

**Sermon Series: “Lessons from King David on Thanksgiving”
“The Future”
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Sunday, November 21, 2021**

There has always been something intriguing about the future. What will it be like? It has always been interesting to me to see different visions of what the future will be like. E.g, I recall the 1960s TV show “Star Trek” had a cool way of going from a visited planet to the ship the U.S.S. Enterprise— beaming them up. So far, such technology has escaped us. But one thing Star Trek did get right is that we can communicate with other people through flip phones! It would be nice to know the future, but the truth is we really don’t know it. What we do know is that there are promises today which we can take into the future that will make all the difference.

READ Psalm 138:1-8 (p. 577)

CONTEXT: This is a psalm composed by King David.

READ vv 1-3. “King David gave thanks to the Lord in the temple before the heavenly beings for His steadfast love, faithfulness, and answering his prayer.” Before he speaks about future things, King David does the wise and sensible thing— he looks back at his encounters with God and what he has learned about God from such experiences. Based on v 2, we can envision King David as in the temple praising God. That is why I think it is wrong to translate the Hebrew אלהים as “gods” and not “heavenly beings”, which is what that word can mean. It would be awkward for David to refer to God being exalted over other deities in the temple; more likely God is over the heavenly beings, such as angels. King David found out first of all the characteristics of God Yahweh, the first that comes to mind is His אהבה, His steadfast love. I understand this character of the God of the Old Testament is disputed. E.g., I recall talking to some people who regularly went to church about the God of the Bible, and they mentioned that they believed in the God of the New Testament, the God of love, not the God of vengeance of the Old Testament. Have you ever encountered this view? It is old, and goes back to the heresy in the early church of the second century from a guy named Marcion. Now it is true that God in the New Testament is a God of love. In 1 John 4:7-8 we read, “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” But if anyone would dispute that the God of the Old Testament is a God of vengeance and not love, it would be not only King David, but also Jesus! Jesus said He came not to abolish the Law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). King David knew of God’s love through His taking David from a shepherd boy and making him a successful warrior, keeping him safe from King Saul, and setting him up as King of Israel. Even when King David sinned

with Bathsheba and repented, God did not take His love from David, though the Lord certainly grieved over David's great moral lapse. King David also knew of God for His faithfulness, or His truthfulness, and answering his prayer— what God said was what happened. E.g., in 2 Samuel 7 God promised that David would have one follow him on the throne forever, that came true not only in Solomon but also Jesus. Have you ever had an answered prayer? E.g., I recall over the last month a gentleman and I have been praying for his job, that he would not lose it, after a while of worry he heard back from his job that he was going to be able to keep it, and that has given him a great deal of comfort coming into Thanksgiving and Christmas. E.g., we have been praying for baby Daisy, because she was not gaining weight and not hearing, but I spoke recently to her Mom and she said that Daisy is hearing a bit now and is gaining weight— Praise God!!! E.g., also, we have prayed a lot for baby Beau, and we have seen great answers to prayer during his young life in his health and development. It is from such background characteristics that King David knew about God that he can make the following statements about the future.

READ vv 4-6. “King David looked forward to the day when the rulers of the earth would worship Him also, for He is not a respector of persons.” This idea of nations of the earth coming to God is found periodically in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah 60:1-3, “Arise, shine: for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” Sometimes we forget this, but God is the God of *all* peoples, *all* nations. E.g., God is clearly at work in a church that has different races and/or countries represented, and this is a good general test for church that sees the harvest through God's eyes, and we have different races here at Lake Vista UMC. E.g., I recall

going to a graduation ceremony at UNO a few years ago, and I was amazed at the large variety of nations represented at UNO— much greater than when I was a student there— and I could sense God’s aching for them to know Him; I have not done anything about an outreach on this yet, but I would like to see us look into this. David also knows of God as no respecter of persons— it does not matter one’s social status or social graces, where one lives or where one works or from where one was born— God loves them all, especially those in humble circumstances. READ Matthew 5:3-5; James 1:9-11. E.g., I recall someone who worked downtown in New Orleans, and when someone asked him for food, took the time from his busy day to buy him a meal and tell him about Jesus. That kindness is what expresses the Lord’s heart. And one day we will see all the kings and nations of the earth bend their knee before the Lord in praise, regardless of whether they are believers and saved.

READ vv 7-8. “King David also foresaw that in times of/in inner distress God would deliver him, for His steadfast love would last to eternity; God would not forsake him!” The way v 7 can be translated can refer to inner distress, to which we can all relate. And the end of v 8 is translated consistently in major translations as a command, an imperative, “Do not forsake the work of your hands”, namely, us. But even though this be more rhetorical as a command or plea, the original language is in the indicative, making a statement, literally, “You will not forsake the work of your hands”. So King David thanks God for this future aspect of His character— as long as don’t know the future, we can continue to praise God and thank Him for what the future is. Why? Because nothing can stop His love! He will *never* forsake you and me. Have you ever known someone like that? E.g., I recall when I was little my Mom would take me with her to Pap’s Grocery Store-- that “ain’t der no more”. I would run off for the cookie aisle and the cereal aisle and pick out what I wanted, and once after taking my sweet time in

doing this I decided to take my goodies to her, but she was nowhere to be found! I looked frantically up each aisle, thinking for sure she had left without me and I was all alone, but then I finally found her, to my great relief, in the back of the store in the meat section. As I look back now I have to think, why did I doubt her so quickly? She had never left without me before! Sometimes we are like that with God. Even though He has never forsaken us, we believe our present pickle in which we are is the exception and surely God will not be able to help us out— or will not want to help-- and we are left all alone to our own quite limited devices. King David would remind you and me-- if He has not left you and abandoned you before, I guarantee He will not abandon you now— He is true even to eternity!!!

“How can we better trust the Lord by thanking Him for our unknown— to us, *not* to Him— future?” We cannot predict the future, although we do enjoy seeing attempts like Star Trek as they try to anticipate what the future will be like. Let us start this week by in our quiet times of devotion to thank God specifically for the future, for the unknown, for things which perhaps cause us some anxiety, and trust Him. For He is good, His steadfast love lasts forever, and He will not forsake His own.