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# The Heart of God's Sheep

## PSALM 100:1-5

### Introduction

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1. Two of the most powerful words you have in your vocabulary are the words "Thank you."
2. Many of us may recognize Paul's words to the Christian in Colosse, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).
3. Or even what he wrote to the church in Thessalonica, "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NASB95).
4. But did you know there are proven benefits to our gratitude?

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5. According to an article a few years ago in *Psychology Today*, Dr. Amy Morin listed seven scientifically proven benefits of gratitude:
  - a. Gratitude opens the door to more relationships.
    - 1) We teach our children to say "thank you" as a part of teaching them good manners.
    - 2) Saying "thank you" to a stranger for something he or she has done may cause them to want to know you better.

**3a**

- b. Gratitude improves our physical health.
  - 1) Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people.
  - 2) They are more likely to take care of their health.

**3b**

- c. Gratitude improves our psychological health.

- 1) It reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, from envy and resentment to frustration and regret.
- 2) It effectively increases happiness and reduces depression.

**3c**

- d. Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression.
  - 1) Grateful people are less likely to retaliate against others.

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- e. Grateful people sleep better.

**4a**

- f. Gratitude improves self-esteem.
  - 1) When we are grateful, we aren't as likely to compare ourselves to others.
  - 2) Instead, we are able to appreciate other's accomplishments.

**4b**

- g. Gratitude increases mental strength.
  - 1) It plays a major role in overcoming trauma.
  - 2) Recognizing all that you have to be thankful for— even during the worst of times—fosters resilience.<sup>1</sup>

6. No wonder the Psalmist exhorted God's people as they were approaching the temple in Jerusalem almost 3,000 years ago to . . .

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving  
And His courts with praise.  
Give thanks to Him, bless His name.  
For the Lord is good;  
His lovingkindness is everlasting  
And His faithfulness to all generations.”

(Psalm 100:4-5, NASB95)

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<sup>1</sup>Morin, A. (2015, April 3). 7 scientifically proven benefits of gratitude. *Psychology Today*

## I. Gratitude Makes Us More Like . . .

### A. OUR LORD

1. The apostle John tells us that Jesus was in the beginning with God and that He was God.
2. He is the One whom John calls the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us.
3. However, even though He was God in the flesh, He was constantly expressing gratitude to His Father.
4. Of the twelve times we find words of thanksgiving in the Gospels, seven of those are of Jesus expressing His gratitude toward His father, one is a description of the place where He had given thanks.
  - a. Prior to the feeding of the 4,000, Jesus gave thanks for the seven loaves and the few fish which God had provided (Matthew 15:36; Mark 8:6).
  - b. Prior to the feeding of the 5,000 with the fives loaves and two fish, John tells us that Jesus gave thanks (John 6:11; cf. 6:23).
  - c. At the institution of the Lord's supper in the upper room on the eve of his crucifixion, Matthew, Mark and Luke each tell us that Jesus gave thanks (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17,19).

5a

- d. At the tomb of Lazarus, after the stone was removed, John records that "Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father I thank You that You have heard Me."" (John 11:41, NASB95).

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### B. THE APOSTLE PAUL

1. In his various letters, Paul was constantly thanking God for one thing or another.
2. He was always thankful for the brethren in the different congregations:
  - a. Of those in Rome, he wrote, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for

you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8, NASB95).

- b. **To those in Corinth he said**, “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:4, NASB95).
  - c. **To the faithful in Ephesus, he wrote**, “I . . . having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:15,16, NASB95).
  - d. **He told the saints in Thessalonica**, “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2; NASB95).
3. **Paul was constantly grateful for what God was doing in Christ:**
    - a. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57, NASB95).
    - b. “Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:14).
    - c. “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).
  4. **If Paul were to write to us, what would he express thanksgiving for where we are concerned?**

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## II. Why Should We Give Thanks?

### A. OUR GOD IS SOVEREIGN

“Know that the Lord Himself is God” (v. 3a).

1. **It was through His prophet, Isaiah, that God said**, “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me” (Isaiah 46:9).

2. Simply put, there is no one above Him and no one like Him.

**Slide 8****B. WE ARE HIS CREATION**

“It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves” (v. 3b)

1. You and I are not the result of millions or even billions of years of evolutionary changes.
2. You exist because of the purposeful design of an intelligent being.
3. Again, it was through His prophet Isaiah that God said, “I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the earth all alone” (Isaiah 44:24).
4. In John 1:3, the apostle John wrote, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”
5. It is in Him that “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

**Slide 9****C. WE BELONG TO HIM**

“We are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (v. 3c).

1. This was true of Israel of old.
  - a. In the days of the prophet Ezekiel, God spoke out against the leaders of Israel, those whom He called “the shepherds” because they failed to care for His sheep.
  - b. He promised through Ezekiel . . .
    - 1) “I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out” (Ezekiel 34:11;NASB95).
    - 2) “I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day” (Ezekiel 34:12, NASB95).
  - c. He said to His people, “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of my pasture,

you are men, and I am your God" (Ezekiel 34:31, NASB95).

2. This is equally true of us today.
  - a. On the shore of Galilee, following His resurrection, Jesus redeemed Peter and told him to "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15) and "Shepherd My sheep" (John 21:16).
  - b. Peter did not forget His instructions because he gave the same command to the elders over the various churches in Asia Minor, "shepherd the flock of God among you" (1 Peter 5:2).
3. You and I as Christians are a part of God's flock and He is still concerned for our well-being.
4. To have a God who is so concerned should prompt our hearts to speak words of gratitude at each opportunity we are afforded.

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#### **D. HE MEETS OUR DEEPEST NEEDS**

1. When David wrote in Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," he had known God to be the One who met his deepest needs.
2. Our need for spiritual nourishment.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside quiet [still] waters" (v. 2)

  - a. After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus told the crowd that followed Him, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever . . ." (John 6:51).
  - b. Later in Jerusalem, He told another crowd, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38).

#### 10a

3. Our need for spiritual restoration.
  - a. Earlier, in Psalm 19:7, David wrote, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul."

b. The reason God's Word is able to do this is because, as Hebrews 4:12 states, it is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

- 1) It removes all the dross and cuts to the heart of the matter.
- 2) It is then that God is able to bring about the positive restoration He desires.

**10b**

4. Our need for direction in life.

"He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (v. 3b)

- a. These days it is still easy to become lost, not just physically, but spiritually.
- b. You and I need someone who can guide us in the right way.
- c. God will never lead us astray.
- d. Jesus said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). if we will but follow Him, we are assured of our heavenly destination.

**10c**

5. Our need for comfort and His divine presence.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil [harm], for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup overflows" (vv. 4-5)

- a. God's presence sustains us in the most difficult times of our lives.
- b. You and I need not fear, because the Lord is with us, even in the midst of our enemies.
- c. Isaiah 41:10 — "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I

will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

## **Conclusion**

1. Last week, one of our shepherds, George Palmer, stood before you and asked you to look out amongst us for other godly men with the heart of a shepherd who desire to join them in leading us as a congregation.
2. Next week, Lord willing, we will look at the kind of heart that God looks for in a shepherd.
3. This morning, we have looked at our own heart and the gratitude we express to God for all that He has done for us.
4. Today, have you expressed thanksgiving to God for all that He has done and continues to do in your life.
5. If not, is it because you haven't yet given your life to Him in obedient faith?
6. If that is the case, will you come to Him now?