

An Attitude Adjustment

Thanksgiving – 11/24/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Psalm 116 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 2, “Because [the LORD] inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.”

Introduction

- ⊗ We all know what it means to say that someone needs an “attitude adjustment”, right? That person’s priorities are founded in the wrong place or focused in the wrong direction. Their words, thoughts and/or actions are off balance as they deal with others or when they respond in certain or all situations.
 - ➔ Most of the time, unfortunately everybody seems to know of this person’s need to adjust his/her attitude except the one with the bad attitude. And rarely are people willing to address the problem with that person in a loving, yet honest manner.
- ⊗ Well today I’m stepping out on a limb, and I’m asking each and every one of us to look at ourselves in light of God’s Word and try to honestly discern, “Does my attitude need some adjusting?” And I want to stress this folks; this is not the time for you or me to think about anyone else’s attitude – but only our own!

I. Ungrateful Hearts

- ⊗ In particular, on this Day of Thanksgiving, it seems quite appropriate for each of us to focus especially upon our attitude in our relationship with God Himself; in our communications with Him in prayer and in our relationships with fellow Christians in God’s Church. So ask yourself, “When I think about my attitude toward God; in my prayers, am I in need of some adjusting?” “In my interactions with fellow brothers and sisters in the Christian faith, am I a bit out of balance?”
- ⊗ Think about your own personal prayers. Do they consist primarily of the burdens that you are carrying or the burdens of others that are close to you? God’s Word of course invites us to bring our burdens to the LORD. 1 Peter 5:7 is a favorite passage for many, “Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.”
 - ➔ And in our own text we can see that the Psalmist brought many petitions to the LORD and they were answered. In verse one, we read, “I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.”
 - ➔ Beyond that we are also encouraged in Scripture to pray for both our specific needs and the needs of others. Take, for example, the petition in the Lords’ Prayer “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Martin Luther says, “Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like” (Meaning to the 4th petition, Small Catechism). So in praying that simple petition, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we are asking God to help us realize our need – all of our physical, earthly need – and then receive all of His many blessings with the right attitude of thanksgiving.
- ⊗ Yet even with these verses there can still be a void in your life. You see, beyond all of our burdens and needs, there is still the need that we simply praise God, receive all that He has to give and give thanks to our God ... for being God! This is where I’m suggesting that many of us need a bit of realignment in our attitude.
 - ➔ Again, when we think of our prayers, many of us could use a little retraining of the way that we understand and approach our God. You see, often we can forget that God already knows all

of our burdens and needs. Listen to the Psalmist in verses 1-2 of our text, “I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because He inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.”

→ I love the way that he prays – his confidence; his complete trust and his unwavering devotion to the LORD. This guy knows that God has already heard His voice and His pleas for mercy. And it’s the same for you, dear Christian. He has already heard your cry for mercy, even before it entered your mind and passed through your lips. He knows and listens to the heart of those who call on Him as long as they live.

✘ Apparently this Psalmist didn’t know how long that might be, for we hear the description of an individual who has come face to face with death and the grave. Yet verse six says that “[the LORD] saved me”. God snatched him from the jaws of death.

→ Did you know that all of us have been equally close to death – countless times – and most of those times, we didn’t even know it? It might have been a narrow miss on the highway, a slip and fall with a bang on the head, a severe illness, a bout with cancer, a surgery with complications. It could have been the difference of a matter of only a few inches, or just a handful of seconds in time that meant we escaped death and now continue to live.

→ So think to yourself, “What’s your attitude toward this daily work of salvation from your God?” Look at the Psalmist. Was he thankful? You better believe it! Did he find it worthy of a special thanksgiving service? He absolutely did! Look at verses 17-19, “I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.”

→ He took the time and made it a priority to spend time in thanksgiving and praise with fellow believers. Isn’t that why we are here today?

II. Simple and Daily Praise

✘ But what I hope catches your eye most about this Psalm is the way that the entire Psalm ends. He simply and boldly says, “Praise the LORD” (v. 19). Now look, neither the Psalmist nor I are suggesting that we ignore life and just walk around saying, “Praise the LORD!” and nothing else. No. One of the beauties of this Psalm is how the author comes to realize just how good God has been to him. Verse seven could just as easily be your words, as those moments when you come to see the goodness of the LORD. “Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you”. Yes, God is good all the way to the deepest part of our soul! All of us need to learn that. And each of us could respond to that reality more than we do.

→ Most of us have physically moved from one house to another at some point – many of us a number of times. Doing so can really reveal how bad our attitude alignment truly is. You see, on a day to day basis, when we go to the store and we look in our homes we say over and over again, “I don’t have enough.” “I need this new item.” “Life would be better with that addition.” But then when you have to move all of it, piece by piece, instead of praising God for His flood of blessings, we are more likely to complain, “Why do we have all of this junk?” the same “junk” that at some point you were certain you couldn’t live without.

✘ Yes, it’s so easy and so common for us to get caught in that sinful misalignment of never being content with what we’ve got; never being satisfied with our current situation. That’s just the opposite of Paul’s words in verse 11 of our Epistle Reading, Philippians 4:11, “...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.”

→ But that’s hard for us to do, isn’t it? It seems that we like to grumble, complain and find fault. We take so much for granted that we look right past the countless blessings that daily flood into our lives from our God and Savior. And one of the greatest reasons to give thanks is the fact

that our own lack of gratitude is itself forgiven by God. Oh, praise the LORD that His blessings do not depend upon our thankfulness, right?

→ But the fact that you and I have been forgiven, doesn't mean that it's okay for us to just go on as we are. In Psalm 34:1 David shows us the proper adjustment for our attitude. He says, "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

- ✘ You see Thanksgiving Day is not just one day each year. Thanksgiving Day is every day! More than all of the burdens and needs we have, our greatest burden; our deepest need is to simply Praise the LORD!

III. The Attitude of Christ

- ✘ And the reason for us to Praise the LORD ultimately comes from the attitude that Jesus displayed as our Savior and the work He completed in our place. Yes, Jesus has already met the proper balance for us! He has already made sure that the praises far exceed the blessings.

→ Remember, even at the worst of times Jesus was always praising and thanking the Father. With His arms stretched out and pinned to the cross He took our thanklessness, our praise-less words, every one of our burdens and He sacrificed His life to pay for each one of our sins!

- ✘ Philippians 2:5-11 shows this balance within Jesus. Paul says, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

→ Jesus' attitude was focused not upon Himself but on you and me; in bringing glory to the Father through His own death and resurrection. Friends, as we consider our own realignment, let us pray that the LORD will strengthen us to focus likewise less on self and more on the LORD. That's when our prayers will become their fullest. That's when our worship will become truly beautiful and satisfying. That is when our lives and all that we have become in Christ by His grace will be the simplest and best expression of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Conclusion

- ✘ So, why wait? On this special day, right now, let's begin our tune up. A different Psalm, Psalm 77:12 teaches us how to start. It says, "I will ponder all Your work, and meditate on Your mighty deeds."

→ So let's make room in our schedule today to do just that, dear Christians. Turn off the TV for a little while. Sit with Your loved ones. Spend some time meditating on all that the LORD has done and continues to do for you. And then spend some quality time in simple praise and thanksgiving to our God. Make it the first step in an attitude adjustment; the first step in an adjustment that will last for as long as you live. And be assured in Christ, God will hear you in your prayers. "Praise the LORD." Amen.