

YOU HAVE MADE ME GLAD BY YOUR WORK

Psalm 92:1-15

Key Verse 92:4

“For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the work of your hands I sing for joy.”

How has God made you glad and thankful? On Thursday, November 23, 2023, this nation will celebrate the annual Thanksgiving holiday. Days of Thanksgiving are not uniquely American or any nationality. Canada celebrated Thanksgiving on October 9 this year. In the Bible, God directs his people to set aside days to gather, worship, and give thanks. For example, in Leviticus 23, God gives a list of holidays. The holidays were mostly *annual* celebrations. But the first holiday on that list is the *weekly* Sabbath. This morning's passage, Psalm 92, is about how to celebrate the *weekly* Sabbath. And the first verse of Psalm 92 says, “It is good to give thanks to the LORD.” God calls us to celebrate Thanksgiving, not only on the fourth Thursday of November annually, but every week that we gather together in worship, to observe the Christian version of the Sabbath. Have you ever considered *every Sunday* as a Thanksgiving holiday? Turkey, pumpkins, and Autumn colors are not what make Thanksgiving truly meaningful. According to Psalm 92, a heart of thanks, songs of praise, and testimonies declaring God's love and his great works, are truly what make Thanksgiving meaningful.

We will cover Psalm 92 in three parts: 1) “It is good...” 2) The LORD's works, and 3) The flourishing of the righteous. May God speak to each of us from Psalm 92.

First, “It is good...” (1-4)

Let's read verses 1-3. “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.” This Sabbath song immediately directs the worshiper's attention to the LORD. Worshipers are to “give thanks”, “sing praises”, and “declare your steadfast love... and faithfulness” to the LORD. All of these actions are good.

“It is good to give thanks to the LORD.” God sometimes blesses us in a new way. He may give perspective or insight that easily leads us to give thanks to him. When circumstances are favorable or a pleasant thing happens, we may be inclined to give thanks. The Bible commands us to give thanks, not in some, but in all circumstances (1

Th 5:18a). Yet, only looking at our circumstances may not lead us to give thanks. That's why we need to look at God, who is in all of our circumstances, and give thanks to him. When we look at God, we can give thanks to him when we've landed that new job, when we've successfully navigated school, when we see our child thrive, or when we experience some positive breakthrough in life, because God was right there and helped us. When we look at God, we can also give thanks to him when we suffer with our loved ones and friends, when we are stressed out from work, when we are deeply struggling in a relationship or _____ because God has also been right there with us in those dark valleys. Psalm 23:4 says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." God is with us. He gives us all we need in every situation. Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Giving thanks to God is good because our God is always good in all our circumstances.

"It is good... to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ... to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre." (1a,3) Singing and making music to God are also good. Music and songs that declare the wonderful things of God can be very powerful in helping us to worship. Have you ever come into this sanctuary on a Sunday, weighed down by fears and anxieties or distractions? Then a hymn or praise song, some music from the orchestra, or a special music program, lifts up your heart to the Lord Jesus in worship and thanksgiving. Let's thank God for our orchestra and praise team members who lead us in singing praises to the Most High God each week. Some of us sing together at our Christmas gatherings in our homes. But with this upcoming Thanksgiving, can I suggest that we also sing at our Thanksgiving gatherings? Maybe "Great Is Thy Faithfulness", "Count Your Blessings" or "Give Thanks With a Grateful Heart." Singing praises to God is good because God deserves our praise and worship.

"It is good... to declare your steadfast love in the morning." (1a, 2a) The pace of modern life can make mornings and evenings feel like an endless blue of busy activity. In the mornings, we'll probably look at our phones, maybe get some coffee, and prepare for work or school. For those of us with children at home, we try to get them ready for school without snapping at them. And some of us experience the curse of Chicago morning rush hour. Your morning routine may include exercise, reading, or something else. Whatever your morning habits, the Psalmist also tells us to declare God's steadfast love in the morning. "Steadfast love" here refers specifically to God's faithful, caring, covenant love. This steadfast or covenant love has been best expressed to us through the new covenant in Jesus' blood (Lk 22:20). Of course, we should pray in the morning for God's help for whatever issues we face that day. But starting every morning, not with what I have to do but declaring what God has already done - God's steadfast love to us in Jesus Christ - is

foundational for our day. Declaring God's steadfast love in the morning is good because it is good for our soul and orients us to God each day.

"It is good... to declare... your faithfulness by night." (1a, 2b) At night, we are usually very tired and want to relax or go to sleep. But we made it to that evening because God was faithful all throughout the day. At dinner I previously asked my sons, "How did God help you today?" The idea was to reflect on God's faithfulness. One of them often reflexively answered, "I didn't die." Whatever that son's intention, even that answer testified to God's faithfulness. If we take even a few minutes to reflect, God's faithfulness that day will be evident. Earlier this year, I was riding my bike into work and got a flat tire. At first, it was a real bummer. I was going to be late for work. How would I get home after work? What will I do with my bike? But God, in his indescribable way, allowed me to get a flat tire in front of a bike repair shop. The shop wasn't open yet but it turned out that the bus running on the next street would take me right into work due to some detours. I wasn't late. Then in the afternoon, work wasn't super busy so I could leave a little early and get my bike fixed. I caught up on work while waiting and then could ride home with a clear mind. This was not a very dramatic experience. But we do not need a dramatic experience to declare God's faithfulness. God is working and involved in our lives all the time. What are the odds of getting a flat tire right in front of a bike shop? What are the odds of how everything unfolded that day? That's God. That evening and for days after, I told people about this experience. My sons said, "That's pretty cool!" It is good to declare God's faithfulness at night, giving thanks to him for what he has done. It is good for others, and it is good for us.

As a member of the English daily bread team, this will sound like a shameless plug, but the UBF daily bread is a good tool to help us declare God's steadfast love in the morning and his faithfulness by night. The daily bread can ground us in God's word and help us to pray. It is available in the morning and by night, 24x7, at <https://ubf.org/dailybread>. Whether it is through the daily bread or some other means, commit to declaring God's steadfast love in the morning and his faithfulness by night.

Let's read verse 4 together. "For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy." Notice the "me" and the "I" in this verse. The Sabbath song becomes personal. On the Sabbath, each person is to confess that the LORD has made that person glad by God's works. God's works cause that person to sing for joy. What makes you glad? For the gardeners among us, seeing flowers, fruits, and vegetables that God grows in your garden makes you glad. For the parents with babies or toddlers among us, seeing your child eating well or smiling makes you glad. For those of us with older family members, God-given opportunities to have time together can make us glad. Having fellowship with God's people, sharing our lives together and witnessing how God is working in each of us, also makes us glad. Many of us in this room were glad at the ISBC

to meet new people and renew old friendships. We could sing for joy at the works of the LORD in the lives of people from all over the world. Then there are the works of the LORD we've all seen here in this sanctuary throughout 2023 with baptisms and testimonies of what Jesus has done. Then there are so many other ways that the LORD has worked in family and friends that have made us glad and sing for joy. Specifically, how has God made you glad and thankful? I pray that the prayer of verse 4 may be our personal confession to the LORD: "For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy."

Second, the LORD's works (5-11)

God does not gloss over the reality that not everything in life makes us glad or feel joy. In fact, we regularly experience disappointments, pain, anger, injustice, broken relationships, worries, sickness, and even death. In this year alone, each of us has likely experienced all of these, many times over. While some here may be glad and thankful about what God has done others feel as though they barely hung onto God by a thread. We may feel more agonizing hurt than sweet blessing. Life may feel incredibly frustrating in the moment. From our human point of view, God has sometimes not answered prayer in the way we hoped. Our hearts break and we are so confused when we see the conflicts and wars in the world. Seeing the work of the LORD seems impossible in those situations. This does not mean God is not working or that he does not care. It means that we live in a very sinful, broken, and fallen world that is in desperate need for God's salvation and restoration.

What should we do when we are not glad or able to sing for joy? Let's read verse 5. "How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep!" The Psalmist declares that God's works are so great and his thoughts so very deep that both are often beyond our understanding. More important than us always understanding God, is that God always understands us. Most of all, God is over every situation and circumstance. He is in control. He is sovereign. Holding onto our pride, anger, or pain hinders us from accepting this liberating truth. But we can accept verse 5 when we humbly come to God with our hurts and struggles. Then, by faith, God will help us believe, "How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep!"

Those who accept God's great works and very deep thoughts are contrasted with the stupid man and the fool. Such people are called stupid or fools because they are spiritually short-sighted. They see the wicked sprouting up everywhere like grass. They also see evildoers flourishing. Fools think that it is better to be wicked and do evil than to be righteous before God. God's people may be tempted because of how well the wicked are doing. Do not be fooled by superficial appearances! The righteous see God's great works. The righteous accept God's deep thoughts. But a fool does not see what God is

doing. A spiritually short-sighted person only sees momentary flourishing in the world. He does not see the LORD who is on high forever (8).

The wicked and evildoers are also called God's enemies. Look at verse 9. "For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered." God's enemies are those who oppose God and tear down his people. Once, during the reign of King Hezekiah, the king of Judah, the Assyrian army marched up against Jerusalem. The situation was dire. All the surrounding nations and peoples had been swallowed up by the Assyrians. But this wasn't only about politics and land. It was a spiritual battle between God and an arrogant, idol-worshipping man who mostly worshiped himself. The king of Assyria taunted the Israelites and God. Hezekiah told the Israelites to trust in the LORD their God. But the king of Assyria told the Israelites that doing so was foolish. He said, "No god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hands of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand!" (2 Ch 32:15) The Bible says he also sent letters to cast contempt on the LORD, the God of Israel, and to speak against him. (2 Ch 32:17) When the king of Assyria spoke out against God and discouraged his people, he became God's enemy. God answered, "Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel! ... you have mocked the Lord." (2 Ki 19:22-23a) Then God promised Hezekiah that the Assyrians would not enter Jerusalem. God himself would save her. That night God sent his angel and struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their camp. Soon thereafter, the king of Assyria was assassinated. God's enemies perished. God's enemies were scattered.

God's judgment, in that example, foreshadows Jesus' final victory over all his enemies when he comes again. Even now, there are many enemies of the cross of Christ. (Ph 3:18) Our real enemies are those who oppose Jesus and his kingdom. That's how God's enemies become "my enemies" as it says in verse 11. God's people often suffer because of the actions of the wicked. God sees this injustice. But when Jesus comes again, he will destroy every authority, rule, and power and put all his enemies under his feet. (1 Co 15:24,25) Singing about doom and God's judgment of his enemies feels uncomfortable on the Sabbath, especially before Thanksgiving. But we Christians do not sing this from a place of vindictiveness or self-righteousness. We sing this strong, sobering reminder of God's sure judgment to remind each other and ourselves not to be fooled by the short-term flourishing of the wicked or whatever fools may say. We sing this song of God's judgment to pray for and tell God's enemies to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Let's read verse 10 together. "But you have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil." "Horn" is a symbol of strength. The act of pouring fresh oil on someone was an act of anointing someone for God's work. God will certainly

destroy his enemies. But God also exalts his people. He gives them strength to be faithful and overcome the world. He anoints his people with the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit's work, we give thanks. By the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, we are glad at the works of God's hands and can sing for joy.

Third, the flourishing of the righteous (12-15)

The word "flourish" is repeated in verses 12 and 13. This is not like the flourishing of the wicked in verse 7, which is brief and ends in destruction. Though the wicked may flourish in the world for a little while, the righteous flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Both palm trees and the cedars of Lebanon can grow to a very old age. The palm trees referenced in verse 12 are date palms. When cared for properly, these date palms can produce an abundance of sweet dates, year after year, for many years. Cedar trees in Lebanon can grow as high as 130 ft. and have massively thick trunks. With God's blessing and care, the righteous produce fruit to an old age.

This is what spiritual flourishing of the righteous looks like. The righteous grow spiritually big and strong in the LORD and bear fruit pleasing to God. This fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control throughout our life here on earth. Just as a plant flourishes when planted in the right soil, so the righteous flourish because they "are planted in the house of the LORD". (13a) If we plant ourselves on our couch or in front of our computer and water our hearts and minds with Netflix or YouTube, we will not flourish. We can flourish when we are planted in the house of the LORD. This means God's people need to live in God's presence every day. In other words, having a relationship with God is key to spiritual flourishing. John 15:5 says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

I know an 85-year-old gentleman who isn't physically big but is spiritually flourishing like a palm tree and a tall cedar of Lebanon. He leads several group Bible studies, visits group members individually, and does street evangelism. Last year, while driving in a rough neighborhood, he was caught in the middle of gang gunfire. The police were there, pulled him over, and then chased down the gang members. At the scene, two bullets were found in his car. One of them had come from behind, was lodged in his door, and had missed him by inches. The police told him he was lucky to be alive. They kept him to make sure he was okay. He peacefully told the police, "It's not luck. God will take me when God is ready, not one day sooner. I'm fine." Then he talked to the officers about Jesus. Were they ready if they died that day? Did they have the peace that surpasses understanding? He is not afraid of dying. He prays to do God's work until God takes him home. At his age, he is still flourishing and bearing good fruit. No matter our age, God will

work in us to spiritually flourish when we are planted in him. May God bless each of us to flourish spiritually and bear fruit into our old age.

God's purpose in making the righteous flourish is in verse 15. "To declare that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Verse 15 points us to the Lord our God who is upright and our rock. Acts 4:11-12 tell us that Jesus is the rock. "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Furthermore, there was no unrighteousness in Jesus. Hebrews 7:26 says, "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." Because Jesus was sinless, he alone could die to take away and pay for all of our sins. Our sins are forgiven because of Jesus. We have eternal life because of Jesus. Jesus continues to be our rock today because he is alive. We have many reasons to thank and praise God as we gather every Sunday to worship. Most of all, because of what Jesus has done for us, we gather every Sunday to declare, "The Lord Jesus is upright; Jesus is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Because of Jesus our rock, we can always be thankful in good times and in bad times.

Let's read our key verse again. "For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the work of your hands I sing for joy." The LORD has made us glad by his work. We sing for joy at the work of his hands. So I ask again, "How has God made you glad and thankful?" As we enter this Thanksgiving season, ask God to remind you of his specific work and to fill your heart with gladness. May God make you glad and thankful and enable you to sing for joy. Amen.