

“I WILL GLORIFY GOD WITH GRATITUDE.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Text for the Sermon: Psalm 69:30-32

Introduction:

I want to focus on these few verses at the end of Psalm 69. But because they are at the end, that means these verses have a context. And that context gives these verses even greater impact.

This Psalm is one of a few Psalms, sometimes called imprecatory psalms or laments (the main ones being 35, 69, and 109).

They are prayers that record the details of the dark side of life. In this Psalm David is crying out to God to save him. His enemies outnumber the hairs on his head. He is being pursued by those who want to kill him. His enemies mock God and scorn all things godly. David prays for relief and prays a curse on his enemies and that God would vindicate His own righteousness.

After pouring out his prayer in much detail, with specific requests for specific action by God, he sums up his prayer and the miserable condition of his life in verse 29. He is in pain and great distress.

After 29 verses of lament and anguish and strong language, all of a sudden, the Psalmist turns to praise and thanksgiving.

Psalm 69:30 I will praise the name of God in song. I will glorify (or magnify) the Lord with thanksgiving.

What does it mean to glorify God when it has the sense of magnifying Him?

Well, how do you magnify something, anything? Two ways (to borrow an illustration from John Piper): you can magnify something that is very small by using a microscope or a magnifying glass, or you can magnify something that is very large but appears very small or insignificant. To do this you might use a telescope. Our huge telescopes reveal the magnificence of the universe by showing us how big and great the stars and galaxies really are.

There is microscope magnifying and telescope magnifying. When David says, “I will magnify God with thanksgiving” he is not saying, “I will make a small God look bigger,” but rather, “I will make a great God begin to look as great as He really is.”

We are called to be telescopes, to make God’s greatness look as great as it really is. This is our purpose as a church when we gather for worship, to magnify God’s greatness and goodness and all His works. This is our purpose when we focus on missions and telling the world how great

God really is. This is our purpose when we teach and service and volunteer, we are saying something about the worthiness and significance and greatness of the God we want to honor in all we do. When we love each other and our world, we are magnifying the love of God for us and in us.

To paraphrase I Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all in a way that makes God look as great as He really is.”

So why don't we do this more? Two reasons.

One reason is forgetfulness. We forget what God has done for us and what He has given to us. This is why David prays the way he does in Psalm 103:1-2:

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Soul, don't forget how great God is and all that He has done for you. Or in the words of:

Psalm 77:11-12 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. 12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

When we grumble and complain and dwell on the troubles in our lives, we are forgetting who God is and how great He is and all He had done for us we don't even deserve.

Forgetfulness is one problem. Independence is another reason we don't magnify God. If we are not clear about how dependent we are on God for all that we have and are, then we will not be good telescopes. We will be magnifying glasses trying to make our small stuff look great, trying to impress everyone with how good we are or how we have it all together. Magnifying glasses and microscopes make lousy telescopes.

This Psalm shows the antidote to arrogance and unthankfulness. It is humility and poverty of spirit. It is not found in those who can bring a big offering, even a big mature bull with horns and hoofs. It is the one who becomes aware of his dependence and need; the one who brings gratitude and thanks for who God is and what He has done. The reason gratitude glorifies God is because gratitude shows that God is great, and we aren't.

Psalm 50:23 He who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies God, he will see the salvation of God.

But what if your life is filled with bad stuff, hard stuff, things that have you on your knees begging for help? As I pointed out already, this text comes at the end of just such a prayer.

In the midst of his hard life, David makes a vow, a commitment. He resolves to magnify/glorify God with Thanksgiving/gratitude. Remember the prophet Habakkuk making a similar vow:

Habakkuk 3:17-18 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

This shows that thanksgiving has its roots in the heart and not in circumstances, not in the abundance of good things or pleasures.

One of my favorite magazines is the Christian news magazine, *World*. Put it on your Christmas list. One of my favorite columnists is Andree Seu.

She reflects on the difference between Thanksgiving today and Thanksgiving 1621. In 1621 they offered prayer to God for His goodness. But for what goodness? Many had died on the Mayflower coming over and had suffered from scurvy and typhus. Over that first winter many were sick and by spring 12 of the 18 married women had died. Those who lived barely had strength to plant the next year's crops.

America in 1621 – people with nothing but gratitude.
America in 2019 – people with everything but gratitude.

Thanksgiving is not in the pantry or in the house or in the paycheck. Thanksgiving is not on the mountaintop or in the valley. Thanksgiving is in the heart.

For the Psalmist, after pouring out his heart in an urgent appeal to God and in a prayer against his numerous enemies, it is as if his gaze turns upwards and he gets a glimpse of God and his perspective changes. He remembers that there are realities that are truer than his current circumstances.

Instead of curses, he turns to blessings and praises. “I will magnify Him by glorifying and praising Him with songs of thanksgiving.” In won't magnify my problems, I will magnify my great God.

Let me tell you about someone who personifies this beautifully. On Tuesday I went to Lynden Manor to visit Kristi Nieuwendorp. I went specifically because one year ago today her 95-year mother died, Evelyn Nieuwendorp. For the many of you who don't know Kristi, she was the third resident to move into Lynden Manor 24 years ago at the age of 29. She is the youngest resident at Lynden Manor.

In July of 1987 at the age of 21 she was hit by a drunk driver. Ever since then she has been bound to a wheel chair. She never had a chance to marry or have children, she never had the life she hope for or dream of or was planning for herself.

But to meet her, you never hear a complaint, no bitterness or anger, no sadness or why me. Every time I see her, she is positive, happy, smiling. She has a sense of humor, is quick witted, spunky, and sharp minded with a good memory.

She drives her electric scooter next door to the CHCC every Sunday to go to church there, has hardly missed a Sunday in 24 years.

When I asked her about her mother on Tuesday, she was full of thanksgiving, first that she had such a wonderful mother for so long. Evelyn was feeding Kristi her meals up until about a month before she died at the age of 95. She is glad she's not suffering, not a word about wishing she was still here.

Kristi told me she loves Jesus, trusts God with her life and is thankful for her life. She has a note on door, Bless All Who Enter. And I can't get out the door without a hug and an I love you.

That is being a telescope, magnifying the greatness of God by declaring how great and good God is with thanksgiving. Gratitude for God is how we glorify God.

We are a thankful people not because of our circumstances, not because of our afflictions or because we have been spared worse afflictions. We are thankful because our hope and our joy are solidly and firmly grounded in our magnificently great God. We are thankful because our true satisfaction and happiness rest in Him and in Him alone.

As Christians, we have for too long been plowing in the valley with our head down, bent to the task at hand and we have missed the grandeur of the mountain peaks before us. With our hand still on the plow, may we also have a greater sense of faith, anticipation, expectation, contentment, joy and gratitude for we can see the goal of our salvation, the glory of God.

“Come magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together this day and always.”

So now, to all of you I say, go to your homes, gather with friends and family, be filled with good food and more filled with thanksgiving. Let's be telescopes and fill this day and week with outburst of thanks to God, thanks for life and health and strength, thanks for your spouse, parents, children, relationships, employment, provision, church and most of all, above all else, for Jesus and your salvation and His great grace. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.