



Pastor's Note

"Give Thanks and Tell the Story"

Every so often in my life, the Lord will keep bringing me back to a particular passage over and over again. No matter how many times I try to say "Okay, I've got that one," still I will hear God tell me to go back to the same passage and read it again. Recently, God has been doing this with Psalm 9 for me.

The psalm is too long to print for you here – hopefully you will take a minute to read it as you read this article today. When you do, you'll see that it's a psalm of seeming contradictions. David begins by praising the Lord, but almost immediately, he also begins to recount his troubles: enemies of some kind or another are attacking him. (Knowing what we do about David's life, those attacks could very well have been literal attacks by enemy armies!) And yet, throughout the song, David maintains this marvelous tension – he is afflicted, but God is good; he is oppressed, but the Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed; he is needy, but God is the hope of the poor and the needy.

While none of us are probably being attacked literally by enemy armies, I think we all can relate to the tension David is describing here. As your pastor, I am privy to some of the things that you are dealing with in your personal lives. I know that some of you are grieving and praying for wayward children or grandchildren. Others of you are suffering because of the cruelty of family members. Still others have health problems, financial problems, or are dealing with a tyrannical boss or hateful co-worker. Most of you know that I myself am going through a difficult season – especially as this month marks the one-year anniversary of my father's death. We all are grieving, hurting, suffering, or struggling in some way.

And yet – as David so wisely wrote many centuries ago, God is the One who lifts us up from the gates of death (Psalm 9:13b, ESV). Our enemies are only temporary, but God is enthroned forever" (Psalm 9:7a, ESV). Over and over, David affirms both to God and to himself the Good News: that God is powerful and rebukes his enemies, that God has maintained David's just cause, that God is an avenger of injustice, that God does not ignore or forget the cry of the afflicted, and on and on. And in the midst of all this, David *gives thanks*. He does not just list out all his troubles before God – he also *affirms and gives thanks for the hope he has in God in the midst of these troubles*. And that, I believe, makes all the difference in the world.

What if we committed to do this in 2018? What if we made this our new year's resolution – to give thanks every day, even in the midst of our troubles? What if we gave thanks and told ourselves over and over this Good News story? How would our lives be different this year if we spent time each day praising and thanking God, and reminding ourselves of the hope we have in Him? How much more joy and peace would we have, even in the midst of our difficulties and pains - and how much more effective would we be as Christians in our broken and fallen world? With this as a holy habit, we will be far less likely to be overcome by evil, and instead, will, in God's power, overcome that evil with good (see Romans 12:21).

Will you commit to this with me this year? Will you give thanks and tell the Good News story each day? For no matter what we are going through, and no matter what we may face in 2018, *He is good, and He is with us!* To Him alone be the glory!

In Christ's Love, *Joshua*