opposition, but when things get tough, that is when the real challenges begin.

Many scholars believe 1 Thessalonians is most likely the earliest letter we have from the apostle Paul. He and Silas had visited Thessalonica where many people were converted to Christianity and had begun to gather and worship in the name of Jesus. However, in Acts 17 we read that the Jewish leaders became jealous and the Gentile rulers became threatened that people were defying Caesar and proclaiming Jesus as the one, true king. This led to persecution against Christians in the city. Yet, despite persecution, the believers in Thessalonica continued to stand firm in their faith (1 Thess. 3:7–8).

In the final two chapters of his letter, Paul challenges his readers to grow by living a counter-cultural lifestyle. In our text today, Paul gives a few final instructions on how to do this. Along with living respectfully, peacefully, and kindly, Paul admonishes them to be joyful always, pray continually, and to give thanks in all circumstances (vv. 16–18). If there was one person who had the authority and experience to talk the talk *and* walk the walk it would have been Paul. He had seen his fair share of good times and bad, and regardless of situation, he thanked God in all circumstances.

One of the interesting things about verses 16–18 is that it is one long sentence. Permanent joyfulness, continual prayer, and constant thankfulness go together. Paul concludes by stating that all of these actions are God's will for the people in Thessalonica. We can say that it is God's will for us, too.

APPLY THE WORD

You may be experiencing difficult times right now, and perhaps giving thanks to God is the farthest thing from your mind. You may think, "Well, if only Paul knew my circumstances, he wouldn't have written that." Paul may not have known your story, but the Holy Spirit does. Through hardship you may learn lessons you could learn no other way.

PRAY WITH US

Moody Radio expands to South Carolina and honors its longtime radio pastor, C. Donald Cole, with the newest station's call letters, WCDC. Please support in prayer the ministry of this Moody Radio station in Charleston, S.C.

READ **PSALM 57:4–11**

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER
21

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

Colossians 3:23

Praise God at Work

According to the Rosen Institute, several signs indicate when a workplace has gone into survival mode: everything is urgent, appointments are constantly missed or rescheduled, stress is overwhelming, there is little to no joy, and everyone is reactionary. Even if just one of these signs is present, it might be an indication that you or members of your team are merely surviving. Perhaps you are at a point in your life when you can relate to these signs, whether in the workplace or at home.

In today's reading, David was in that place. He was fleeing from Saul and had one job: to survive. Nonetheless, he turned his attention away from his circumstances and toward the nature and person of God. He identified his obstacles: "I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts" (v. 4). Even when his enemies plotted against him (v. 6), God was his protection and his deliverance.

David knew God was to be exalted, praised, and lifted up among the nations regardless of his circumstances. When God delivered him, David did not shy away from praising the Lord with both his heart and his words. A chorus repeats in verses 5 and 11: "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth." He was a musician, after all, and could not help but sing about what the Lord had done.

Perhaps the Lord has brought you through some difficult times as well. When all you could think about was survival, God was thinking about your growth. One way we can measure our spiritual growth is to see how often we praise the Lord with our words and our lives. His praise should be continually on our lips.

APPLY THE WORD

Our lives should be a witness for the Lord, especially in the workplace. How can you glorify the Lord at work this week? Maybe you need to show grace to a coworker or a customer, or perhaps when you receive praises, you can credit the Lord's goodness. Praise God that He has given you a job and He is able to use it for His glory.

PRAY WITH US

Keeping with today's devotional, thank the Lord for your job and the ability to work. Let's remember to give Him credit for all our career accomplishments. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord" (Col. 3:23).

I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

Psalm 13:5

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER
22

Praise God When We Hurt

The U.S. Navy SEALs train rigorously so they can endure demanding and painful circumstances. Their slogan, "The only easy day was yesterday," is both encouraging and challenging. On the one hand, it means one has persevered through a strenuous time, but on the other hand, it's sobering because the current and future days are possibly even more exhausting. Life poses the same challenge for all of us. Sometimes we walk through such an unbearable seasons in our lives that the prospect of tomorrow can seem overwhelming.

If there was ever a man in the Bible who faced difficult life situations, yet still praised God, it was David. He was familiar with pain, but also with praise. His life was a roller coaster of experiences and emotions. His best friend's dad had it out for him, he lost a child at birth, his kids were a mess—but through all the hurting and pain, he continually praised the Lord.

David repeats a cry to the Lord four times in Psalm 13: "How long . . . " (vv. 1–2). His prayers are authentic, and his pain is real. He wrestles with his thoughts and feels that God is hidden from him. When we hurt, often thoughts may be the same, "How long will I experience this?" "How long until the wrong is made right?" "How long until I can find peace again?" But notice that even when the future seemed bleak, David's trust was in God's unfailing love.

David concludes his psalm with singing because he is certain God *still* has the whole world in His hands. "I will sing the LORD's praise for He has been good to me" (v. 6). This was not the first time David experienced hurt, and it would not be the last. The same is true for you and me. But every time David encountered pain, he praised the Lord.

APPLY THE WORD

It is said that courage isn't having the strength to go on; it's going on even when you don't have strength. The next time you encounter hurt and pain, perhaps you can find the courage to praise the Lord. Begin by giving Him praise for the little things in your life. One small step at a time, the Lord wants to take you on a journey.

PRAY WITH US

Moody's executive vice president, Mark Wagner, often faces challenging decisions that require determination, resolve, and sensitivity to God's leading. He welcomes your prayer support for him and his teams.

READ DANIEL 2:1–23

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER
23

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Romans 8:28

Praising God for Answers

Questions knock on the door of our lives every day, some simple and some complex. Sometimes we know the answers. Sometimes we can only find them after searching. Other times we are left scratching our heads. But when we do find an answer, how quick are we to praise the Lord?

In today's text, King Nebuchadnezzar was seeking for answers to a puzzling dream that was keeping him up at night (v. 1). All the king's wizards and astrologers were also searching for the answer. When faced with the king's order to give him the correct interpretation or die (v. 5), they responded, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!" (v. 10).

That statement opened the door for God's man, Daniel. Because of his personal relationship with the Almighty, Daniel was not only able to tell the king what his dream was, but also what it meant. When the king's men attempted to put him to death, Daniel spoke, "with wisdom and tact" (v. 14). Then he did the one thing he always did when needing guidance, he prayed (vv. 17–18). That night, the Lord gave Daniel the answers and he praised "the God of heaven" (v. 19). The magi were right, *no man on earth* could do what the king requested, but this was a simple task for "the God of heaven."

After the mystery was revealed, they praised God with words that reflected the very nature of His supreme rule and reign. They highlighted God's wisdom, power, authority, omniscience, and might. They also praised God because He gave Daniel "wisdom and power" (v. 23). Praise God that He continues to give His followers wisdom to know what to do and the power to do it.

APPLY THE WORD

When challenging situations come your way, perhaps you can pause and pray like Daniel did: "Lord, give me the wisdom I need, and the strength to endure." If answers do come your way, don't forget to praise the Lord. In His goodness and grace, He chose to reveal a mystery that could have kept you anxious and stressed.

PRAY WITH US

Web Technologies staff, part of our IT department, serve all Moody's ministries with their computer expertise. We are grateful for Drew Smith, Ian Cunningham, Peter Distler, and Victor Lebron who use their technological ability for God's glory.

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:24

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER
24

Praise God for the Church

If you were going to describe our world today, the words *peace*, *love*, and *understanding* might not come to mind. The church, however, is called to a higher standard. God's people are called to be one body in Christ, where everyone is valued and viewed as significant. Instead of tearing one another down, we are to encourage and lift up our brothers and sisters in Christ. Instead of fighting against one another, we are called to love one another.

This notion of church made the early believers stand against the Roman Empire during the first few centuries after the resurrection of Jesus. Christians began assembling together, providing for one another, praising God, and serving their communities, even in the midst of intense persecution. Praise God for the church!

During communal gatherings, the church has the opportunity to worship by learning, encouraging, and reflecting on the One in whom we have placed our hope. The author of Hebrews commends us to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (v. 23). We are not to waver from our faith but constantly draw near to God. Being a part of the church gives us the opportunity to grow spiritually from the pulpit and the Word, as well as from one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Praise God for the church!

The author of Hebrews reminds us of the importance of "not giving up meeting together" (v. 25). In the 21st century, gathering on a Sunday morning may have become overly ritualistic for some and occasionally rare for others, but it does not have to be. Gathering regularly has a purpose. Church is a time of seeking God, uplifting others, and praising the Savior. When the church is true to its calling, it can be a glimpse of heaven. Praise God for the church!

APPLY THE WORD

The Word of God says we ought to praise God *for* the church. Of course the church has flaws and imperfections—it is comprised of sinners. Despite its blemishes, however, let's praise God for the church, and this week let someone in your church know you are praising God for them.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, brings wisdom, insight, and financial integrity to his service at Moody Bible Institute. Will you pray for Ken and the teams he leads, asking the Lord to bless this vital area of Moody life.

READ ROMANS 11:33–36

MONDAY
NOVEMBER
25

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever!

Romans 11:36

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow

In the middle of his deeply theological letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul cannot contain himself. Bursting onto the pages of Scripture is his doxology—his glorious sayings regarding God. This is not the first time Paul has broken the ordinary rhythm of his letters to stop and praise the Lord—evidence that Paul's life continually overflowed with praises to God.

In today's reading, Paul begins this doxology by praising God's infinite wisdom, knowledge, and ways. He is determined to have a proper perspective of God so he can accurately praise Him. Paul continues by quoting a series of rhetorical questions from Isaiah 40:13 (v. 34) and Job 41:11 (v. 35) that leave the reader utterly speechless when facing the God of creation. Of course, no one has known the mind of the Lord, nor would God ever require counsel. Paul reminds us of the roles and relationships between the Creator and the created. His final question may cause those in the heavenly realms to chuckle: "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" (v. 35). Once again, the answer is no one.

Paul concludes his glorious praise the same way he began—making sure he has a proper perspective of the One who deserves all the glory and praise.

When we understand who God is and what He has done, praises to Him will increasingly overflow from our lives. As we begin this Thanksgiving week, it's important to remember that our perspective precedes our praise. It's important for us to break the rhythm of our daily lives and journey together through Scripture to discover more of who God is and why He deserves our utmost praise. Remember, your story is for His glory. Praise Him from whom all blessings flow!

APPLY THE WORD

In 1674, Thomas Ken wrote the words of this well-known doxology for his students to sing every morning and evening. Take a moment to praise God aloud with these words: *Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow / Praise Him, all creatures here below / Praise Him, above the heavenly host / Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost / Amen.*

PRAY WITH US

Let's come to God in prayer today, acknowledging that everything we have indeed comes from Him. When we strive to know God better, to understand who He is and what He has done for us, our hearts will overflow with thanksgiving and praise.

I will give thanks to you, LORD , with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 9:1

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER
26

Praise God with Thankfulness

In our culture, an entire market is dedicated to expressing gratitude. Businesses like Hallmark and 1-800-FLOWERS have made it easier than ever to say *thank you* to special people in our lives. However, we can still forget to express appreciation to our family, coworkers, neighbors, and friends. This isn't a problem only for us today, it has been an issue for generations.

In our reading today, we find ten people with a horrible skin disease (v. 11). Not only were they in tremendous physical pain, but they also suffered emotional and spiritual hardship. If you were diagnosed with this particular disease in those days, you were as good as dead. By law you were forced to leave your family, friends, job, and live with others who had a similar affliction. You were not allowed to worship in the temple. But one day, all of that changed: Jesus showed up, and they were made clean.

Imagine the ecstasy they felt as they started to look down at their hands, then their arms, and then their legs and feet. They realized they were not just healed but "cleansed" (v. 14). Then something even more incredible happened. One of the ten, identified here as a Samaritan (v. 16), paused and returned to Jesus to give thanks. He stopped, did an about-face, and made a beeline for Jesus.

This time, instead of having to yell, "Unclean, unclean," he could go directly through the crowd praising God with a loud voice. He fell at the feet of Jesus and gave thanks. Jesus responded, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" (v. 17). All those healed that day were grateful, but only one turned around and turned his gratitude into thankfulness and praise.

APPLY THE WORD

What are you grateful for today? Like the man who returned to say "thanks," will you turn your gratitude into action? Even in the midst of your busy schedule, pause and turn your *grateful* into *thankful*. Let others know by writing a thank-you note. It is one thing to be grateful, but thankfulness puts praise into action.

PRAY WITH US

As vice president and associate provost, Dr. Bryan O'Neal implements the long-term vision of the Moody education and also focuses on many immediate practical details. Today, lift to God in prayer all the responsibilities of his leadership role.

READ **MATTHEW 21:1–11**

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER
27

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.
Psalm 118:26

Greetings with Thanks and Praise

According to AAA, the day before Thanksgiving in the United States is one of the busiest travel days of the year. People travel by car or airplane, some going long distances, to celebrate the holiday with family and friends. For Jesus and His disciples, one of the busiest travel days of the year was when the Jewish people would flood into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

Our passage today highlights Jesus' journey to Jerusalem days before Passover. Instead of arriving in an intimidating motorcade displaying His power and might, Jesus traveled on the back of a humble donkey, thus fulfilling the prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. The crowds took notice of Jesus' arrival and welcomed Him with praise. Some went ahead and others followed, but they all shouted, "Hosanna!" which is a Hebrew expression meaning "Save!" (Matt. 21:8–9). Hosanna is also an exclamation of praise.

Their praise of Jesus caused the entire city to sit up, pay attention, and wonder who was coming (v. 10). The crowds' response gives us a glimpse into the reason they would later turn on Jesus and approve His crucifixion. They believed He was a prophet from Nazareth (v. 11). The crowds showed their thanks and praise of someone they thought was a prophet. They completely missed who Jesus really was—the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

As you gather with your loved ones this holiday, will your thanksgiving and praise of the Lord cause others to ask, "Who is this Jesus?" If they do, I hope you are able to give them an answer. Jesus is not just someone to be appreciated because of the things He has done, He is to receive thanks and praise because of who He is, the Savior of the world.

APPLY THE WORD

If you are welcoming people into your home this Thanksgiving, treat them as if you were welcoming Jesus. You don't need to treat them as "Savior," but perhaps you could go above and beyond to make them feel loved. If you are traveling, perhaps arrive with a humble attitude and spirit, looking to serve and not to be served.

PRAY WITH US

In preparation for tomorrow's Thanksgiving holiday, let's thank our Father for His Holy Spirit, His amazing presence in our lives, His mercy, and His overwhelming love. Imitating Christ, let's serve others with humility.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.
Revelation 19:7

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER
28

Every Day Is Thanks Giving

Sometimes I get so full at Thanksgiving dinner I skip dessert. This is unfortunate because the end of the meal with its pumpkin pie and whipped cream is one of the best parts.

The vision John describes at the end of the book of Revelation is definitely one that sparks thanksgiving. He begins by seeing the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, looking as beautiful as a bride on her wedding day (vv. 1–2). Can anything be better than this sight? The answer is *yes*, because what he hears next gives clarity to what he witnessed. Not only does John note that it was a *loud* voice but he identifies where the voice was coming from—a throne. This is significant because it indicates that the following words come from a place of triumph and authority.

The voice John hears proclaims: "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them" (v. 3). The last time God dwelt with mankind was the incarnation of Christ when "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Before the incarnation, God walked with humanity in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2). John is witnessing Eden being restored and followers of Christ reunited with the resurrected Christ. This will be the time when all pain, mourning, and death will finally be exterminated (v. 4), and everything will be made new (v. 5).

Just ponder that for a moment. The God of the universe could dwell anywhere, and yet, He has chosen to be with sinners like you and me. As a result of Him allowing us to be in His presence, there will be no more suffering, only love, joy, and peace. You have a lot to be thankful for today, but John's revelation gives us a lot to be thankful for every day.

APPLY THE WORD

As you celebrate Thanksgiving with family and friends, take time to thank God for who He is and for what He has done. And, consider the feast we will one day have with the King of kings when we are reunited with Him. We will dwell with Him forever. Today, tell Him how thankful you are for your bright tomorrow.

PRAY WITH US

We pray this month's study in *Today in the Word* will enrich your Thanksgiving celebration. As you gather around the table with family and friends, or even if you prefer to be alone, take time to remember the One who is worthy of all thanksgiving and praise.

READ 1 CHRONICLES 29:1–20

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER
29

For everything in heaven and earth is yours.
1 Chronicles 29:11

A Proper Perspective Produces Praise

People have been lining up, even before this day began, to get bargains from their favorite stores. There is no doubt they are committed to getting the best deals. Nothing is wrong with shopping, but a day like Black Friday is a good time to pause and consider our perspective on earthly possessions.

In our reading, David's boyish good looks are a thing of his past. His ruddy red hair has now turned gray, and he has more wrinkles than he can count. Running for miles was never a problem, but David finds himself winded from walking up a flight of stairs. One last thing the Lord wanted him to do before his last breath on earth was to build a place of worship where the Ark of the Covenant could rest.

Therefore, David drew plans, rolled them up, and handed them to his son Solomon to finish the job. However, before he was completely done, he taught his son and the Lord's people that when it comes to wealth, a proper perspective produces praise. King David led the people in generous giving (vv. 1–9) and followed by leading them in an abundance of praise (vv. 10–20).

He begins by praising God because He is an eternal God (v. 10) who has all the power, glory, majesty, and splendor (v. 11). In His hands are wealth, honor, strength, and power (v. 12). David praises the Lord because he acknowledges that everything he and the Israelites have comes from the Lord. This truth is even more evident in verses 14 and 16. David's perspective on the possessions God has given him allows him to lead the Lord's people during this time of thanks and praise.

APPLY THE WORD

If you are a leader in your church, work, or home, people are watching your example just like the Israelites under King David. Hunting for the best deals and purchasing holiday gifts is not wrong, but when you do, make sure you do it with the proper perspective on money and stewardship. Remember, a proper perspective produces praise.

PRAY WITH US

Coming to the end of our study, reflect on this month's theme and ask God for deeper understanding of gratitude and praise. May we have the heart of the psalmist who said, "Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:2).

Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.

Romans 15:2

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER
30

Showing Thanks in Small Ways

Small Business Saturday began in America in 2010 and in the United Kingdom in 2013. City officials noticed consumers were overlooking smaller shops and local businesses. On this day, customers are encouraged to purchase items from small local businesses instead of choosing the big box retailers or e-commerce stores. In order to have a growing and fair economy these small businesses are vital.

Our passage today does not speak about the value of small businesses, but it does speak about the importance of being known as generous people. While many use these verses to promote the "prosperity gospel," Paul's main idea here is for believers to sow generously with good intentions, despite one's wealth. A person ought to give to the work of the Lord out of a cheerful heart (v. 7). Perhaps Paul realizes that some people give to get something in return: assets, possessions, or acclamation.

Paul acknowledges that what we give or "sow" returns to us in abundance. He is not saying that we will necessarily profit monetarily. Rather, Paul is saying that our generosity will "enlarge the harvest of your righteousness" (v. 10), giving this passage a decidedly eternal perspective.

In verse 11, Paul claims that the generosity the Corinthians showed him and his companions directly caused thanksgiving to God. He does not tell us specifically who is giving thanks to God, whether it is him, his companions, or the ones who are able to hear the message of the gospel because of Paul's missionary work. God receives thanksgiving because of the Corinthians' generosity. When you give with a cheerful heart, it opens the opportunity for others to thank God. Don't miss an opportunity to sow a seed of generosity.

APPLY THE WORD

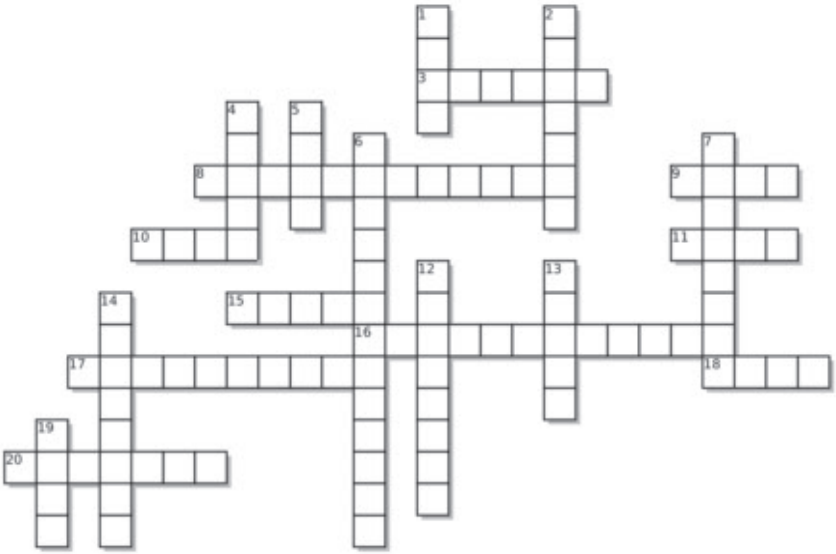
As we conclude this study, think of a way you can give and spur on thankfulness to God. Is there a small business in your community that is trying to shine God's light in the marketplace? Is there an organization that is sharing the gospel with others? Perhaps you can generously bless them today, and others will thank God because of you!

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of this month's Bible study, praise the Lord for His truth that truly sets us free. It's a joy and a privilege to study the Scripture and pray together with the Moody community. Thank you for your prayers and financial support of this ministry!

Thanks and Praise

A Thanks-Filled Puzzle for You!



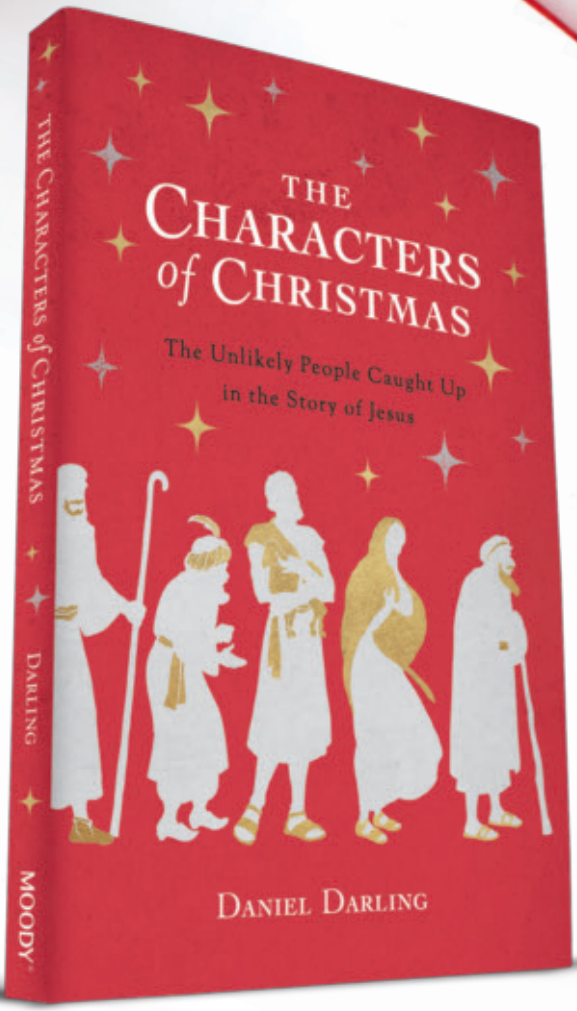
ACROSS

3 An expression of admiration and delight
8 The disciples and we give thanks for this
9 Jesus broke bread to represent His . . .
10 Musical instrument in David's day
11 We give thanks to God for He is . . .
15 A prayer said before meals
16 Enter the temple or church with . . . (Psalm 100)
17 Literally, Praise the Lord
18 Represents a plow and a promise (Matthew 11)
20 Expensive object used to anoint Jesus' feet (Luke 7)

DOWN

1 For Christians, this is certain (1 Peter 1:3)
2 A Hebrew expression meaning "save"
4 Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise
5 He thanked God, even from prison (1 Thessalonians 5)
6 Phrase often repeated in the psalms (3 words)
7 Hymn of praise to start and end the day
12 Nine forgot to say this (2 words)
13 Jesus restored this to the beggar in Luke 18
14 Appreciating what someone has done
19 God promises this in Matthew 11

ANSWERS ***Across:*** *3 Praise, 8 Resurrection, 9 Body, 10 Harp, 11 Good, 15 Grace, 16 Thanksgiving, 17 Hallelujah, 18 Yoke, 20 Perfume* ***Down:*** *1 Hope, 2 Hosanna, 4 Sleep, 5 Paul, 6 Praise the Lord, 7 Doxology, 12 Thank You, 13 Sight, 14 Thankful, 19 Rest*



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