



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen: January 17, 2023

The Lord be with you.

Now, I've heard that feeling thankful can present a real problem to an atheist or an agnostic, they don't know who or what to thank. Well, a Christian never has that problem, we know who to thank for our many blessings, we thank our Father in Heaven, but sometimes we might wonder how best to thank our Father for all that he does for us.

Well today, I'm looking at a psalm where the psalmist is wondering how, how to thank God... How to sufficiently, adequately thank God for all that He does. I'm looking at Psalm 116, verse 12, where I read, what shall I return to the Lord for all His bounty to me. You like me have probably asked that... And what can I ever give back to God for all that he's done?

Well, let's see what the psalmist comes up with. As he says in verse 13, I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people. Well, to see if we can unpack this... See what it means. When I was first studying biblical Hebrew, I was surprised to learn that the ancient Hebrews did not have comparable words for saying thank you, so rather than saying, thank you to someone, they would say, I will tell of your name, I will tell others about you, and I just bet if you are in business that those words would be words you'd love to hear... I will tell others about you, I will tell of your name.

Now my Hebrew professor, Dr. Ron Allen, illustrated this aspect of ancient Hebrew with a story. Dr. Allen has a friend who is a medical missionary in India, the friend is an ophthalmologist and a part of India where blindness is rampant as thousands of the people are struck with the blindness this missionary doctor develops a cure for that form of blindness. People flock to see him at his clinic, and they leave the clinic healed of their blindness, and of course, they are wanting to thank him. But like the ancient Hebrews, these Indians speak a dialect that does not have words for saying, thank you. They will instead say, I will tell of your name. I will tell others. By the way, I want to know more of this story, check out Dr. Ron Allen's book, and I Will Praise Him: A Guide to Worship in the Psalms.

But I like that story because it does speak to the Psalmist question, What shall I return to the Lord for all His bounty to me? Well, here's the Psalmist's answer. Here's what he comes up with. I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people. In ancient Israel, when a person wanted to express thanks to God,



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he or she would make a vow... Would make a vow to go to the house of the Lord, offer up a sacrifice of praise. That's what they called it. And they would call on the name of the Lord. That is, they would tell, This is what the Lord did for me. They would speak of His name. Note here in the presence of all the people. And here we see a very, very important element in the biblical way of saying thanks to God. We tell of his name. We tell others. And that makes God's smile.

So here is a Psalmist who is standing beside the altar, he lifts up a cup, a libation that they called the cup of salvation, the cup of deliverance, he lifts it up to God, and at that moment, calling on the name of the Lord, he says, I want to tell you what the Lord has done for me, it might be telling about the Lord delivering from trouble or the Lord healing an illness, the Lord answering the prayer, the Lord blessing in a special way, they knew that things had to go public. They never felt that was enough to go into their prayer closet and say, Thank you, Lord, they wanted to tell of the Lord's name to others.

It's what David has in mind in Psalm 103:1, Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Or in Psalm 99:3, Let them praise your great and awesome name. I will tell of your name. So I've taken as my personal mission statement, Psalm 107:2, Let the redeemed of the Lord say, so. Those He has redeemed from trouble.

You see that the Lord has done something for me. And I wanna tell others, I wanna tell you... And that is the reason for the Selah conversations. I want to tell others. I want to say thanks to God by telling what God has done. And that has for me, put what we call evangelism, that's put it all in a new light. I used to feel guilty as I thought about evangelism, I know, I know, I really should talk to people about the Lord, but now I see what I used to think of as evangelism. Well, it's just my way of telling his name, telling what he's done for me and what he can do for others. So I'm wondering, are you thankful today? Are you thankful for what God has done for you? How about telling others? You decide the best way to tell them. But how about telling them? It is a good question. a pertinent question, the Psalmist races.

What shall I return to the Lord for all His bounty to me. I will tell others what the Lord has done, I will tell of his name.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening until next time.