

Thanksgiving Day, Old Testament, Year C

GOD BLESSES US BUT DO WE BLESS GOD?

Psalm 100

Thanksgiving Day

Analysis by Mark Marius

1Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

2Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

3Know that the LORD is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

5For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Author's Note: The Diagnosis depicts a white privileged, upper-middle-class assessment of a United States Thanksgiving. There may be some truth in the cynicism that unfolds, but the cynicism stops at the Prognosis where the good news of the Psalmist (read with the lens of the New Testament) is proclaimed.

DIAGNOSIS: Thanksgiving Is What We Make It

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Valuing Our Life over Our God

Isn't Thanksgiving the day we stop working so hard to take inventory of the empires we have made and recognize the satisfaction we have achieved? We put a decadent meal on the

table, we tolerate our family for the day. And we go around the table and pat ourselves on the back with God's blessing. We may even mention those who aren't as lucky, or rather "blessed" as we are, as we implore God to do something about it. But really we thank God for tooting our horn. Because of all we have, God must be making a joyful noise to us.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): We Are Blessed

We must be blessed. God must be blessing our name because we are good—not perfect, but better than all those others who don't think like we do, or go to church as often. We have invited God into our pastures and told him the rules we are willing to follow. And, of course, God never refuses an invitation. But we shouldn't mistake his presence as an endorsement. And moreover our perceived blessing could be hiding God's curse.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): If God Is for Us, Then We Must Be God

We are easily tempted to ascend the throne of God. After all, if he is loving us and blessing us, and giving us every good gift, then wouldn't it make sense that we are the ones who rule, and the one we call God serves us. But we prove that our love is not steadfast, we cannot endure forever, and our faithfulness might not even last the day. What happens when our pumpkin pie runs out? It is worse than a food coma—it's death.

PROGNOSIS: What God Gives Makes Us Thankful

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): The Lord Is Good

Even as we sinfully take all that we can for ourselves, God is still good to us. Steadfast love and God's faithfulness to all generations is what saves us and gives us the reason to give thanks. Steadfast love died on a cross and God's faithfulness brought this very love back to life. So this love that endures forever is given to us—all because the Lord is good.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): We Are the Lord's

And it is this steadfast love that makes us God's sheep. It is this steadfast love that creates lush pastures for us to live in. It is not our table and house that has us thankful it is the entire pasture and people in which we find blessing. We give thanks for God including us into his body, through water, bread, wine and WORD. And when we eat from God's table and share God's grace with the body of Christ we are blessed to be a blessing.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): We Sing the Lord Praises

So instead of singing our own praises of what we have, we sing the Lord's praises for who we are. And we are glad that we do not go it alone—or only with those in our homes, but that we are part of a larger kingdom. And the way we get to live—for God and others, is what we are thankful for. We get to be a part of God's faithfulness. We get to be love for one another. And this is how God's name is blessed. And when God's name is blessed then all the earth rejoices.