



SPECIAL SESSION

A Song of Thanksgiving

SESSION SUMMARY

The prophet Isaiah recorded a song of thanksgiving inspired by God. The people of God would one day sing this song to God's honor and glory. On account of His mercy and salvation—which were promised and eventually delivered in His Son, Jesus Christ—we thank God, enjoy His gifts, and proclaim His greatness to every person and in every place. Gratitude to the Lord for salvation leads to public proclamation of His glory.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 2:1-6

THE POINT

Christians thank the Lord, sing His praises, and proclaim His greatness in all the earth.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Thankfulness can be an easy thing to express but much more difficult to embody. We say “thank you” to someone who did something for us, but do we mean it or is it simply a polite courtesy hiding ungrateful thoughts? For example, your pencil runs out of lead right before a test, and the person beside you passes you an extra pencil. Maybe you mouth the words *thank you* or maybe you smile at that person. Or maybe you find yourself thinking, “After all the pencils and paper I have given to you, it’s about time you came through for me.”

Thankfulness is a matter of the heart and that is why we struggle to be thankful. The sinful nature we inherited from Adam constantly directs us to feel entitled to other people’s actions and attention. It is true that people can take advantage and work an angle to get their way—this is also the work of sin in our lives—but the struggle with thankfulness is more often internal than external. We think we are deserving; we think we are owed.

Sadly, sin would have us believe the same in our relationship with the Creator God. The holy God owes us nothing except judgment for our sin, yet He freely offers His love, mercy, and grace to us undeserving sinners because He paid the cost for our sin Himself.

- **In what circumstances have you struggled to be grateful for the words or actions of another?**
- **Why do we have sometimes have a difficult time being thankful toward other people?**

Option 2

A metaphor is a symbol, a representation of a particular subject; a word picture that helps us understand complicated subjects. Throughout the Bible, prophets and apostles used metaphors to help people understand the complexity of things like God’s salvation, wisdom, life, and safety. As a group, discuss some common metaphors students may have heard before. Then, discuss some metaphors in the Bible:

- “Hook,” “bit,” and “bridle” are often metaphors for God’s restraint (2 Kings 19:28).
 - “Walls” are often a metaphor for security and safety (Isa. 26:1; 60:18).
 - “Lamp” is often a metaphor for life, wellbeing, or God’s guidance (2 Sam. 21:17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23; 13:9).¹
 - “Fountain” is often a metaphor for the source of something, such as wisdom.²
 - “Water” is often a metaphor for God’s salvation (Isa. 12:3; John 4:10-15).
- **How do these descriptions help you better understand God’s character and things like salvation?**

When we better understand God and His character, we better understand all the reasons we have to praise Him. Today’s session will help us see how to give thanks for our salvation.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Christians thank the Lord, sing His praises, and proclaim His greatness in all the earth.

CHARACTERS

- **Isaiah:** prophet of God who wrote the book of Isaiah; prophesied about a future Messiah as a Suffering Servant

PLOT

This session takes a look into the Book of Isaiah, specifically at a recorded song of thanksgiving. This song was inspired by God, and one day, God's people would sing this song to His honor and glory.

THANK THE LORD FOR HIS MERCY AND COMFORT

In the 11 chapters preceding this passage, the Lord indicted His chosen people for their idolatry and rebellion against Him. He was angry with them for turning their backs on Him, the One who brought them out of slavery in Egypt and settled them in His promised land. His judgment would come in the form of the nations of Assyria and Babylon, and it would be severe: war, siege, death, and exile. Even in the midst of His anger, the Lord pronounced a day of mercy, grace, and redemption for His people, which would result in giving thanks.

¹You will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. ²“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” (Isa. 12:1-2)

Isaiah’s song refers to a “day” that for him was yet to come, but it was not a reference without context. In the first 11 chapters of Isaiah, “day” was used multiple times with positive and negative implications, depending on where you should stand on that day. Imagine you’re a child again and your dad is coming home from work. Depending upon your behavior toward your mom that day—respectful obedience or disrespectful rebellion—you know whether your dad’s arrival is something to be happily anticipated or dreaded. In a similar way, for the proud enemies of God, the “day” is a day of judgment and humiliation (Isa. 2:5-17). At the same time, for the remnant of the Lord’s people, it is a day of preservation and salvation, even a full restoration from exile (Isa. 11:10-16). The Old Testament prophets often called this “the Day of the Lord.”

In light of the potentially destructive nature of this day, it makes sense that Isaiah’s future-oriented song begins with a note of thanksgiving to the Lord. After all, without God’s grace, we would all face judgment on His day.

According to Isaiah 1, Judah was on trial before God for being sinful, doing evil, and abandoning the Lord and turning their backs on Him (1:4). And in Israel, all the people were godless and doing evil deeds (Isa. 9:17). The Lord had been patient, slow to anger, faithful in His discipline, and gracious in His prophetic warnings, but He would be true to His word to exile His sinful people from their land.

Of course God was angry! His people defied, rebelled against, devalued, and despised Him. But this wasn’t only a general populace thing, it was a specific, personal thing. The Lord was angry with individual sinners. Isaiah’s song says, “you were angry with me” (v. 1). Just in case we think we get a pass, let’s not

TIMELINE

**Bonus Session*
SONG OF THANKSGIVING
Being grateful for God’s salvation leads to public proclamation.

**Beginning*
Winter 2017-18

PENTECOST
The Holy Spirit empowers the spread of the gospel.

COURAGE OF THE DISCIPLES
John and Peter perform miracles and preach the gospel with boldness.

forget that the New Testament makes it clear “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We have all personally been under the wrath of God for our sin (Eph. 2:3).

Returning to Isaiah 12, we are faced with this question: How can God be just in His anger against sin and sinners and then turn His anger away? Not only that, but how can God also graciously comfort the sinner (Isa. 12:1)? The answer: atonement is provided by God (Isa. 6:5-6)—the reason for giving thanks to the Lord. Those who want to stand on their own before the Lord, believing they are entitled and owed by their Creator, stand condemned in their sin. The Lord promises to humble the proud and to bring low the arrogant (Isa. 2:11,17). But those who humble themselves and confess their sin before the holy God will find that they can sing, “God is my salvation” (Isa. 12:2).

- **How does your view of this song of thanksgiving change, knowing that we have all been under God’s wrath?** (p. 84, PSG)

TAKE JOY TOGETHER IN THE LORD’S PROMISE OF SALVATION

The Lord is the God of mercy and comfort, turning His anger away from sinners and taking them into His arms as beloved children. We give thanks to the Lord because He does this for individuals—for you and for me—so we will sing of His salvation. But if our singing stops there, if we only confess, “God has become my salvation,” to ourselves in the mirror, then we are missing out on an inevitable result of God’s salvation—the joyful community of the redeemed.

3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. (Isa. 12:3)

While, the previous verses of Isaiah 12 were an individual’s proclamation of praise and thanks for God’s salvation, the “you” in this verse is plural—this broadens the view of the people praising because it addresses the community of individuals who will receive God’s mercy and comfort in spite of their sins. And the message is that you are not alone.

An agricultural society settled in a relatively dry and arid land such as ancient Israel would have been keenly aware of the necessity and potential scarcity of water. Rainwater in particular fueled their yearly provision and national economy. If it rained as it should, crops would grow and supply the people’s needs; if a drought came, crops, animals, and people would die because water is a life-sustaining requirement.

God, in His justice and loving discipline, promised to remove all of His people’s water sources because of their rebellion and sin (Isa. 3:1). God did this to drive the people to repentance and to find their joy in Him alone rather than in the idols they had created. The rain would return when the people returned to the Lord, not just with sacrifices, but with a whole heart set upon obedience to Him. No wonder water was an appropriate metaphor for salvation from the Lord.

PROCLAIM THE GLORY AND GREATNESS OF GOD ALL OVER THE EARTH

The Lord has shown His mercy and comfort to His people on an individual basis. Then we love, encourage, and comfort one another with the love, encouragement, and comfort that we have received from God. But again, if the joy of our salvation stops with the community of the redeemed, then we are short-circuiting the full purpose of that community. We don't gather to stay; we gather to encourage one another to go with a message for the world.

⁴ And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.”

⁵ “Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. ⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” (Isa. 12:4-6)

Isaiah continued by addressing the community of God as a whole (v. 4). On the Day of the Lord, God's people will be speaking to one another, and their message will be full of mutual instruction—honor the Lord and do so everywhere so everyone can hear the Word and honor Him too.

The individual gave thanks to God for His salvation in verse 1, but here the saved individuals who have gathered together also encouraged one another to give thanks to God and publicly honor His name. The picture of praise in this chapter flows like this: *I thank the Lord that He has saved me! Hey, you are here with me, so you have been saved too. Thank the Lord that He saved you!* But the praise of God can't stop there. This salvation from God is so great, gracious, and kind that everyone needs to hear about it, so let's go tell more people—even those who haven't heard about our God and His salvation!

- **How does thanking and praising God with other believers encourage us to go to those who do not know God and His salvation? (p. 85, PSG)**

TIMELINE

COMMUNITY OF GENEROSITY

The church displays unity and generosity.

THE FIRST MARTYR

Stephen reflects Jesus in his life and his death.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Philip faithfully shares the message of the gospel.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Body of Christ (p. 86, PSG)

The New Testament describes the church as the body of Christ. The church lives and operates as Christ's representatives here on earth, with Christ as its head (Col. 1:18). This means that the church is an extension of Christ's ministry, carrying out His work by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). In addition, the picture of the church as the body of Christ shows us the interconnectedness of individual Christians, with each member dependent upon one another for growth and sanctification (1 Cor. 12:12).

CHRIST CONNECTION

Isaiah looked forward to a day when the blessing of God would once again be experienced by His people and God's glory would be proclaimed in all the earth. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we thank the Lord for His mercy, enjoy His gift of salvation, and commit to spreading the songs of His praise throughout the earth.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Isaiah used water as a metaphor describing God's salvation. What are some metaphors from our culture that we could use to describe salvation from the Lord?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How can we make the community of faith a priority in our lives and in the church?** *Becoming more involved in the student ministry at your church, being faithful to your small group, making a commitment to being disciplined by someone older in the church, and so on.*
- **What should we do when we find that our joy in salvation is decreasing?** *One thing is to remind yourself of the gospel—the fact that you were a terrible sinner who was desperately in need of a wonderful and powerful Savior, and that God gave you the gift of grace and forgiveness. We should also pray, and ask God to forgive us for not feeling the gratitude we should and for the grace to once again experience the joy of our salvation. Finally, we should look at our hearts and lives to see if any sin remains that may be causing a lack of spiritual joy in our lives.*
- **What works of God in your life can you make known among the people of the earth?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

“The Day of the Lord” was a day of God’s decisive action in the world. In Isaiah’s immediate context, the “day” addressed the destruction that would come upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria, as well as their attempt to destroy Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Isa. 7:17-25). Truth be told, there have been many “Days of the Lord” in Scripture, but there is also one “Day of the Lord” to end all “Days of the Lord.” The apostle Peter described this ultimate day: the second coming of Christ (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Christians long for that day.

- **What are some reasons people may not eagerly look forward to the “Day of the Lord”?** *For many, the answer is that since they are not followers of Jesus, His return would be a day of judgment and accountability for them instead of one of joy and peace.*
- **What do you think are some reasons Christians long for that day?** *Examples might include: the fact that Jesus will make all things new, personal sin will finally no longer be a struggle, and there will no longer be tears of sadness or physical suffering.*



HEART

The God who pays on our behalf what we rightfully owe is One worthy of our full trust. We never need to be afraid of Him because He Himself takes care of our punishment; all that is left is loving, purposeful comfort and discipline that shape us into His image. We also should not be afraid in our life circumstances because our salvation is found in the God who created and governs all things. He infuses us with His strength and power to do what is right, and He works in our hearts to become the delight of our hearts, that His praise would forever be the song we sing.

- **How would you explain the relationship between thanksgiving and praise in your own words?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What is your favorite song of praise and thanksgiving to sing to the God of your salvation? Why?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

If we are saved in Christ, it is because others who experienced His salvation decided to go and share about His glorious works. If we want to worship Jesus rightly, then we must go to all the world and share about His glorious works in our own lives (Matt. 28:18-20). According to the pattern of thanksgiving and praise for salvation in Isaiah 12, worship must lead to evangelism.

- **How would you explain the connection between worship and evangelism in your own words?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How can we encourage one another to share the gospel with the nations?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. Matthew George Easton, *Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (New York: Cosmo Classics, 2005), accessed via mywsb.com.
2. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), accessed via mywsb.com.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject

STUDY PLAN

YEAR 1

Fall 2015

God the Creator (Genesis 1-11)
God the Covenant-Maker
(Genesis 12-50)

Winter 2016

God the Redeemer
(Exodus)
God the Lawgiver
(Exodus, Leviticus,
Deuteronomy)

Spring 2016

God the Savior
(Numbers, Joshua)
God the Judge (Judges,
Ruth, 1 Samuel)

Summer 2016

God the King (1-2 Samuel)
God All Wise (1 Kings, Job,
Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs)

YEAR 2

Fall 2016

God the Revealer
(1-2 Kings, Isaiah)
God the Pursuer (Major
and Minor Prophets,
1-2 Chronicles)

Winter 2017

God the Sustainer
(Daniel, Ezra)
God the Provider (Esther,
Nehemiah, Malachi)

Spring 2017

God the Son (Gospels)
God Among Us (Gospels)

Summer 2017

Jesus the Storyteller
(Synoptic Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker
(Gospels)

YEAR 3

Fall 2017

Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King
(Gospels, Acts)

Winter 2018

The Spirit Who
Empowers (Acts)
The God Who Sends (Acts)

Spring 2018

The God Who Directs His
People (Epistles)
The God Who Changes
Us (Epistles)

Summer 2018

God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles)
The God Who Makes All
Things New (Epistles,
Revelation)