

### **Taste and See that the Lord is Good**

What is your favorite part of the Thanksgiving meal? That question always has a way of getting people to talk. In fact, it might even be the source of a heated debate. Do you like grandma's recipe for stuffing, your mom's recipe or Stove Top stuffing? Do you go for the cream corn casserole or the cranberry sauce or the mash potatoes and gravy? Do you prefer pumpkin pie, apple pie or pecan pie? Do you make the turkey in a smoker, fried, baked, in a rotisserie? These are all good options and now I'm hungry. I wanted to get you thinking about food not to torture you, but because God's Word for today does that. The phrase that sticks out on Thanksgiving is, "Taste and See that the Lord is Good." We are on the verge of doing a lot of tasting and seeing. Taste and see that the turkey is good. Taste and see that the stuffing is good. But for our purposes today I think it would be wise to mine the depths of what King David means when he says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

The title of this psalm says that this psalm was written by King David. And it says, specifically, "when he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away and he left." So what happened was this. David was one of King Saul's most trusted servants and soldiers in his army. He was also the most successful. But King Saul got jealous and wanted David dead. His own friend and king turned on him. So, David ran, and he was so desperate for safety that he went to the home of King Saul's enemies, the philistines. In fact, where David went was a town called Gath, which also happened to be the hometown of the great and legendary Goliath, whom David killed. Now you see David's predicament. You can imagine a lot of people saw him come into town and started to recognize this David as the one who killed their hometown hero Goliath. So, the people take him to Abimelech or Achish as he is called in 1 Samuel, and David was very afraid. In fact, he was walking around with Goliath's sword. He worried that they would kill him, so he acted insane. 1 Samuel says, he was "making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard." (1 Samuel 21:13) And Achish says, "I don't have time for crazy people. Let him go." And David was set free and was saved.

Now David could have been upset at the Lord that he was in that situation in the first place. After all, all his troubles seemed to start when he was anointed as king by Samuel. If only the Lord hadn't chosen him, he would have had a peaceful, simple life taking care of his father's sheep. But now he is being hunted down by both Israel and the enemies of Israel. Everyone wants him dead. He could have turned to the Lord and said, "This is all your fault." It seems that he had a lot of reasons to complain about his current situation. And we do too.

If I were to have you write down a list of all the blessings that God has given you which you are thankful for this year, I'm sure it would be a long list. It would be things like, your family, your job, your friends, your kids, your health, your house, your car. Typically that list is full of good things that we have. But King David's point here is to remind us that the tough moments in our life are a blessing too, because in those difficult moments we see God's deliverance. The obvious sin that we are faced with at Thanksgiving time is the sin of complaining, which we are all guilty of. There is always a reason to complain. We complain about problems at work. Problems with our kids. Problems with our health and the uncertainty of the bad diagnosis. We complain about things going on in the news – the parade in Waukesha is one tragedy that just happened. There is complaining or just a subtle sadness because a loved one can't be with us this year for Thanksgiving or Christmas.

But instead of complaining, he writes this Psalm of thanksgiving to the Lord who saved him yet again. Instead of seeing trouble in life, he saw deliverance from the Lord. The opening line of this psalm says, "I will extol the Lord at all times." So he admits, in good times or in bad, I (we) have every reason to praise him and thank him. Not just when things are going well, but also when things are not going well, or better yet, especially when things are not going well, because it's the Lord who is getting us through those difficult times. It's the Lord who delivers me over and over again. I want you to see how he was able to view the difficulties in his life in this way.

In two different places in our lesson it uses the word "fear." In the original language these are actually two different words. In vs 4 it says, "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears." In that sense the word fear means "horror", or "dread" or something terrible. But in vs. 7, there is a different word for fear. "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." That kind of fear is awe, respect for the Lord, a trust in him. That kind of fear takes away our other fears. Both believers and unbelievers have fears like it says in verse 4. We all have worries and problems and challenges in life. But only believers in Christ have this other kind of fear. An awe and respect for our God that is rooted in a trust that he will deliver us, so that we don't have to be afraid or worry.

When I first read that verse, I couldn't help but think of the children of Israel as they were leaving Egypt and being followed by the most powerful army in the world, the Egyptians. They were pinned between the Red Sea and that army with no where to go. But they could visibly see the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day, the very presence of

God going with them, so that they didn't have to be afraid. A short time later they would see the Lord deliver them by opening up the waters of the Red Sea, where they would walk through on dry land and their enemy would be destroyed. For centuries God's people would praise him at another special meal and celebration, not Thanksgiving, but Passover, where they remembered that miraculous deliverance that showed God's love and power. For centuries that celebration of Passover caused the people to remember God's deliverance in the past, but it also pointed them to a greater act of deliverance in the future, which is also referenced here in Psalm 34.

When you starting reading verse 19, it sounds like the rest of the psalm. "The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." If we didn't know better, we would just assume this verse, like the rest of the chapter shows that God protects and cares for those who have troubles. He delivers them. He even protects all our bones, not one of them will be broken. But the bones referred to here are not talking about our bones. About 1000 years later God would quote Psalm 34, this specific verse, in reference to Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose bones would not be broken.

Do you remember those thieves on the cross on each side of Jesus? The soldiers went to break the legs of those thieves so that they would die sooner. They would suffocate if they couldn't pick themselves up anymore. But when they got to Jesus he was already dead. They tested it by jabbing a spear into his side. What those soldiers didn't know was that this was all prophesied to give us a little more confidence that Jesus is in fact our Savior, that lamb of God whose bones would not be broken but would be sacrificed for us. Without that one event in history, we would have no reason to thank him for anything at all this past year. But because of that one event in history, instead everything changes. Your sins are forgiven. And that simple fact opens the flood gates of blessings that has been poured out on your life that we can see not only in the good moments but even and especially in the difficult moments.

This psalm causes me to stop and contemplate, not only the great deliverance and salvation from sin and death in hell, but also the smaller moments where he also swooped down to save us, sometimes without us even knowing. We don't even know if the we had cancer at some point, and the Lord decided to take it away without us or our doctor ever knowing about it. Or how the Lord used the chemotherapy to take away your cancer or put it in remission. Or maybe even how the Lord delivered someone you love from this world of sin, and took them to heaven through their cancer. It's all God's deliverance.

I had a member of my congregation back in the NY who slipped and fell on the ice and broke her arm. She was angry about it, and that it happened. She went to the doctor and after looking her over they realized that not only did she have a broken arm, but she had lyme disease. And the only reason they caught it early was because she slipped and broke her arm.

How has the Lord used angels this last year to save you from an accident or something worse, that maybe you noticed or maybe you didn't. I had a friend who told me about how when he was a boy he was out swimming in a lake, way too deep and he thought he was going to drown. Nobody noticed him. But out of no where someone came pulled him in to shore and saved. His parents tried finding the person who saved him, but they never found him. Whether it was an angel or not, it was still deliverance and help from God. How many times has God sent his angels to guide the car of your 16 year old to get them home safely, or allowed them to run into a car rather than the light pole which could have killed them? That's what happened to me when I was a teenager. A little to the right or to the left and we would have hit a pole, but instead we hit the rear end of a parked car that gave a little and according to the officer, saved our life.

One of my classmates was the pastor at Grace Lutheran Church who was driving one of the trucks and pulling the church float in the deadly parade in Waukesha. He said in an interview, that most years they would typically have had a dozen people or so on either side of the float handing out candy. But since they weren't sure if they could do that this year they didn't. Everyone from his church was on the truck or the float and therefore was saved when that speeding car flew by them.

Take a moment this thanksgiving to "Taste and see" not just your thanksgiving meal. But "Taste and see that the Lord is good." He delivered you from sin and hell, but his deliverance continues in our lives day after day, through his power, his love, his angels, his timing. Sometimes you see it happening, sometimes you don't. Either way, we have no reason to fear, but plenty of reasons to give thanks. Amen.