



OCTOBER 10, 2021 | REV. MINHONG

“You are my God, and I will praise you” (Psalm 118:28-29)

**28 You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.**

**29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.**

It is our second Thanksgiving celebration since the pandemic. This year's celebration is much better because most of us are fully vaccinated and feel safe.

We give thanks to God for another year of God's protection. Slowly things are returning to a sense of normalcy. Even though we still have a long way to go, we know that things will get better. We need to recover the lost spiritual momentum. We need to pray that our hearts will burn with passion for His Kingdom once again!

We hear a new phrase these days, 'with Covid-19.' This virus will not go away soon, and we might as well learn to live with it like an influenza virus. Instead of cancelling events or delaying things, we need to find ways to move forward. As believers, we need to keep asking why God is allowing this to happen, and what God desires from us.

What are you grateful for at this Thanksgiving?

Let me begin with a question. What are you grateful for at this Thanksgiving?

- Having more time to yourself for reflection, as well as more family time?
- Keep you safe from the dangers of Covid-19? (a phone call with my pastor friend in the US)
- Keeping your family, church, work ... together?
- Providing you with daily bread and meeting all your needs?
- Guiding you through the difficult road and not abandoning you?
- Trusting that He will continue to guide you no matter what?

As I reflect on the past year, and I am grateful to God for

- Experiencing the four seasons fully as I walked my neighbourhood
- Coming to the realization that worldly things will pass away but only the Kingdom-related things will last
- Having two books published and two grandchildren born during the pandemic

Let us continue to give thanks. God has given us a bountiful of harvest this year. See the decoration here of grain, fruits, and vegetables. Yes, God meets our needs.

However, tough times will continue. Some say that this winter will be difficult. In Europe there is a severe shortage of electricity. Drought and not enough wind have resulted in less electric energy production. So, the costs of electricity and natural gas have doubled and tripled. Many say it is going to be a cold winter this year. Well, problems will continue. However, we are grateful that God will never leave us nor forsake us.



Introduction to Psalm 118

Psalm 118 is about God's faithfulness in times of crisis. The psalmist (unknown author) is thanking God for rescuing him in times of severe danger. He begins and ends with the same expression:

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

In between, he records some of the extreme situations he was in and how the LORD rescued him.

When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;
he brought me into a spacious place. (vs. 5)

The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?
The LORD is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies. (vv. 6-7)

They swarmed around me like bees,
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;
in the name of the LORD, I cut them down. (vs. 12)

Most likely the author is David. There is a lot of resemblance between Ps 118 and David's other psalms. He says 'do not trust men.' Instead,

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in humans.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes. (vv. 8-9)

The author has experienced God's leading and protection. He has no fear now. He realizes that he just needs to trust in God.

Like the Psalmist, we can also say that we are safe in God's hands.

In Genesis 28, Jacob is on the run from his brother Esau. He lied to his brother and took his birthright and the blessing from Isaac. Esau was very angry, rightfully so. Jacob is on his way to Uncle Laban for safety.

Here we are. Jacob is in the middle of nowhere, at night, all alone. Fear grips him. He feels lonely. There is no one who can come to his rescue.

Esau's revenge is not the main issue here. For Jacob, the fact that he is all alone and that he cannot trust anybody is the issue. Being alone and having no one who can help you, that is the problem.

I read about a Korean immigrant in DC area in 1990's. He came to America to fulfill his dream. He worked hard at his business and became successful. He opened a store and then the second, and the third store. But one day his company faced a crisis, an unforeseen financial disaster. It drained his resources to the point of being in a huge debt. He had no choice but to declare bankruptcy.

The man lost all his desire to live. Before ending his life, he wanted to talk to his friend for the last time. In the middle of the night, his friend answered the call. It was a crisis. The friend shared a point in a sermon he had heard before: People may triple over a stone, but the same stone can be a useful platform for others to step on and move on. The man came to his senses and decided to give a try again. The rest is history. What would have happened if the man had no one to talk to? You see, that is the difficult part, having no one to talk to when you are in a crisis.

Jacob felt the same. In his sleep, he saw an angel on a ladder, climbing to the heavens and back. Then he heard God's voice, "I will be with you always. I will never leave you until all my promises are fulfilled" (Gen. 28:15).



Jacob woke up from the dreams and called the place where he lay 'bethel' meaning the house of God. He was not alone. In fact, he was in the house of God (or in the presence of God).

God is with us

We must remember that we are NOT alone. God is always with us. In vs 6-7 that is exactly what he says: The LORD is with me. So, we do not need to fear.

We tend to seek wrong things in life. We seek many good things in life, material goods, good life, wealth, health, good children, long life, loving home ... etc. But we should really seek God's abiding presence.

But look at some of the giants of faith in the Bible. What did they REALLY seek and pursue?

- Abrahm, Jacob, Moses, David, Daniel and so on.

They all had some of the earthly blessings, but they all had one thing in common: they sought after the presence of God. They considered it to be most important. Let us be like the psalmist and be able to say, 'the LORD is on my side.'

May the LORD bless you!

Let's pray.