

Thanksgiving

Scripture: Matthew 5:6 & Proverbs 3:9 – 10

While November signals the beginning of winter (Boo Hoo!), November brings with it often dreary weather and brings us closer to the Happy Holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Let's talk about Thanksgiving today. On Thanksgiving we recall the sacrifices of the Pilgrims and our ancestors. We recognize the Thanksgiving meals we have enjoyed over the years and we look forward to sharing in many more Thanksgiving meals. The Thanksgiving meal is a symbol of gratitude and it is a tribute to the Creator. Not only were the Pilgrims thankful for the bounty of their harvest, they were thankful that God had protected them from the elements and God had furnished them with the bare sustenance when the harvest yielded little.

Let us focus in the first Thanksgiving with its Indians and Pilgrims. The first Thanksgiving was an international event. It was also an interracial event.

Each Thanksgiving we celebrate renews our sense of history and recalls the basic simplicities that both fill and fulfill.

We can be thankful for the fellowship we share and have shared with others at Thanksgiving. We can appreciate the golden bonds of friendship and the family ties we have made over time at Thanksgiving. We can praise the infinite grace of God for the blessings of a thankful heart.

There is a real need for Thanksgiving now! In our time of the coronavirus, we need to regain the Pilgrims meaning of Thanksgiving. In our time of tension within our nation which is far different than what the Pilgrims faced; we need to give thanks. We need to dedicate all our material things to the will and purpose of God like the Pilgrims did. We need to center on God's grace and be thankful!

Now, let us talk about a pilgrimage, a pilgrimage to eternity. A Christian pilgrimage to eternity consists of six good disciplines:

- #1 – Worship together as the people of God
- #2 – Read and study the Bible
- #3 – Pray and meditate about God and his world
- #4 – Give your money, your time, and your talents to God
- #5 – Serve the local and worldwide church
- #6 – Witness by what you say, by what you do, and by what you are

The thing that really counts the most on our Christian pilgrimage to eternity is our attitude toward the cloudiness, the bleakness of winter, and the darkness of night. We may become discouraged with our lot in life. We may search for the sunshine amid the dark. We may search for light in a foreboding sky. Winter may seem reluctant to leave but God has promised a resurrection. God has promised a newness of life!

We can find ourselves wallowing in self-pity, but if we only looked skyward to Jesus. We can become discouraged by life, but if we only lifted our eyes to Christ who is the light and life. Jesus is ever reaching downward to grasp our hands and lift us above all the dark nesses of life.

Thanksgiving is not a beautifully decorated table with pretty dishes and a silver candelabra. Thanksgiving is being thankful and being together. For almost ten years, the last church I served at as pastor, we served a free Thanksgiving meal to those in need. Our invitation to the free Thanksgiving meal was this – No one should go without a Thanksgiving dinner and no one should be alone at Thanksgiving. It was a very successful meal serving over 100 people.

Thanksgiving is the vibration of the soul's heartstrings under the sift touch of God's benevolence!

In times of crisis, we are led naturally to times of prayer. After 9/11 people tended to show kindness toward others in fact our country had more people going to church a month after 9/11 than ever before. I am saddened to tell you that we now have moved back to the point where we have the lowest church attendance ever!

In times of plenty, we are led to often overlook the source of our plenty. We get caught up in the joy of the wonderful gifts and overlook who made all these gifts possible. We get caught up in the beauty of a full Thanksgiving table with the beautiful turkey, the lovely filling, the heavenly mashed potatoes, the gorgeous sweet potatoes, and the pumpkin pie - Oh boy - let us stop and just close our eyes and think of Thanksgiving.

The Bible has a lot to say about living lives of thanksgiving.

One such passage is Proverbs 3:9 - 10 'Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.'

This passage of scripture sure does fit my memories of Thanksgiving. My Dad probably would have used these words - Honor the Lord with your life and your earnings then your house will be filled with plenty and the top button of your pants will be bursting!

Through thanksgiving, comes generosity. Generosity does not have a demanding element in it. A waiter will learn soon enough that the most generous tippers are those customers who are least demanding. The customer who demands the most generally is the poorest tipper. Time and time again a waiter will find his largest tips are from the ones who expected and demanded little.

We need to be a generous people! Generous people tend not to demand, tend to look for the positive, tend to overlook the insignificant, tend to be appreciative, tend to be thoughtful and thankful.

And here we are again back at Thanksgiving.

Generosity of giving comes from those who recognize their blessings. Generosity flows from lives of people who understand thanksgiving.

There are many lesson of Thanksgiving. One is generosity and another is the lesson of 'just enough'. This is probably the hardest lesson of the holiday of Thanksgiving. Many a Thanksgiving I have left the table feeling blotted, stuffed, and sick.

Look at the first Thanksgiving, we have a group of people in the Pilgrims who are broken and grieving. Their hopes have been dashed by a harsh winter and the loss of half of the hundred that came on the Mayflower. There was not a home in the community who had not experienced a funeral. There was not a child who had not lost at least one parent. The new compound was not yet complete. The summer and fall harvest was not bountiful.

Then there was the Indians who stumbled on this site where an earlier disease had brought death to tribal and family members.

Not a nice picture!

But together, in their poverty, these two people celebrated God's goodness. They celebrated their hope for the future with a generous spirit.

They took out their small rations and they set aside a feast!

What an act of faith!

We have gathered, Christian one and all. We all have our own brokenness and pain. We all are grieving in some way. Our hopes are tested with today world. We have lost many valued people from Covid 19.

But together, in our poverty, we celebrate God's goodness. We celebrate our hope for the future with a generous spirit. We take our small rations and we set aside a feast! What an act of faith!

In the midst of adversity and loss we are able to say - 'And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever

Let us pray:

May we, O Lord, do our share in keeping your gifts intact. May we pass these gifts on and share them with all your people. And may future generations enjoy this time of Thanksgiving.

Bless us as we bow in love and adoration of you. May the beauty and bounty of Thanksgiving bring you glory. Happy Thanksgiving and glory to God forever and ever! AMEN.