

**THANKSGIVING: SOUL FEAST**  
**PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 AND PSALM 100**

In that story Adriana read about the woman, Anna,  
who complained all the time; her life turned to stone.  
She experienced life as miserable, cold and dead.  
But when she decided to appreciate the things she had,  
to count her blessing one by one and give thanks, then  
her life began to soften and actual joy and peace  
came over her spirit like a gift.  
What you talk about, or think about defines your reality –  
defines your life.  
How you consider yourself, so you shall be,  
the rabbi said.

As I reflected on the scripture passages for today,  
I began to realize that thanksgiving is really a soul feast.  
Thanksgiving is good for the soul year round.  
Thanksgiving softens the spirit.  
Taking time to list or write out the blessings in your life  
one by one is the root of joy and peace in life.  
It helps us define our reality.  
It helps us to be who we were meant to be.

Notice what the bible says in Philippians 4:  
Rejoice in the Lord always.  
Paul cannot emphasize this concept enough.  
Rejoice he repeats for third or fourth time. Rejoice.  
God is near, Open you eyes.  
God is active and working in your life.  
God is blessing you. Take notice.  
Take time to smell the roses. God is with us.  
There is no need to be anxious.  
No need to list all our complaints.  
Paul says;  
in everything you do and say,  
pray to God with thanksgiving.

And in other parts of his letters he says the same thing.  
Always Give thanks to God.  
Do not stop giving thanks.  
Give thanks in all circumstances.  
But notice, Paul does not stop there.  
This is not just a command he gives out of the blue.

He says: if you do, if you pray to God and give thanks,  
something happens, something happens in your soul:  
the peace of God,  
a peace that is beyond human understanding  
a peace beyond our comprehension,  
peace for your soul will come over you, and  
this peace will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

If you focus your mind and your attention and your energy  
on what is lovely, and admirable, and praise worthy.  
If you do the ABC's of Thanksgiving,  
If you focus on what is noble, and good, and right and  
pure.

Then the God of peace will be with you.  
So rejoice, give thanks,  
take time to list the blessings of your life and  
you will experience peace and the God of peace.  
Thanksgiving is a soul feast.  
Counting our blessings is food for the soul.

So how do we go about giving thanks?  
The title of Psalm 100 is this: a psalm for giving thanks.  
This psalm has helped the people of God give thanks  
since the time of David.  
David too had a hard life. Many things he could  
complain about, and some times he did.  
But it was important for him to always enter the gates of  
God's house with thanksgiving to come into God's  
presence with praise.  
It was important for his well being to give thanks to God  
and praise his name.

So what are we invited to do?

Verse one: We are invited to Shout for joy to the Lord.  
When was the last time you shouted?

We are often a reserved people.  
To stay dignified we seldom raise our voice.  
When do we shout? When do we raise our voice?  
Maybe at a football game or a basketball game.  
Or when we are angry.

I have a couple of Korean friends.  
They used pray in the mountains above Pasadena when  
they were going to Fuller.

When Koreans pray they often shout.  
Well one day my friends were praying so loud  
people in the streets below heard them, and thought  
they were in trouble. So they called 911.  
And the firefighters and the para medics rushed up the  
mountain only to find two people praying,  
shouting for joy to the Lord.

Giving thanks sometime requires  
that we let go of some of our inhibitions.  
That we let it all out. That we shout for joy to the Lord.

Secondly this psalm suggests  
we worship the Lord with gladness.  
Now the Hebrew word here is serve.  
Serve the Lord with gladness.  
Live your life with gladness.  
Come to church with gladness,  
help other with gladness,  
do the work God calls you to do with gladness.  
Give you tithes and offerings with gladness.  
Develop an attitude of gladness.  
Serve the Lord worship the Lord come before him  
with joyful songs.  
Make time to sing, join with others in singing.  
All of this primes the pump and  
helps us give thanks in all circumstances.

Thirdly and most importantly, this psalm invites us to focus our mind and our hearts on  
God.

This is where true thanksgiving begins and ends.  
Knowing God. Realizing that God is God.  
Understanding and knowing that God has made us.  
That we belong to him, that we are his children.  
We are the ones he loves.  
We are his and God is our good Shepherd.  
He cares us. He leads and guides us. God is good.  
God works for our good in all things,  
even if we don't see it right away or  
experience it immediately.  
And know that God's love endures forever.  
His faithfulness continues from generation to generation.

Its that knowledge of God  
that biblical knowledge  
that stirs up thanksgiving in our heart.

So as we leave this place of worship this morning,  
continue what we started here,  
continue to give thanks in all circumstances.  
Shout to the lord. Serve him with gladness,  
know God as your good shepherd  
for this is good for your soul.

Happy Thanksgiving everyone. Have a wonderful meal.