

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

People loved by God,

Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter of the whole Bible. It contains only 2 verses.

And perhaps to our American minds, it doesn't seem to be all that necessary,
after all, many other Psalms say pretty much the same thing throughout their verses.

It seems superfluous, or redundant.

And yet, this too, is an inspired Psalm all by itself,

and one that lends itself to a wider usage, much like Christians today might sing

the common Doxology: *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow* ^{ELH #592} for various occasions.

So let us consider this short and simple, yet profound psalm.

...as follows in Jesus' name:

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles!

Laud Him, all you peoples!

For His merciful kindness is great toward us,

And the truth of the Lord *endures* forever.

Praise the Lord! (NKJV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In a way, you could call this Psalm the "Gentiles' doxology."

Notice how it calls on "**All you Gentiles**" and again, "**all you peoples**" to **praise the Lord**.

Now for us, this may not seem like much of a big deal.

Being Christian Gentiles ourselves, we desire to give **praise** only to the Lord, the one true God.

We recognize His **merciful kindness** and His **enduring truth**.

Of course we Gentiles should praise the Lord!

But in the context of when these psalms were written, this would have been a notable thing.

You see, Psalm 117 is one of the 6 "Egyptian Hallel" psalms.

These were the Psalms that the Jews would sing around their celebration of the Passover

—similar to how we have hymns that we sing especially during the Lenten or Easter seasons.

But remember the Passover is to the Jews as Thanksgiving is to Americans.

It is the holiday that helps to define them as a nation, distinct from other nations, like Egypt.

It helps to give them a shared identity and teaches them who they are.

They are a people, redeemed by God through blood, called out of worldly living, to live with Him.

So to have a Gentile doxology in the middle of your Passover hymns would take some explaining...

And that is what St. Paul does in his letter to the Romans as he quotes Psalm 117, verse 1 in chapter 15.

Throughout Romans, he speaks of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles,

how the Lord worked His plan of salvation through the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)

through the nation of Israel, and through the Jews, until Jesus suffered, died, rose and ascended.

But the Gospel was never meant only for the Israelites or Jews;

as Psalm 117 points out, God's salvation was always for **all you Gentiles** and **all you peoples**.

So let's consider God's **great merciful kindness**, or His steadfast love, **toward us** this Thanksgiving.

And why don't we first consider His greatest display of **love** and **kindness**,
in making us His people, redeemed through the blood of Jesus.
Like the people of Israel, He has called us out of worldly living
(that is, living for myself and my enjoyment, as if this life & this world were the only reality),
and has called us into eternal life and into His gracious presence, living not for ourselves but for Him.

We do not **praise** and **laud** an obscure or unknown, abstract concept of a god, somewhere out there.
We have a present God who reveals Himself and speaks to us in His written Word,
and who made Himself known to us through the person of His Son: the man Jesus Christ.
It was by the actual shedding of His blood on a real cross 2,000 years ago under Pontius Pilate
that God has *redeemed you, purchased and won you*
from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.
In His **merciful kindness**, He made you a member of His eternal family through Holy Baptism.
There He touched you with water and washed you in that redemptive blood of Jesus.
And now the Holy Spirit gathers you together in His house with spiritual fathers and mothers,
and brothers and sisters in the one true faith.

And in **steadfast** (unwavering) **love**, He continues to speak to you through His Word,
sending His ministers to you so that you may hear Him speak to you,
words of peace and forgiveness in your repentance, and comfort for you in your distress,
teaching you to observe all things that He has commanded, Matthew 28:20
reproving and **correcting** you when in error,
and **training you in righteousness**.
that you **may be complete... and equipped for every good work**. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

And in His grace, He gathers you around His altar, around His family table,
to feed you the true and holy body & blood of your Savior
to give you His holiness in place of your sin,
to strengthen you that you may endure the various trials and temptations yet to come,
and to nourish you with peace and joy for the **good works He has prepared for you to do**. Ephesians 2:10

It is these **eternal truths** that give all our temporary blessings their colors.
As Jesus said, "**What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?**" Matthew 16:26
So when, during our national celebration of Thanksgiving, you consider how the Lord has blessed you,
because the Lord has redeemed you (body and soul) don't forget about your temporal blessings, too.
These are also for your eternal welfare.

So **praise the Lord** for your family and friends,
both those who are still present with you, as well as those who have been a blessing to you in the past.
These are a reminder that you are not alone, for **He puts the solitary in a home**, Psalms 68:6
as He has settled you, not only into an earthly family, but also into His holy & redeemed family.
And even when there is strife and struggle in your family or among your neighbors,
there is also a blessing in learning to love your neighbor with the steadfast love
with which the Lord has loved you.

Praise the Lord for your house and home, even an inheritance:

that He gives you a place to protect you from the elements, and to be settled/find reprieve each day.
And even as the purchase prices, rents, and taxes get higher and higher,
you have a reminder of the impossible price that we could never afford for an eternal mansion,
and yet your Lord Jesus has come and died, paying the price for your to have His inheritance.

Praise the Lord for health and the **power to get wealth.** Deuteronomy 8:18

Because of the corruption of sin, handed down to us from Adam and besetting God's creation,
there is no guarantee that our lives will be free from physical or mental illness or injury,
nor that our finances will ever be completely safe from **thieves, moths, or rust.** Matthew 6:19
So each day when health is given, each day when your bills are paid and you have enough,
thank the Lord for such provision and that He would keep you from taking it for granted.
And yet, if you live with temporary or chronic illness or pain,
or your finances come up short, even though you are diligent and wise with your funds,
keep your **eyes looking to the Lord**, for He **gives food in due season.** Psalm 145:15
There will be a time, an everlasting time, when **He will wipe away every tear from your eyes,**
and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore,
for the former things [will] have passed away. Revelation 21:4
and there will be a forever when He will bid you, **come, buy and eat!**
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ...
Eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food. Isaiah 55:1-2

Praise the Lord for unexpected help, generous support, and gracious gifts.

Even as these mercies surprise and can give a certain amount of relief,
so also let them remind you of the Lord's unconditional love that you could never earn.
His **mercies** truly are **new every morning.** Lamentations 3:22-23
And you will never want again.

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!

Do so with your heart and your voices in prayers and songs and public confession.
And praise Him also in your actions, making wise use of His gifts
as a faithful steward & manager of God's blessings.
Use those blessings for your own needs and welfare, as blessings from God to you,
Use His blessings for the needs and welfare of those around you, as blessings from God through you.
Use them to serve your family, your community & country, and the Church of God,
that the Lord may use you to encourage, support, defend, build up, and to bless His people.

It is good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to God,
for our temporal and eternal blessings through which He sustains us day by day.

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Soli Deo Gloria