

Friday
7:30-8:00
A.M.

Scripture Lesson: - Psalm 103: 1-8.

Text: - Psalm 103: 2. "Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits."

The Psalmist
Introduction: - Paul was a master of the fine art
of gratitude, or thankfulness. He looks into his
own life, and sees how thankful he has been in
the past year. There is one grace, called grati-
tude, or thankfulness, which he deliberately set
out to cultivate. He does not allow his soul to
become dull and listless and all but asleep amid
God's amazing mercies. He refuses to blunder thru
life, as a blind man might blunder thru an art
gallery, never seeing anything to bring him to
his knees in eager thanksgiving. He therefore
takes himself in hand, and rouses his soul with
the urgent appeal, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and
forget not all his benefits."

It is a matter of choice to be thankful, or
thankless. All who really desire to be thankful
can be. The Psalmist knows that just as we can
if we so desire, deliberately cultivate the obnox-
ious weeds of hatred, malice, and ingratitude, ev-
en so, we can cultivate the opposite. There is no
weed so poisonous that it will not grow in a man's
own soul. And there is no flower too lovely or
too beautiful to grow in the same soil. We can,
therefore, if we wish to, cultivate this fine
flower of thankfulness, or we can refuse.

Real thankfulness must be deeper than the thanks we so often say to those who do us favors. Our thanksgiving is too often from the lips only. But, our thanksgiving, if it is of real worth, must be from the heart. And how grateful may we in our hearts? We can do so, by refusing to be forgetful. "Forget not all his benefits", says the Psalmist. Note, that he does not ask that we remember all of God's benefits. He merely asks that we do not forget "all his benefits." "Think", he says, and then you will thank. The reason we are so thankless is because we are so thoughtless.

But if we are to think in order to thank, what be the nature of our thinking. He does not tell us to think upon our enemies, those grouchy souls that rub us the wrong way and in a general way get on our nerves. He does not tell us to think over some petty slight or little injuries, that may have befallen us. He does not ask us to miss all the music of life, because we were listening for the discords of life.

What, then, are some of the benefits that arouse in us the fine grace of thankfulness. He does not mention the day-by-day mercies, which we so often regard as commonplace, because they are so constant. He does not mention the splendor of the sunrise, the bloom of flowers, the song of the birds, the handclasp of friends, the tender love of the home-circle; we know that these have come from his hands. But we are to think of the blessings that come from his hands that people sometimes never think of.

flower of thankfulness. If we can refuse.

1. He thanks God for the revelation that he has made of himself, through Moses, and through his own personal experience. It is absolutely amazing how fully this man has come to know God, in spite of the fact that he lived centuries before Jesus came into the world and gathered little children into his arms, and took upon his own shoulders the burden of every nameless and needy soul and to say to us, "God is like me; he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

2. He is thankful for the infinite beauty of God that this revelation has disclosed. How winsome he has found him to be! How altogether lovely and lovable. No wonder his soul falls upon its knees in spontaneous thanksgiving as he thinks upon such greatness and gracious qualities.

(1.) He has found God to be like as a father. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." How much more is this true declared to us through Jesus Christ. He tells us of the tenderest love of a father, is only a dim and blurred copy of the love of God. He has reference to a boy who ran away from home, his father's house who ran past his own wealth, both physical and spiritual, ran past his friends, ran past decency, and self respect; but could not run past his Father's love. His father was always missing him, always watching with yearning for his return.

(2.) If God's heart is like that of a father, is a forgiving heart. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." God does forgive, but He does so, not in a grudging fashion, but eagerly and abundantly. He is plenteous in mercy. When he forgives, he does so agrandly; he forgives and forgets all our iniquities.

and hides them behind his back. This plenteous forgiveness means also that he takes us back into his confidence, trusts us as if we had always been true. "He will forgive all their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more." This, the sin of our lives is the only thing in the whole universe that God ever forgets. He never forgets the least of his children. He never forgets their efforts to serve him. But he forgets our sin. He turns his back upon it, and invites us to do the same. He takes us fully into his confidence, saying even to the weakest of us, "Go and sin no more!"

(3.) He is thankful because in God he has found the secret of unfailing youth. "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." In all ages men have hated to grow old. I believe we should remain young physically as long as we can. But fight against it. Yes we may. But this old house we live in is sure to fall into ruins. No beauty secrets, no surgery, no mystic fountain of youth can prevent it. Winter is sure to come to our bodies, but in spite of that, we can have abiding springtime in our hearts.

In a certain church there was a man who was ^{score} forty years and ten. In addition, he carried the heavy burden of sorrow and of dreams that never came true. Yet he never complained. No one ever heard him utter a word of discouragement. When he came into a meeting, it was like turning on a light. It was like opening a window and letting in a breath of fresh air. He shared with our poet the secret of unfailing youth.

(4.) Finally, in this old world of restlessness and weariness, of broken hearts and broken hopes

he was thankful that he has found one who can abundantly satisfy. He has found the one "who can satisfy." What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and miss his who alone can satisfy? What have we lost if we miss the things for which men are scrambling madly? We have missed the all-abiding One, the One who abundantly satisfies.

They tell us, that on the west coast of England there is the grave of a man, who while he lived, moved about his community like a rich man. His tomb has this inscription on it, "Here lies a man who was satisfied with Jesus." If that can truly be said of us, we have sufficient to make all time and eternity one great thanksgiving day.

The author of our text knew that to be thankful in his own heart was not enough. If we are thankful, and shut that thankfulness up in our own hearts, we will surely lose it. But, if we let it out of our hearts, if we seek to share it, it will never increase in value, as we share it.

Then we ought to give expression to our thankfulness, because it heartens those to whom we are grateful. How desperately some need to be cheered. As a preacher, I have long since learned that the average man and woman does not need to be skinned. What they need more than a good skinning, is a little bit of encouragement. How much more smoothly the machinery of life would run, both in the home and out of it, if we oiled it with gratitude or thankfulness. It would put a new spring into the step, a glad sparkle into the eye, and plant some roses into the cheek.

And, last of all, we ought to give expression to our thankfulness, because by so doing, we gladden the heart of God.

Once there was a tired minister who, on a late Saturday afternoon, was trying to finish his Sunday morning sermon. He had been interrupted many times. He was nervous and weary. Then came another knock at his door. He braced himself and said, "Come in." Then the door was opened and a sunny faced little girl looked in, and said, "Daddy, may I come in." Of course he said "yes". She ran across the room, climbed into the tired man's lap and began to caress him in her sweet childish fashion. Then she said, "Daddy, I did not come to ask one single thing. I just came to climb into your lap and hug your neck and kiss your lips and tell you what a good, kind, sweet daddy you are!"

And so much warmth slipped into his ^{tired} heart that it crowded out all the weariness. God is like a Father and his heart too, warms at our giving of thanks.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

As a Nation we have more to be thankful for than any Nation on Earth and I have been good to us. We can't begin to count our blessings. Let's not have just another day of feasting and celebration - let's really just thank God for His many blessings & tender mercies.