

“A Call to Remembrance and Trust”

Psalm 33

“Thanksgiving” is a special day in our nation’s history when as a people we look back upon the bounty that He has granted. It inaugurates a season that culminates in the advent of our Lord, a pivotal event that marked a major disclosure in the story of redemption. “Thanksgiving” looks back recognizing the mercies of God’s sustaining grace.

The background of a National Day of Thanksgiving takes us back to 1621 when a group of hardy Pilgrims celebrated with the local Indians the mercies of God of with a feast. Washington called for a “Day of Public Thankfulness” to be celebrated on 26 November 1789. Jefferson refused, citing the separate of church and state theory. Lincoln proclaimed such a day in 1863, the dark days of the Civil War in the North He wrote in part, “No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most-High God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.” On 23 December 1941 congress petitioned Roosevelt to declare that the fourth Thursday of November to be a “National Holiday for Thanksgiving.”

That stated, let us turn to the Holy Scriptures, Psalm 33, considering the theme of our indebtedness for God’s care for His children and for our nation.

- I. An introduction to the Psalms.
  - A. The term “Psalms” is derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and means words to be sung with musical instrumentation (the harp, the lyre). of
  - B. The Jewish tradition divided the 150 Psalms into five sections parallel in structure to the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch. Each section (1-41, 42-72, 73-89, and 90-106, 107-150) ends with a benediction (41:13, 72:18-19, 89:52, 106:48, 150:1-6).
- II. An Introduction to Psalm 33.
  - A. Author  
Lacking a superscription, this Psalm is of unknown authorship. However, of the forty-one poems in the first division of the Psalms or Songs, poems set to music to be sung in the temple liturgy, thirty-seven are ascribed to David, none to any other writer. In addition, the New Testament attributes

Psalm 2 to David in Acts 4:25. It is most likely that David composed 11 and 33 as well.

#### B. Setting

Further, the circumstance for the writing of the poem is not stated though sometimes such appears in the superscription (Ps. 3, 7, 18, 30, and 34). At other times, the superscription contains a musical connotation or simply that David wrote it.

The Psalm is a praise hymn. It has been suggested that the background may have been a national triumph of some sort.

#### C. Theme

In this hymn the psalmist praises the Lord as the sovereign creator and just ruler of the world who protects and vindicates those who fear him. This is evident by two actions of God expressed by the terms “word” (or speech v. 6) and “looks (v. 13).” The first verb expresses His power to create, the second His power to control.

### III. An Exposition of Psalm 33

The Psalm has three parts: a call to praise (vv. 1-3), the causes for praise (vv. 4-19), and a confession of praise (vv. 20-23). The causes are five-fold.

#### A. The Call to Praise, vv. 1-3

Praise begins and ends in this Psalm by focusing of the Lord; it begins with “shout” and ends with “wait,” expressions of emotional delight and resignation. We should enter worship with joy (v. 1). The essence of worship is the expression of speaking well of God, rehearsing His mighty mercies (v. 2). This involves effort (orchestration and skill). It is the right thing to do (v. 3). New songs, words of praise, should be unending because His mercies to us are ever new.

#### B. The Causes for Praise: The Ways of Our God, vv. 4-19

The word “for” that begins this paragraph indicates that David is sighting reasons for the call to praise, telling us why praise is appropriate.

Vv. 4-5: God, dependable and reliable.

Vv. 6-9: God, mighty creator.

Vv. 10-11: God, sovereign

Vv. 13-17: God, provider.

Vv. 18-19: God, caring.

##### 1. For His justice and mercy, vv. 4-5

God’s word or speech refers to His decrees, the ways that He reveals Himself to us (revelation in general). God’s ways are “right;” there is simply nothing amiss in the way He does things (v. 4). Further, all that God planned has and will come to pass with exactness (v. 5) because God “loves righteousness and judgment;” the earth is full of His

bounty. Wrote Matthew Henry, “What a pity it is that this earth, which is so full of God’s goodness, should be so empty of his praises, and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty there are so few that live to his glory!”

2. For His power in creation, vv. 6-7, 9

The point seems to be how God so easily created a complex universe (v. 6); it was simply by speaking, with no expenditure of energy on His part. This is consistent with what we are told about the creation in the Genesis account (And God said, let... And there was...” [1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, and 24]).

Not only did He create; He also controls the world He made (v. 7)! This verse appears to refer to Gen. 1:9 where God decrees that the watery deep be gathered to one place so that dry land might appear. If so, the participles in this and the following line depict this action with special vividness as if the reader were present on the occasion.

(A Choral Refrain of Praise, v. 8)

I can imagine that the temple would be filled with a chorale response at this point as the Psalm is read in worship. This should be our response to God’s great power and controlling mercies. “Fear” means “to demonstrate respect” for God’s greatness in creation and worship Him obeying His commandments.

Verse 9 tells us that God not only effortlessly created the world and controls it with His sovereign power, setting the limits of the seas, but what He did cannot be diminished (“it stands fast”). Power, strength, and duration characterize the actions of our God.

3. For His governance of the world, vv. 10-11

God rules over all the counsels of men and, contrary to their intentions, makes them serve His will by frustrating their selfish designs (Ps. 2). In contrast to the inability of mankind to devise plans and execute them apart from God’s will, God’s plans are as sure and permanent as His ordering of creation!

(A Choral Refrain of Praise, v. 12)

This seems to be a second choral refrain. We are to give our praise to God because He has chosen to make us His inheritance.

4. For His providential mercies toward His people, vv. 13-17

The shift from God’s speech (vv. 4-12) to His perception (“looks”) suggests that the all-powerful God is also caring as well (vv. 13-17), transcendence and immanence combined. Power without care lends

to callousness and harshness. Care without ability to affect compassion is ineptitude.

a. God's all-controlling providence, vv. 13-14

Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet therefore he not only has a prospective of all the earth, but also a particular awareness of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholds them, but he looks upon them; he looks narrowly upon them (so the word here used is sometimes rendered), so narrowly that not the least thought can escape his observation.

b. God's depth of knowledge, v. 15

Further, God makes us what we are by fashioning our very personalities and understands our activities (Ps. 139).

c. Man's dependence upon God, vv. 16-17

People are totally dependent on God; all our abilities are of no account with Him! This David illustrates with the actions of a king, his army, and a horse. In both verses the phrase "cannot deliver" occurs.

5. His graciousness to His people, vv. 18-19

In v. 12 David stated that a people, a nation, is blessed who knows the Lord. In this verse, he makes the same claim for individuals as well ("looks," "eye of the Lord"). The "eye of the Lord" suggests His recognition and bestowment of favor. God's graciousness demands a grateful heart response. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favor is upon those that fear him. He looks upon them with delight, as a father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse. He will deliver us when kings, armies, and horses cannot! "Death" is paralleled with "famine" suggesting that God will provide protection for us in His divine will and purposes in this life (death being used metaphorically for tragedies and difficulties in life).

C. The Confession of Praise, vv. 20-21

The word "our" suggests a personal response to the display of God's mercies (vv. 4-19) and is the fitting conclusion to the call to praise (vv. 1-4). Here are two statements (vv. 20a, 21a) and two reasons for them (vv. 20b, 21b). The first reason is rooted in God's character, the second in our response to His character.

"waits".... "help" and "shield"

"rejoices".... "we trust"

We "wait (trust)" because He alone is trustworthy; He directs us positively and shields us from negative consequences as well. We "rejoice" with delight!

(A Concluding Refrain, v. 22)

Here is the third, and final, choral refrain. What a wonderful benediction. “Loving-kindness (“hesed”) is a reference to God’s covenant faithfulness. It is one of the great words in the Hebrew Scriptures. The term refers to a kind of love and, therefore, its range of meaning is narrower than the biblical concept of love. It means loyalty in the context of promise; God is one who will keep His promises. It means a covenant bond with treaty obligation. In reference to God’s relationship to His people, it means faithfulness (Ex. 34:6).

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As you think about God’s great faithfulness to you throughout 2025, what first and foremost comes to your mind? Would you share it with us?

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