

## **Devotion #1 - Psalm 145:15-21**

### **“Giving Thanks because God meets All of our Needs”**

**15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. 16 You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. 18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. 20 The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. 21 My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever.**

There are many different stories behind the history of the Cornucopia (Latin: Horn of Plenty), but there is no doubt that this picture has become the symbol of Thanksgiving in the United States. The horn symbolizes each of our lives and the fruit and flowers represent all the blessings God has given to us. The fact that the fruit and flowers are spilling out of the horn or can't even fit in the horn represents that God's blessings to us are overflowing. I think King David, the inspired writer of Psalm 145, would agree that the cornucopia is a fitting symbol of the point he is trying to convey to us today.

My life overflowing with plenty of blessings? Sometimes it feels like that. and sometimes it doesn't. It doesn't always feel like everyone looks to God for providing their blessings. Even Christians like us at times just assume those blessings will be there and that we are entitled to them. It doesn't always feel like God satisfies every last desire that I have. Otherwise I would be a professional golfer today instead of a pastor or whatever your version of "satisfy my desires" would be. I don't always feel like God's timing is perfect, or that God rules this universe in a way that is right, or that God has loved me the way I want to be loved, or heard my cries for help, or held the wicked accountable for their sins.

Feelings are a blessing from God, but feelings are also tainted by sin. Our feelings aren't always reality. Psalm 145 is reality, even if we don't always feel like it. The key to Psalm 145 feeling true more often is focusing our attention on one word, "LORD." The cornucopia that we enjoy is not from God, some abstract impersonal being. The cornucopia we enjoy is from the "LORD" the special name God uses when he wants to focus our attention on the fact that he is our SAVIOR God, the one who is near and dear to us and personally called us into his family. The LORD loved each of us so much that he was willing to punish his Son Jesus for our unthankfulness, worries, and discontent, instead of us. Instead of piling the guilt on us the LORD offers forgiveness instead. Instead of death we receive a new life filled with opportunities to thank the LORD and serve others. Instead of Hell we can confidently look forward to Heaven.

That is reality! And when I focus on that daily then Psalm 145 sounds different, it feels different. Maybe not everyone thanks the LORD for their cornucopia, but let's give thanks that God provides for both believer and unbeliever alike. And maybe some of the desires I want satisfied the LORD doesn't fulfill because they are sinful, or he knows that fulfilling that desire will not be beneficial for my faith in Christ, or he knows that while I think certain things in life are going to satisfy me they really wouldn't and God has provided for me what he knows will be more satisfying. And then when I look at the cross suddenly those thoughts of the LORD not being fair to me, or loving me wrong, or not ruling correctly, or his timing being off – suddenly those thoughts and feelings seem ridiculous. And those times that I'm frustrated that the LORD isn't holding the wicked accountable faster for their sins – I need look no further than the Bible to see that the LORD is being patient so that more unbelievers, like you and I used to be, repent and might enjoy being righteous through faith in Jesus. And on Judgment Day God will hold unbelievers accountable forever, we just need to be patient and trust that our loving, patient, and just God has it all under control.

Tonight and tomorrow we celebrate Thanksgiving. What an opportunity – to give the LORD the thanks he deserves for meeting every last one of our needs. **“My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever” (vs. 21).**

### **Devotion #2 – Hebrews 12:7-13**

#### **“Giving Thanks to God when Things Go Wrong”**

**7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.**

Dear Lord, thank you for health problems; thank you for relationship issues; thank you for job stress or job insecurity; thank you for that accident; thank you for that latest natural disaster; thank you for \_\_\_\_\_. I don't know about you, but often times I forget to add hardship to my list of things of which to be thankful. Each of us craves an easy pleasure filled

existence on earth. But easy and pleasure filled can distract us from the ultimate goal – to be in heaven one day where it will be easy and pleasure filled all the time and forever. Scripture is filled with examples of people who benefitted long term from hardship. Scripture is filled with passages encouraging us to rejoice in our sufferings. Why? Because hardship is one loving way that God keeps us focused on our need for Jesus and the ultimate goal to live in heaven for eternity. And hardship can produce a **“harvest of righteousness”** (vs. 11) in many ways that are useful on earth. Getting disciplined by your parents or some other authority figure when you were younger is never pleasant at the time, but later in life aren’t you thankful for authority figures who bettered you as a human being by holding you accountable for your words, actions, and attitudes. Each of us has had to deal with some tough moments in life. Don’t we often look back on those experiences and think to ourselves – there were good things that came from that? While not pleasant to go through at the time lessons of discipline, toughness, perseverance, and keep the big picture in mind were all lessons worth learning and continue to benefit us in our lives today. Our eternal salvation through Christ Jesus is a done deal, but each us as a follower of Jesus is a work in progress. Take a moment to thank God for the hardship he allows or sends into your life as he will use it to make you a more productive, focused, and disciplined Christian. The kind of Christian that can be a source of wisdom and encouragement to other people.

### **Devotion #3 – Matthew 6:25-34**

#### **“Giving Thanks because God Never Forgets”**

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

“I forgot, sorry about that.” How many times have you uttered that phrase in your life? I know I’ve said that phrase more than I care to admit. You ever have those times where you walk into a room to get something or do something and along the way you start thinking about something else and then when you get to the place you were going you can’t remember why you went there is the first place? That’s a good illustration of worry. We think God is like us and he has so much going on, so many things to take care of that on his way to take care of our needs he is going to forget what he came to do for us. Jesus reminds us of an awesome reason to give thanks to God – because he is NOT like us. God never forgets. Yes, God has a lot of irons in the fire so to speak, but he can handle that responsibility. And if God takes the time to provide for the needs of the birds, lilies, and grass – then certainly he is going to take care of you, me, and all humans – the crown of his creation. How do I know God won’t forget? Just look at how our God takes care of nature. Just look at all the things you do have in your life and not just the things you don’t. Most importantly, look at your Savior Jesus. Since God took care of our biggest need (rescue from eternal punishment in Hell), certainly he will take care of the smaller details of the rest of our lives as well. Focus every day on God’s gift to you through Jesus (“seek first his kingdom”) and I guarantee you will find less reasons to worry and more reasons to thank God that he never forgets to take care of us.