

Giving Thanks and Telling the Story

Thesis: Today, let's give thanks for and tell the story of what the Lord is doing in our lives in general and to celebrate in particular what he is doing through us in the nation of Myanmar.

Text: Psalm 50:23; Acts 13:1-3, 47; Isaiah 49:6

1. **Thanksgiving is a reminder to practice the spiritual disciplining of giving thanks. Expressing gratitude involves:**
 - a. Remembering who the Lord is and what he has done
 - b. Thanking the Lord for who he is and what he has done
 - c. Worshiping the Lord for who he is and what he has done
 - d. In this season, I want to invite us to give thanks to the Lord for his many blessings. We have much for which we can be to be grateful. This season is a great opportunity to take some time to give thanks to God for his many blessings in our lives, our community, and nation.
 - i. We come into his courts with thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 100:4).
 1. *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name (Psalm 100:4 NIV).*
 - ii. When we give thanks, we honor God and prepare the way for him to do more (Psalm 50:23).
 1. *"He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23 NIV).*
 - iii. Our prayers to God should be seasoned with affection and thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6).
 1. *6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV).*
 - iv. In everything give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
 1. *16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV).*
 - e. **Q: For what are you thankful?**
2. **Today, I want to talk about what we are doing in the nation of Myanmar.**
 - a. I have 2 purposes in talking about our ministry to Myanmar.

- i. **For thanksgiving and celebrating:** I want us to celebrate what the Lord is doing and to give thanks to the Lord for letting us partner with him to reach the unreached.
 - ii. **For vision casting:** I want share the vision so that you have the opportunity to support our ministry to Myanmar through praying, giving, and going.
- b. **What I am currently learning.**
- i. Whoever tells the story controls the narrative.
 - ii. *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17 ESV).*
 - 1. The world does 10% of the work and talks about it the other 90% of the time.
 - 2. The church does 90% of the work and talks about it only 10% of the time.
 - 3. **We need to tell the stories of what we are doing so that we can change the narrative and raise the faith level.**
 - 4. Because we fail to tell the stories of what the Lord is doing, the news outlets and social media control the narrative, and it is not a narrative of faith.
 - iii. **Point:** The Lord is challenging me to do a better job of telling the story of what he is doing in and through our lives.
 - iv. **I want to encourage you to use your social media accounts to tell the stories of what the Lord is doing in and through us, and to pass along those stories.**
 - 1. Sharing on their phones and social media accounts is something that the younger generations do naturally.
 - 2. The rest of us need to learn to use our phones to record the stories and to share those stories with others.
 - 3. Personally, I have to learn how to tell the stories, to podcast about the stories, and to record the stories more effectively.
 - a. But, don't wait on me and the staff. You have a recording studio in your hand. Go ahead and tell the stories of faith.
 - b. *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give*

glory to your Father who is in heaven"

(Matthew 5:14-16 ESV).

3. **Why are we involved in missions?** Here is a brief history of how we got into missions from Calvary.
 - a. **The Lord spoke to us as we pursued him and sought him.**
 - i. The Lord led our first pastor to plant a church in NW Houston in 1982. In the beginning, we started out as a church that was focused on reaching NW Houston, which in the early 1980's, was the fastest growing part of the USA.
 - ii. From 1983 – 1987, our primary involvement in missions was (1) **through giving financially to the Cooperative Program** of the SBC and (2) **through summer youth mission trips to the Valley of Texas.**
 - iii. In 1987, we were on a staff retreat.
 1. People had been praying for us to get more personally involved as a church in world missions.
 2. On that retreat, the Lord spoke to us and said it was time. God called us to help export what the Lord was doing among us to other places. We were to help send people out and to pastor people on the mission field. And, we were to equip indigenous leaders and believers to know the Lord and to move in the presence and power of the Lord.
 - b. **As we spend time with the Lord, he speaks to us and guides us.** We see a similar example in the Scriptures to how the Lord called Paul and Barnabas to missions.
 - i. *In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3 NIV).*
 - ii. Here is the Scripture that the Lord used to speak to the team in Acts 13:1-3. *For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47 NIV).*
 - iii. Quoting Isaiah 49:6. *God says [to the Messiah]: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6 NIV).*

4. **Here is the history of how we got into missions to Myanmar.**
 - a. I was attending a World Missions Summit held in Houston at Grace Church in May 2009.
 - b. There were hundreds of participants from all over the world.
 - c. At lunch on the first day of the conference I sat at a table. A man came and set beside me. He introduced himself as Pastor David Biakkung from Myanmar. I introduced myself to him. Pastor David said that he was looking for me. I found that very interesting. Pastor David had met Doug Stringer and he told Doug that he was looking for someone to come and equip pastors and leaders regarding the things of the Spirit and mobilizing missions. Doug Stringer suggested that Pastor David meet with someone named Jeff McGee.
 - d. From that divine appointment, the Missions Council and I prayed for the Lord's direction. We stepped out in faith and took a team to Myanmar in the Fall of 2009. We have been going back each year since then.
5. **Here are the two of the key players in our ministry in Myanmar.**
 - a. Pastor David Biakkung told us how Christians were taking care of orphans from the **Nargis Cyclone** in 2008. Between 140,000 and 250,000 people died in that cyclone, leaving hundreds of orphaned children.
 - i. He needed to build a place for the orphans living with them.
 - ii. And, he was working to build a Bible School for equipping and sending out missionaries to the unreached in Myanmar.
 - iii. Finally, his vision was to help pastors and leaders in Myanmar begin to move in power of the Holy Spirit for the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel of the kingdom of God.
 - b. Pastor David introduced us to Pastor John Cung. He was leading a ministry to reach the unreached in the NW part of the county.
 - c. Each year we do a conference with Pastor David in Maymyo for about 50 church leaders and pastors from Chin State. They represent thousands of believers of Chin Baptist Churches.
 - d. We also do a conference in Kalaymyo with Pastor John Cung. About 200 pastors, leaders, missionaries, evangelists, and church planters attend this conference. After the conference, we go to the villages to minister to the missionaries and to minister with the missionaries to unreached.
 - e. Along the way, we have helped to build homes for the missionaries that also serve as their houses of worship and schools. We have also helped them to drill water wells for safe, plentiful sources of water for themselves and for reaching the community. We help provide resources like motorcycles for ministry between villages, solar panels and batteries so that they can hold church meetings in the evening, and

other provision which they request to advance the kingdom of God in their villages.

- f. The Lord moves so powerfully at the conferences that they testimony of the Lord spreads and inspires others to come, to experience the Lord, and to get equipped.
6. **Here are 2 testimonies and impact of what the indigenous missionaries are doing in the villages in Myanmar.**
- a. In the villages, missionaries, pastors, and church planters are reaching unreached Buddhists.
 - i. They reach out to them in the love of the Lord, disciple them, baptize them, and strengthen them in the faith.
 - ii. Because of persecution, we have to help them buy land to build a small metal building that serves as their home, church, and school.
 - iii. In the villages, there is limited access to clean water.
 1. Most people have to walk a long way to get water from rivers. Those rivers dry up in the dry season and there is a total lack of access to water.
 2. Even if there is a water well in the village, the villagers refuse to share their water with Christians.
 3. So, we provide water wells for the pastors and church planters because of their desperate need.
 4. They are using the water wells and free education to build bridges of relationship with neighbors and to share the love of Jesus with others.
 - b. One missionary family we support works in Zakhan State. That is where the Rohingya people are experiencing genocide.
 - i. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor John contacted us about a desperate need.
 - ii. Because of the fighting, the new believers fled to the missionary's home for shelter.
 - iii. "Bullets are flying all around," they said.
 - iv. Mary, the missionary, appealed to Pastor John Cung for money to buy food. They had no food and no money for food.
 - v. Pastor John let us know of the need. A member of our church had just donated \$500 for the Myanmar missions. We used that gift to meet this emergency need.
7. **This is a Kairos moment for Myanmar.**
- a. Recently, I heard that several major missions organizations and ministries are focusing on Myanmar collaboratively. They believe that the Lord has said that this hour is strategic for reaching Myanmar.

- b. That made me think about our involvement in Myanmar and to give thanks for what the Lord has done.
 - i. We obeyed the Lord to go starting in 2009.
 - ii. We have helped to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.
 - iii. We have helped, along with many others, to pave the way for this current missions emphasis.
 - iv. We are one ministry effort partnering with the Lord in Myanmar, as are many, many other ministries.
 - v. This is the time for Myanmar to receive their king.
- 8. **We are headed back to Myanmar on a short-term trip in February 2020.**
 - a. We usually are farther along in trip planning. This is the latest that we have ever begun to organize a trip. There were several circumstances that came together to cause the delay in announcing the trip and raising funds for the trip.
 - b. **I want to invite you to invest in our mission trip to Myanmar.**
 - i. Because of the poverty and lack of resources, we raise \$14,000 for the 2 conferences. Those funds cover the cost of the food, lodging, and transportation of the pastors, missionaries, church planters, evangelists, and leaders who attend the conferences.
 - ii. The members of the team who are going on the trip to Myanmar also invite you to consider giving for their trip costs, which are around \$3,500.
 - iii. By the way, I am still putting the team together for this trip. If you have an interest in or any questions about going on this trip, please let me know.
 - iv. Finally, we are raising funds to meet the needs of these people who are doing such amazing ministry in their nation to reach people for Jesus. Together, we are making disciples of all nations.

Ministry Time

1. **Let's close in worship** by expressing our yearning and longing for our Bridegroom King, for our First Love: *Even So Come.*