

What He's Done: Thank God – Ps 111:1-4

Ps 111:1-4. When I chose this passage as the basis of our 20th anniversary celebration, I didn't realize that I had used it before. I was going through an old nostalgia folder and discovered a hand-written note with this chapter at the top, and the date February 23, 2006. Except it wasn't a Sunday, but a Thursday. And it wasn't in the High School, where we *first* met as a church, it was right here.

We were scheduled to close on this building a week or so later, and February 23rd was the final walk through. So we gathered the pastors and elders, along with their wives, and circled up some folding chairs right about here (center aisle, mid-way back).

The floor was still flat of course, and the place was a complete mess with wires and debris everywhere, but we couldn't have cared less. All we knew, is that God had done some extraordinary things to bring it about.

So we spent the evening talking, praying, sharing Communion, and dedicating this place to the Lord. But only after we read these four verses, and recounted as much as we could of what he had done. Which is exactly what I want to do this morning.

Intro

So let's do something different and read this out loud together. Ps 111:1-4.

[1] Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. [2] Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. [3] Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. [4] He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. (Ps 111:1-4; ESV)

It's true, isn't it? He's done great things. Not only in centuries past, but decades past. Not just in biblical history, but our history. (Stage)

What's more, *he has caused his wondrous works to be remembered*. V4. And no wonder. They're *full of splendor and majesty*, v3. How could we forget? And they're *studied by all who delight in them*, v2. Which preserves our memory all the more.

The result of which is a command, and an example. A command to praise, and an example to thank. *Praise the LORD*, v1; the command. And *I will give thanks to the LORD*, the example.

And notice it's not just a casual thanks, a *passing* expression of gratitude; like "thanks for opening the door;" but a heartfelt thanks. *I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart* the psalmist says. And not just privately, but publicly; *in the congregation*. There's a command and there's an example.

And while it's nearly impossible to *separate* the two, I'm going to focus on thanking God *this* week, and praising him next. All for what he's done.

Let's start with our ministries. Thank God . . .

For fruitful ministries

When we moved here the summer of 2004, we assumed our girls would have little to nothing in the way of ministry. Or anybody else for that matter.

No children's ministry, no youth group, and certainly no adult ministries. At least for a time.

But by God's grace 463 people showed up the first Sunday, including 75 kids, and we were off. We even started youth groups right away. 3 Junior High students and 3 High School. With Small Groups and Women's Ministry close behind. All that with no building. We rented Bettendorf High School on Sundays, Bettendorf Community Center mid-week, and met in homes for all the rest.

But thank God that didn't prevent the ministries from being fruitful. Spreading the Word and making disciples. Preaching the Word and growing saints.

So that now, our ministries are flourishing. Like **Coram Deo Kids**, that runs about 330 every Sunday. And 230 every Tuesday; at Kids Club. And on Wednesdays, our **Junior High and High School** ministries run about a hundred *each*. Fruitful ministries through and through. And if you serve in one of them, would you stand? Let's thank God for them. You're part of the work he's done; and doing.

In addition to student ministries, our **Men's and Women's Ministries** have exploded recently. With Men running about 180 and Women about 440. Up from 30 and 250 three years ago. And that doesn't include Moms for Moms once a month with 60. If you're a table leader in one of those ministries, would you stand as well? We thank God for you.

Next is **Small Groups**. Having started with 3 at the beginning of our church, we now have 33. With about 400 involved. And our **College Ministry** runs about 65 every week. Up from 20 a few years ago. If you're a Small Group leader or one of the College Ministry leaders, would you stand? We thank God for you.

Another fruitful ministry is **Biblical Soul Care**. Helping *hundreds* of people every year. From those with ongoing sin issues to marriage problems. People with addictions to those who are grieving. And it's not just pastors or staff who are doing the work, there's a whole *team* of people. If that's you, if you serve in the Biblical Soul Care ministry, including Marriage Mentors, would you stand? We thank God for you. You're bearing fruit.

Last is **Outreach**. Where we partner with various ministries, locally and globally, to meet needs and spread the Gospel. And we support cross-cultural *missionaries* to reach low-reached or unreached people groups. Some of you serve on Care Teams for those missionaries, and others with the local ministries. If that's you, would you stand? God bless you. You're bearing fruit.

Thank God for fruitful ministries. Not just because of the numbers, but the results. The discipleship. Changed lives, increased knowledge, and greater obedience. Thank God for that. Fruitful ministries full of fruitful people.

Second, thank God . . .

For faithful servants

And by faithful I don't just mean diligent and devoted, but *faith-filled*. *Full* of faith to trust God and trust his leading. Like our first worship leader. (Nathan Begnaud)

In the summer of '04 we were sitting in our Small Group back in Wheaton, before we moved, asking them to pray for a worship leader. We were moving here in a few months, and we had nobody. Not even a blip on the radar screen.

And as soon as we mentioned it, one of the young adults in our group said, "I have a brother who could do it." And then, the next words out of her mouth were, "He's working at a health club, and he just learned to play the guitar, but he's a really good guy and has a really good voice." And the next words out of *my* mouth were, "Great, what's his number?"

Long story short, after two conversations and telling him we might not be able to pay him for 12-18 months, he moved from Minneapolis, lived in our basement, and worked at the Y. Thank God for faith-filled servants like that.

Same for our Small Groups Pastor (Mark Cantey). He was part of our sending church in Glen Ellyn, and upon hearing about us, he asked if we could have breakfast. During which I cast the vision, told him of my need for help, and "clinched it" with a map of the Quad Cities that I drew on a **napkin**. This very one. Which at the time seemed clear as day.

And faith-filled that he was, he entrusted his business to his employees, moved his family to Bettendorf for a year, and worked for free on anything and everything.

God provided so many people like that, so early, we moved our start date up. We were supposed to launch in the Spring of '05, but we had so many key people in place it didn't make sense to wait.

There were others, however, who came just in the nick of time. Like our first drummer who I nearly begged to come (Ward Crawley). And ended up serving every week for the first year and a half. Faithful to the core.

Another was the wife of one of our first elders (Kim Steinbronn). Who served in *children's* ministry every week. Which means she missed the worship service for the first six months, because we only had *one*. And had to listen to the sermon on a recorder I bought at Radio Shack. She was faithful, faith-filled, and sacrificial. Thank God.

And thank God that our church is now *full* of faithful servants. From our **Worship and Production Teams**, to our **Service Teams**. Parking, Greeting, Security, Ushers, Café, Welcome Center; you name it. If that's you, if you serve on one of those teams, would you stand? We thank God for you. And I trust your example will spur others on as well.

Thank God for faithful servants.

Third, thank God . . .

For godly elders

The men who have been appointed to oversee our church. Men who are qualified according to the Scriptures and gifted according to the Spirit. Humble men who walk in repentance and lean on the Lord. Men devoted to the Word and prayer. Men who love our church and protect it.

We're blessed. Because not many would go through such a rigorous vetting process, spend so much time to fulfill their role, and carry so much weight in doing it. Guarding the doctrine, providing direction, carrying out church discipline, and overseeing the finances. It's massive.

And to do it all, they meet every Wednesday night for 3 to 3½ hours. Praying, spending time in the Word, talking, and making decisions. It's not easy, but it sure is fruitful. And unifying.

And thank God that sometimes our elders take big risks for us. Personally. Like the *first* elders (**Photo**) of our church. Pictured here with their wives on their installation, at our first anniversary service. November 2005. And it wasn't but a few months later that they put their homes up for collateral, to secure the financing for this building. True. Personal risks for our reward. Thank God for such men. And the wives who stood with them.

Now, there are 9 of us. (**Photo**) And I can't sing the praise of these men enough. My appreciation and admiration couldn't be higher. They love the Lord, they love the Word, they love his church, and they love you. And while the bar is high and the burden great, serving as an elder is one of the greatest joys of their life. Would you guys stand? We thank God for you.

The same is true of our deacons. Thank God for godly elders . . .

• And deacons

Men who lead by serving, under the direction of the elders. Elders serve by leading and deacons lead by serving. And just like the elders, we have an amazing group. Men with servant hearts and helping hands. Responsible for a variety of things, from congregational care to coordinating baptisms. Not to mention being on call for unexpected needs. (**Photo**) If that's you, would you stand? We thank God for you.

Fourth, thank God . . .

For gifted leaders

I'm thinking of our staff on this one, and if you've been around here for any length of time, you well know we're blessed. Blessed with men and women who are humble, gifted, and biblical. Soft of heart and firm in conviction.

If that's you, if you're a **Pastor or Director** on staff, would you stand? For all you do, bless you. For your servant-heart, bless you. For your tireless work and partnership in ministry – some of you 10, 15, almost 20 years – bless you. Your giftedness is extraordinary, and we thank God for you.

I'd also like the **Support Staff** to stand. Truly, these are the men and women who hold us all together. We couldn't do half the ministry without them. And they too are gifted. From administration to foresight. Budgeting to problem solving. God bless you as well. We thank God for you.

Last, is **Coram Deo Academy**. Our newest ministry. Having started 4 years ago, in the Fall of 2020, we've grown from 12 students in *some* of the grades, to 118 students in *all* of them. K-12. Instilling faith and inspiring excellence from a Christ-centered, biblical worldview.

None of which would be possible without gifted teachers. If that's you, would you stand? What a responsibility you have. What an opportunity. To shape the hearts and minds of the next generation. And you do it well. God bless you in that. You have our admiration, you have our prayers, and we thank God for you.

Last, thank God . . .

For new faces

If you started coming in the last two years, and you feel comfortable doing so, will you stand? We thank God for you. It takes courage to walk in a church. Faith. Hope. And I want you to know that I mean it when I say, "You are loved." We all do. (Seated)

If that's you, if you're new to our church, I want to impress two things on you. First . . .

• **Our history is your history**

Just like your *family* history is yours, despite the fact that you weren't born for most of it, our *church* history is yours. Despite the fact that you weren't *here* for most of it.

This is a **picture** of my *great* grandparents, and great, *great* grandparents on my mom's side. And while I know very little about them, their history is my history. I'm a part of all that preceded them and all that followed them. Because we're family.

Same for you. If you're a follower of Christ, you've been adopted into the family of God. And if this is your *church* family, with whom you live that out, our history is your history.

And second . . .

• **Our church is your church**

This is us. We are *one* in the body of Christ. *One* in the family of God. And I trust that you'll be as proactive about connecting with us as we are with you. Belonging together in mutual partnership. Getting involved. Sharing the weight. Doing the work of ministry. Because thank God, this is your church just as much as it is ours.

Summary

Thank God for fruitful ministries, faithful servants, godly elders, gifted leaders, and new faces. On the eve of our 20th anniversary, *great* [indeed] *are the works of the LORD* (Ps 111:2). And I give thanks to him with my whole heart.

Prayer – Father, a simple thank you doesn't seem enough, but it's from our heart. And it overflows. It overflows with your goodness and greatness. For all that you've done, all the glory and honor to your Son. May you be exalted and magnified more and more.

You Are Loved