

ST. ANDREW'S, BLACKROCK AND BRAY - 18TH OCTOBER 2020

HARVEST THANKSGIVING (PSALM 34)

Welcome and Announcements

"Welcome to our weekly sermon transcript from St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Blackrock and Bray. Today's service will have a harvest theme, and I pray it will brighten your spirits after the governments announcement of further resections." - Rev. Andrew Gill

Scripture Sentence - Psalm 67:6 (NIV)

*The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.*

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,
we offer you cheerful thanks
for your goodness and care
in giving to us the fruits of the earth
in their seasons.
Give us grace to use them rightly,
to your glory,
for the relief of those in need,
and our own well-being;
through Jesus Christ, the living bread,
who came down from heaven
and gives life to the world,
and who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

Reading - Psalm 34:1-8, 15-18 (NIV)

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left.

1 I will extol the Lord at all times;

his praise will always be on my lips.

2 I will glory in the Lord;

let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

3 Glorify the Lord with me;

let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought the Lord, and he answered me;

he delivered me from all my fears.

5 Those who look to him are radiant;

their faces are never covered with shame.

6 This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;

he saved him out of all his troubles.

7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him,

and he delivers them.

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good;

blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

and his ears are attentive to their cry;

16 but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil,

to blot out their name from the earth.

17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;

he delivers them from all their troubles.

18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted

and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Sermon - 'Taste and See that the Lord is good'

The current restrictions have caused us to miss out on many aspects of life, and in our church we have been unable to celebrate some key events in our yearly calendar. Sunday, in the Bray congregation, would have been our Harvest Thanksgiving, and we missed it a few weeks ago in Blackrock too.

Harvest is a time where we think about God's creation and how he provides for us from the land. We sing hymns about farming, we decorate the church with fruit and vegetables, and we celebrate God's goodness. Even though we can't remember harvest in the traditional ways, we can still take a moment to be thankful to God. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 tell us to give thanks in all circumstances. Our circumstances right now are difficult, and many of us are facing hardships, but we can still find ways to be thankful today.

Maybe you are reading this today and you're feeling isolated, or you are feeling anxious, or depressed, or even angry and frustrated.

Yet through it all there are still things that you can be thankful for today; God's wonderful creation, his generous provision, his loving presence, and most of all, the hope we have in Jesus. So today we're going to have a time of harvest thanksgiving to celebrate God's goodness. To help us do that we will look at Psalm 34.

Psalm 34 is written by David, and is an A to Z of thanksgiving. At the beginning of the psalm he invites others to join with him in his praise. But he invites those who are afflicted, oppressed, and feeling helpless. This is how he begins the psalm, *"I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears."* (vv.1-4)

This psalm reads like a testimony where King David is giving thanks to God, explaining why he is grateful, and then leads us in worship too. It is written after a time when he pretended to be insane so that he could escape with his life. 1 Samuel 21:10-15 tells the story about how David was being chased by King Saul and his army, and he flees and he goes to a place called Gath. While he is there the servants of Abimelek, King of Gath, recognised him as the mighty warrior David, and they were worried about what he would do. But when they brought David to the king, he pretended to be insane and was drooling out of his mouth. When the king looked at him he said, *"Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me?"* David's life was spared and he knew that God had been protecting him and had rescued him.

David in his experience had seen that God was good. As he writes this psalm he turns to the listener and says we can experience God's goodness too. Look at what he says in verse 8, *"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him."*

Have ever been out at a restaurant and seen how delicious another person's food looked? They tell you how good it is to eat, and then ask, 'would you like a taste?' What wonderful words!

David is not just telling us God is good, but he is inviting us to experience his goodness for ourselves. Through prayer and faith, by doing good, and being honest, we too can taste and see that God is good. He continues in verses 17-18, *"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."*

David knows that life is not always easy. Nowhere in the Bible does it promise that Christians won't face difficult times, just that God will be with us and help us during those difficult times. This psalm reminds us that we may face many troubles, but that God will rescue us from every single one.

It's so important that we know this today. When we need help, he will provide for us. If we are being chased by evil, he will deliver us. When we're broken-hearted, he will comfort us. And when it feels like our spirit is being crushed, he will save us. We are in the middle of a second wave of the Covid-19, and it's getting harder and harder to hold on to hope. But know today that God is good, and he will deliver us.

We see God's goodness throughout the life of King David. He experienced God's provision when he was hungry. He knew God's power as he stood against a giant. He received God's forgiveness when he sinned.

All through the Bible we have these stories of hope about how God rescues his people. Joseph from the jealousy and the hatred of his brothers, the nation of Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt, Daniel was kept safe in the lion's den. These stories are there to give us hope as we face our own troubles.

However, the greatest story of rescue in the Bible is in the story of Jesus Christ. God, in his love and power, delivered Jesus out of the grave. But more than that, through his death and resurrection, and by faith in him, we are saved from our sins and receive the promise of eternal life.

God loves you, Christ is with you. God has a good plan for your life, and you can trust in him. Taste and see that the Lord is good, and happy are those that put their hope in him!

Prayer

Father God,
I thank you that you are good
and that your love for me endures forever.

Lord, in your goodness, hear my prayer;
deliver me from all my troubles,
heal my broken heart,
and give hope to my spirit.
I desire to see good days;
teach me how to trust in you,
and help me to turn from evil and to do good.

Thank you for your wonderful creation,
your generous provision,
your faithful presence,
and for the hope I have in Jesus.

Amen