

Dear Friends, **An update from meditations on a few verses in Psalm 116:**

Verse 1 – *I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.* In COVID's forced separation from normal interpersonal relationships, I found I had more time to lift my voice to the LORD, and that often in pleas for His mercy upon my loved ones, my country, my own soul. This intimacy with my Savior has drawn me to reflect on my love for Him and His love for me. When the world seems to crumble around us and the foundations of our life are shaken, what is more comforting or significant than to know the Creator God in a personal, loving relationship and to have the assurance that in that rapport our Redeemer willingly and perfectly hears our pleas for mercy. Have you experienced this as well in 2020?

Verse 7 – *Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* This year's pandemic, economic woes, natural disasters, and political upheaval brought unusual fears and anxieties into my days and into my nights. Rest for my soul was stolen. Then I heard the Word of the LORD "Return, O my soul to your rest!" I know I have been caught up in the worries of this world which have swirled around me, but I need to hear the Shepherd's call to find rest in His strong arms. In His safety, I can release the anxieties and focus instead on the bountiful ways in which the covenant keeping God has dealt with me, personally. It is in rehearsing His blessings and promises that our souls find peace and rest in days as these. Have you found this true in 2020? This week's Thanksgiving Day gives a perfect opportunity to consider the overflowing cup of grace the LORD has poured out upon you and in that grace find the only true place of rest for your soul.

Verse 15 – *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* One issue that has been constantly before me this year is death. The statistics are everywhere. The fear of death has been magnified exponentially. The world's lifestyles and economies have been turned upside down in an attempt to prevent death. I, like so many others, have experienced the emotional pain of a loved one's death. In October, my brother-in-law, John Johnson, a faithful believer in the LORD, was taken from this world. His death certificate indicated COVID-19. But in that excruciating loss, the Word of the LORD brought clarity and comfort: In the LORD's perspective, the death of His saints, of those who are holy in the cleansing blood of the Lamb, is a precious thing and not a devastating thing. This has caused me to relook at death from a divine perspective, not to fear it, but to see it as the entrance of God's children into His eternal presence. This has reinforced my missionary zeal.

Verse 17 – *I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving...* This year our national Thanksgiving Day is like none other in US history. Will the restrictions rob me of the thanksgiving spirit behind the holiday? Or will they remind me that I can offer up acceptable worship to my God through heartfelt thanksgiving no matter what worldly constraints are placed upon me? I choose to look beyond the world's pessimism and narcissism and offer up to my LORD a very purposeful act of thanksgiving for His manifold blessings. These are both general and specific, temporal and eternal, merciful, free, and overflowing. But one of the blessings I will surely mention in my sacrifice of thanksgiving is... you.

I challenge you to meditate on Psalm 116 and find at least 10 reasons to give thanks to God on this Thanksgiving Day.

Praises: 1) The church in Amanzimtoti is growing in strength, ministries, leaders, and numbers. Nine new believers were baptized last Sunday. 2) The Bible college is awaiting government certification. The date of opening has been moved from January to April. 3) 7 Rivers Outreach is seeing positive development. New missionaries should arrive in Durban early in 2021. 4) The Zulu radio broadcasts are reaching thousands with amazing responses. 5) We continue to serve the Durban ministries full-time in a variety of ways. Thank you for being a part of our South African team.

Prayer: 1) protection of our missionaries and national pastors (a Zulu pastor whom I worked with weekly in 2019 was shot and killed in his home); 2) finances for our various ministries in Durban; 3) our personal support needs.

From our home in Florida, We wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving,

- David & Virginia