

The Thanksgivings of Jesus

Scripture Reading: Matthew 11:20-30

We are often told to be careful to give thanks to God (Psalm 100; Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18). We should thank God for who He is, as well as all that He does (Psalm 97:12; 103:1-5). We are taught to ask God for all our needs and desires (I Peter 5:7). Requests should be made in a thankful manner. We, then, should also be careful to give thanks for answered prayers (Philippians 4:6; Psalm 116:1-2).

The study we're about to make is unique, in that it shows four instances when Jesus gave thanks. It is certain that He was thankful to His Heavenly Father and expressed it often, but only four times in Scripture do we read of Jesus specifically giving thanks. Using a harmony of the Gospels, the four events are listed in chronological order. Let's see what we can learn and apply from these examples.

Thanks for the Revelation of Truth to People with Child-like Hearts: Matthew 11:25-26

Jesus often warned that we needed the simplicity and pureness of heart that is often seen in a child (Matthew 5:3, 5, 8; 18:1-4; 19:13-14). The motive of the heart is shown to be a decisive factor in how we learn and grow spiritually (Psalm 18:25-27; Proverbs 8:1-9; James 1:21; I Peter 2:1-3; II Peter 3:18). God graciously touches those who are blinded and trapped in the deception of sin (Acts 9:1-6; I Timothy 1:12-16; II Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:1-7). However, the call of God is for men to humble themselves and hear His word (Psalm 46:10; Proverbs 3:34-35; Isaiah 45:20-25; 55:6-7; Acts 17:24-31; Revelation 22:17 cp. James 4:4-10).

To harden your heart and disobey this call is to run the risk of having your heart hardened more and living a terrible life, with terrible eternal consequences (Romans 1:16 – 2:16; II Thessalonians 1:4-10; II Timothy 3:1-9, 13; 4:3-4; Hebrews 3:7-13; Jude 14-19; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8).

Look at Jesus' words in context (Matthew 11:25-26 cp. Matthew 11:2-30).

- John the Baptist was in prison and about to die. He directed his disciples to know and to follow Jesus. Matthew 11:2-19 (Note vs. 6)
- Jesus rebuked the cities of Galilee for their unbelief and hardness of heart in the face of the miracles that He did. Matthew 11:20-24
- Jesus acknowledged and gave thanks for the sovereign and solemn operation of God that can judiciously blind and harden proud and stubborn people – and, at the same time, graciously give light and soften the hearts of others. It is like sunlight that hardens clay and, at the same time, melts ice. Matthew 11:25-27 cp. 13:9-17
- Jesus offers Himself to those who understand and feel their need for grace. Matthew 11:28-30

Do we appreciate child-like faith which is grounded in the Scriptures, or are we charmed by “popular” religion (politically correct, entertaining, traditional)? Do we cling to the cross, or to culture?

Thanks for the provision of food, before that provision was given: John 6:9-11

In John 6:1-13 we have the story of Jesus feeding around five thousand people with only five loaves and two fish. The people sat down in good faith. Jesus prayed and gave thanks for a meal that was only the lunch of a small boy. Logically, it was not enough. Are we capable of thanking God, when all we have are promises? Can we trust God and exercise thankfulness because we believe that He will continue to be faithful to us? Lamentations 3:22-24 teaches us to live in expectation of mercies that are coming to us fresh each day. Paul teaches contentment in times of abundance or need. Satisfaction is knowing the Lord. Peace is trusting His heart, as well as His hand (Philippians 4:4-8, 11-13, 19).

Are we living by faith, or are we only pleased with God when we visibly see His benefits? See Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Thanks for God's Results in the ministry of the Gospel. Luke 10:21

In Luke 10:1-20 Jesus sent out seventy disciples to go out, two-by-two, preaching the Gospel. The disciples expressed great joy at the victory they experienced over demons (Luke 10:17). Jesus affirmed the authority and power that He had given them, but instructed them to get their joy from their relationship with God by grace (Luke 10:18-20). Jesus began to rejoice and give thanks at the thought of God's sovereign grace: He resists the proud and hides His truth from the hard-hearted. At the same time, He reveals Himself to those who have child-like faith, even though the world considers them to be inferior and immature (Luke 10:21-24).

God's sovereignty and justice are in complete harmony with His goodness, mercy, and grace (Psalm 145:9, 17; Jeremiah 4:2; 9:23-24; Acts 17:30-31 [cp. Psalm 85:10; John 1:17]; Romans 9:14-24; I Corinthians 1:18-31; II Peter 2:9).

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus addressed religious hypocrisy with the story of the Good Samaritan. The outward forms of religion can deceive man, but not God (Isaiah 29:13; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 7:21-27; John 1:10-13; Galatians 5:6; 6:12-15; II Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:16; James 1:21-27; 2:14-20; 3:11-18).

Are we content to do God's work God's way and trust Him with the results?

See Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; 15:12-14; John 6:63; I Corinthians 3:1 – 4:7; II Corinthians 2:14-17.

Thanks for the Hearing of Our Prayers. John 11:41

Jesus' friend Lazarus had died (John 11:1-15). With confidence, purpose, and sensitivity, Jesus approached those who were grieving at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:17-40). When the stone was rolled away, Jesus prayed to His father a relatively short prayer. Next, He called directly to Lazarus and the man rose and walked towards everyone (John 11:41-44). Jesus did not agonize in a long prayer to get Lazarus back from the dead. He already knew that He was walking in the will of God. Rather, Jesus paused to thank His Father for being receptive to His prayers.

The connection we have with the living God is a privilege. Are we thankful?

See Psalm 63:1-7; 65:2; Psalm 100; II Corinthians 9:15; Ephesians 1:3-6; Colossians 1:12-13; I Peter 1:3-8. See also Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-23.