

Special Focus Session

November 26, 2023

GOD DESERVES OUR THANKS

Psalm 65:1-13

The Bible is replete with encouragement to praise God for who He is and to thank Him for what He has done. And no place has more references to those things than the book of Psalms. And no psalmist (in my humble opinion) captures the heart of worship and thanksgiving better than David. What I like most about David's psalms is his ability to magnify the greatness of God (what we call His transcendence) and at the same time highlight the intimate, personal interaction God has with children (what we call His immanence). As we celebrate this Thanksgiving season, Psalm 65 simply and clearly displays these attributes of God. Three key themes are mentioned.

His presence (vv. 1-4). Verse 1 begins in the silence of anticipation. "Praise is rightfully Yours" is literally, "Your praise is silent." In other words, it is waiting in silent awe. Zion is a reference to Jerusalem in general and the temple in specific. Hence the picture is one of great anticipation in the halls of the temple as the people of God await the Lord's grand entrance. Notice the prophetic voice, as the verbs allude to the future. Vows will be fulfilled (v. 1); all the people will come (v. 2); we will be satisfied (v. 4). From David's perspective, this might be the first appearance of Christ, the One for whom the people prayed (v. 2) and the One who could alone atone for sin (v. 3). Or he could be looking further to the triumphal return of Christ when all humanity must (and will) appear before Him. This dual-prophetic vision can be found in David's Psalm 24 as well, as the King of glory arrives strong in battle the first time (Ps. 24:8), and as the Lord of Hosts the second time (24:9). For reflection: As we reflect on Thanksgiving, let us be reminded that the God of heaven inhabits both the magnificent temple in Jerusalem and the humble temple of the human heart.

His power (vv. 5-8). No psalmist paints a more graphic portrait of God in creation than David the shepherd. Here there are three emphases. First, we see the message of His power. In verse 5, God displays His righteousness, His salvation, and His hope. Creation is indeed physical, but in it we see the spiritual. Next, we see the strength of His power. What is more formidable than the mountains? Yet they were established by Him (v. 6). What is more tumultuous than the seas? Yet the seas' waves are "stilled" by Him (see Mark 4:39). In addition to calming the storms of the sea, the Lord even calms the storms that plague the nations (see Job 12:23). Finally, we see the breadth of His power. The mountains tower high above us, the oceans are vast and surround us. Those who watch from afar are astounded by His works, and what about the distance between east and west? Interestingly, if you traveled north, you would eventually pass the North Pole and start heading south. But if you travel east, you will always travel east. Hence, the distance between east and west encompasses the entire globe (for a comparison, see Ps. 103:12). For reflection: As we reflect on Thanksgiving, let us be reminded that our God displays His power in the magnificence of His creation.

For His provision (vv. 11-13). The errant teaching called Deism teaches that God created everything, then stepped away from it, to let it run its course. But the Bible teaches just the opposite! God did indeed create everything, but through His providential care, He maintains

everything as well. Notice that even the so-called “natural cycle” of things begins with God and is superintended by God. He gifts the farmer with an abundance of rain. The streams are filled, the soil is soaked, and the harsh crust of bare earth is softened and smoothed (v. 10). Harvest time arrives at the end of the year, and God’s crowning achievement is an abundance of grain (v. 11). My grandmother used to say she would rather look out the window and see a field of standing grain than a grass lawn any day. Apparently, so would David! Picture the shepherd boy looking across the hillsides: the open spaces are filled with wildflowers and the low places filled with grain. Creation itself rejoices in the goodness of God (v. 13). For reflection: As we reflect on Thanksgiving, let us be reminded that our God does all of this for the benefit of His children (v. 9). He deserves our gratitude.