

“Magnifying the Lord”

Idea: The mark of all true children of God is the longing to magnify the God of their salvation.

Intro: In September 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, carrying 102 passengers made up of an assortment of religious separatists seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith and other individuals lured by the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the New World. After a treacherous and uncomfortable crossing that lasted 66 days, they dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. One month later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where the Pilgrims, as they are now commonly known, began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth.

Throughout that first brutal winter, most of the colonists remained on board the ship, where they suffered from exposure, scurvy and outbreaks of contagious diseases. Only half of the Mayflower’s original passengers and crew lived to see their first New England spring. In March, the remaining settlers moved ashore, where they received an astonishing visit from an Abenaki Indian who greeted them in English. Several days later, he returned with another Native American, Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe who had been kidnapped by an English sea captain and sold into slavery before escaping to London and returning to his homeland on an exploratory expedition. Squanto taught the Pilgrims, who were weakened by malnutrition and illness, how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish in the rivers, and avoid poisonous plants. He also helped the settlers forge an

alliance with the Wampanoag, tribe, which would endure for more than 50 years.

In November 1621, after the Pilgrims' first corn harvest proved successful, Governor William Bradford organized a celebratory feast and invited a group of the fledgling colony's Native American allies, including the Wampanoag chief Massasoit. Now remembered as America's "first Thanksgiving," the festival lasted for three days. While no record exists of the historic banquet's exact menu, the Pilgrim chronicler Edward Winslow wrote in his journal that Governor Bradford sent four men on a "fowling" mission in preparation for the event, and that the Wampanoag guests arrived bearing five deer.

What did they celebrate? What was the purpose of the event? The Pilgrims celebrated God's faithfulness and His provision. That first Thanksgiving was neither about the food they ate nor the fellowship they enjoyed with the natives. It was solely about their great God. It was an opportunity for them to remember and acknowledge the greatness of God.

Read Psalm 69:30-32.

Inquiry: *"I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving."* It is easy and even somewhat expected that one would praise and thank the Lord when all is well...when life is good. But all was not well with David when he penned many of his psalms. All is not well with the one to whom Psalm 69 portrays. This psalm's authorship is attributed to King David. Most scholars believe it to be a messianic psalm, describing the life and experience of the Savior to come. The psalm begins with an appeal for God to save him from those who seek to destroy his life (vs. 1-4). He describes the suffering and false accusations he has had to endure. In fact, in verse 29, the psalmist declares, *"I am afflicted and in pain."* Yet in verse 30 we find him praising God in song and magnifying the Lord with gratitude.

As we approach Thanksgiving this week, it is good for us to examine what it means to be thankful...to be grateful.

Key Truth: The mark of all true children of God is the longing to magnify the God of their salvation.

But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the Lord!" – Psalm 40:16

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! – Psalm 34:3

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! – Psalm 48:1

We see throughout the Old Testament that this was the heart cry of every saint. We find in the New Testament that it was also the desire of every true Christian. Paul said to the church in Corinth, “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor 10:31). In other words, do everything with the purpose of magnifying God. Is this not the desire of our lives today? Do we not desire like Paul for Christ to be magnified in our bodies whether by life or by death (Phil 1:20)? Therefore, the longing to magnify the God of our salvation is the mark of the Christ-follower.

David said, “*I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*” The word “magnify” has two different connotations. It can mean: make something appear greater than it is, as with a microscope or a magnifying glass. Or it can mean: make something that may seem small or insignificant appear to be as great as it really is. This is the job of telescopes, which help us see the vast and magnificent universe that spilled over from the brim of God's glory. So there are two kinds of magnifying: microscope magnifying and telescope magnifying. The one makes a small thing look bigger than it is. The other makes a big thing begin to look as big as it really is.

When David says, "*I will magnify him with thanksgiving,*" he does not mean: "I will make a small God look bigger than he is. He means: "I will make a big God begin to look as big as he really is." The call here is not to be a microscope, but rather a telescope. Christians are not called to be con-men who magnify their product out of all proportion to reality, when they know the competitor's product is far superior. There is nothing and no one superior to God. And so the calling of those who love God is to make His greatness begin to look as great as it really is. The whole duty of the Christian can be summed up in this: feel, think, and act in a way that will make God look as great as He really is. Be a telescope for the world of the infinite starry wealth of the glory of God.

The greatness of the God of the Bible ought to be the most obvious reality to us who have the Spirit of God living within. But it often isn't. Our sensitivity is dulled by sin. It is dulled by forgetfulness, and it is dulled by the struggles and suffering in life. It is here that we must beg God to open our eyes to the reality of His greatness (Eph 1:18-19). We need to plead with God that by the power of His Holy Spirit we would not forget His greatness and goodness. Perhaps this is why David preached to himself in Psalm 103.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, – Psalm 103:1-2

As God's people we are called to be telescopes who make the greatness of God appear as great as it really is. This is what it means to magnify God. But how do we make God's greatness appear as glorious as it really is? David answers that question. "*I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*"

One of the greatest ways we ascribe glory and honor to the name of Jesus is simply in our gratitude for what He has done. Francis Schaeffer said, "The beginning of men's rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart."

Gratitude glorifies God. How? When we are thankful and grateful for what God has done, three things are acknowledged.

1. God is greater.

The rebellious cry of Lucifer's heart was "I will be like God" (Is 14:14). The rebellious cry of Adam's heart in the garden was the same; "I will be like God" (Gen 3:5-6). At the root of all ingratitude is the love of one's own greatness.

Illust: You probably know someone who cannot bring himself or herself to the disposition of gratefulness. He or she is incapable of saying, "Thank you." Why? It is because the act of showing gratitude reveals that the one to whom your thankful for is greater than you. Gratitude admits that you are a beneficiary of an unearned gift.

When I praise the name of God, when I magnify Him with thanksgiving, I am acknowledging and declaring that God is greater than me.

Illust: Think about the Pilgrims in 1621. They made seven times more graves than huts. No Americans have been more impoverished than those – who, nevertheless, set aside a day of thanksgiving. When they feasted for three days, what were they doing? They were acknowledging that God was greater than them. They were declaring that only the grace and goodness of God sustained them. Like John the Baptist, they were saying, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30). Our gratitude acknowledges that God is greater.

2. God is the giver.

When we thank God, we acknowledge and demonstrate that God is the giver or benefactor. We pay Him a high

compliment.

Saying “thank you” is a compliment. It magnifies people. When you thank someone, you’re saying, “You did a good thing for me; I’m indebted to you.” In showing our gratitude to God, we are declaring that He is the wealthy source of our blessings. We are acknowledging Him as the Giver and Benefactor, and therefore as glorious.

When we don’t find gratitude in our hearts, it probably means that we don’t want to pay Him a compliment. Our fleshly nature doesn’t want to magnify God with thanksgiving because it detracts from our own glory. We would rather pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps.

This is why God desires our thanksgiving rather than our religious piety. Read verse 31. In our mind the thought of an expensive animal offering pleasing God less than genuine gratitude doesn’t make sense. How can it be? Psalm 50:9-14 suggests an answer.

One of the reasons God was not pleased with the offering of an ox or bull was that the giver often thought that his gift was enriching to God, that it somehow supplemented a deficiency in God. This type of act is loving to another person, but it is an insult to the All-Sufficient God.

Here is man’s self-exaltation again. Even in the practice of religion, he finds a way to preserve his status as giver, as self-sufficient benefactor. In the very act of worship, he belittles God by refusing to assume the part of beneficiary.

Our gratitude acknowledges that God is greater and that God is the giver.

3. I am a receiver.

The reality of every child of God is that he or she is a recipient of the grace and blessings of God. We bring absolutely nothing into this relationship with Jesus other than our sin and shame. We bring nothing of worth to Christ. We are nothing more than cripples leaning on the cross shaped crutch of Jesus Christ. We are paralytics living minute by minute in the iron lung of God's mercy. We are children asleep in heaven's stroller. The natural man hates to think of himself in these images, but they portray who we are in Christ.

Conclusion: Gratitude is seated in the understanding that God is greater, God is the giver, and I am a receiver. Paul understood that he brought nothing into His relationship with Christ. Read Phil 3:3-11. He was a recipient of grace.

May this Thanksgiving week remind us that we owe our all to God. He is the One through whom we are blessed. He is the Giver of all good things (James 1:17). But may we not just be thankful this week. Let us be grateful every moment of every day. Let us be grateful so that others too will rejoice in God and be revived in Him (Ps 69:32).