

Thank You, Lord

¹⁹ *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

²⁰ *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; - Eph. 5:19-20*

I have *much* to be thankful for:

1) As an American

The holiday's developmental progress seems to be tied with the progress of our nation. Every time there was a major crisis that our nation overcame, there was a further development in our national observance of Thanksgiving.

- **(17th Century)** The hardships and subsequent blessings of the Pilgrims are the basis for the first official Thanksgiving celebration on Nov 29, 1623.

Governor William Bradford's Thanksgiving Proclamation

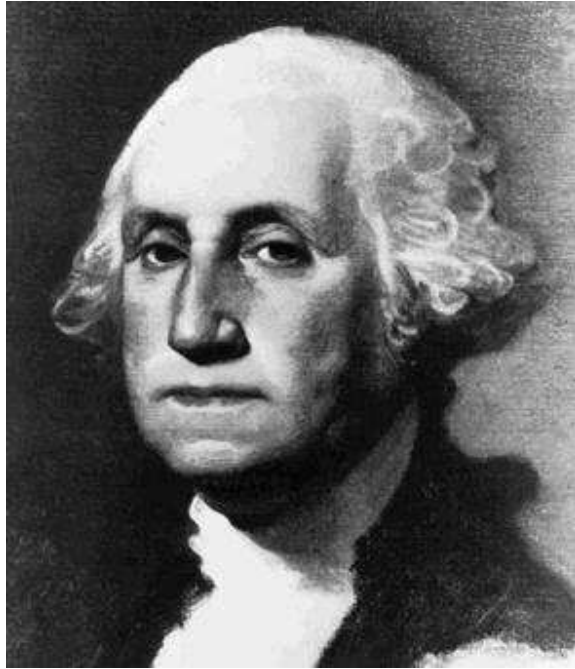
Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as he has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time, on Thursday, November 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty-three and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings.

**--William Bradford
Ye Governor of Ye Colony**

- **(18th Century)** After The Hardship of the Revolutionary War, the holiday gets nationally recognized by President George Washington, on Nov. 26, 1789.

George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation



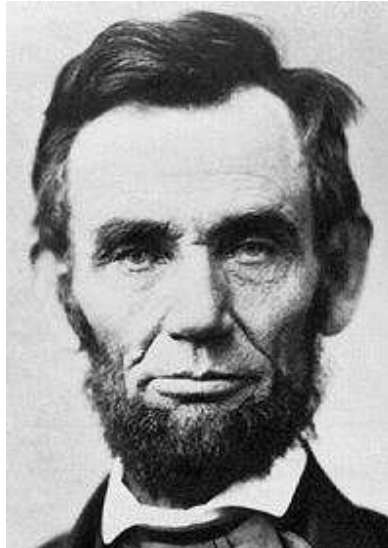
WHEREAS, It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor;

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; ---George Washington - October 3, 1789

- **(19th Century)** It was during the extreme hardships of the Civil War, in which over half a million men died, that President Abraham Lincoln declared *Thanksgiving* as a legal, national holiday. (the last Thursday in November, 1863.) Since Lincoln, every President has issued a national proclamation concerning our sacred obligation to observe Thanksgiving.

Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation



***Washington, D.C.
October 3, 1863***

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

. . . . In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict. . . .

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.

. . . to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those

who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.By the President: Abraham Lincoln

- **(20th Century)** Just after the hardship of the great depression and just before the hardships of WWII, the current date of celebration was established for our national observance of *Thanksgiving* (4th Thursday in November).
- After 9/11 our nation has again been humbled by opposition.

President George W. Bush's Thanksgiving Proclamation



.....

During these extraordinary times, we find particular assurance from our Thanksgiving tradition, which reminds us that we, as a people and individually, always have reason to hope and trust in God, despite great adversity. In 1621 in New England, the Pilgrims gave thanks to God, in whom they placed their hope, even though a bitter winter had taken many of their brethren. In the winter of 1777, General George Washington and his army, having just suffered great misfortune, stopped near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to give thanks to God. And there, in the throes of great difficulty, they found the hope they needed to persevere. That hope in freedom eventually inspired them to victory.

In 1789, President Washington, recollecting the countless blessings for which our new Nation should give thanks, declared the first National Day of Thanksgiving. And decades later, with the Nation embroiled in a bloody civil war, President Abraham Lincoln revived what is now an annual tradition of issuing a presidential proclamation of Thanksgiving. President Lincoln asked God to "heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and Union."

As we recover from the terrible tragedies of September 11, Americans give thanks to God for the many blessings we enjoy as a free, faithful, and fair-minded land. . . .

In thankfulness and humility, we acknowledge, especially now, our dependence on One greater than ourselves. On this day of Thanksgiving, let our thanksgiving be revealed in the compassionate support we render to our fellow citizens who are grieving unimaginable loss; and let us reach out with care to those in need of food, shelter, and words of hope. May Almighty God, who is our refuge and our strength in this time of trouble, watch over our homeland, protect us, and grant us patience, resolve, and wisdom in all that is to come. GEORGE W. BUSH

Again, every time there was a major crisis that our nation overcame, there was a further development in our national observance of Thanksgiving. One thing is certain; our forefathers took seriously the development of a national day of returning thanks to our Lord and Savior. The Thanksgiving holiday has had much thought and planning put in to its development. We should take it seriously. It wasn't meant to be taken lightly.

But I have *more* to be thankful for:

2) As a Child of God

As a child of God, I also have a long history of seeing God lovingly intervene and carefully rescue his wandering people from many hardships. God rescued his children in an *ark*, through a mighty *exodus*, and even through the giving of the *law* and the *prophets*. But it wasn't until He sent His Son that we were given the ultimate expression of His love. For only through the shed blood of His dear Son were we provided eternal life. As a child of God it is my natural response to live out my faith in an atmosphere of thanksgiving.

The Bible has much to say – both in the OT and in the New about the act of giving thanks. For the Christian, thanksgiving, along with her twin-sister: “praise”, are our constant companions. For us, *everyday* is Thanksgiving!

Since the Bible has so much to say about Thanksgiving, shouldn't we be concerned about doing it right? Think about it; we have a specific way that we will celebrate the American holiday of *Thanksgiving*, and we would not dare shortchange the day. For example, *If possible*, we would choose to observe the day by staying home from work, spending the day with family or friends, eating a delicious meal, and by reclining after the meal and probably watching some type of sporting event. No one wants to miss out on those activities (at least some of them).

So how do we do “giving thanks to the Lord” correctly? What is the acceptable way in which to say, “Thank You, Lord?”

While I do not suggest that there is only one “correct” way to say “thank-you” to God, I can, nevertheless, see how other believers reverently demonstrated their gratitude. By taking elements from each of these men and women’s “sacrifice of thanksgiving”, I am allowed to see that the “attitude of gratitude” is particularly pleasing unto the Father. Let me also be quick to say that there are multiplied hundreds of examples and verses that we could examine today as examples of thanksgiving, but time will only allow us to sample but a handful.

Saying, “Thank you, Lord” is:

I. A Voluntary Reflex of the Believer

- And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer *it* at your own will. – Lev. 22:29

While there were certain feasts and sacrifices that were specifically demanded from God, the sacrifice of Thanksgiving was to be done at the prompting of the believer. How often and how extravagant the sacrifice was up to the discretion of the saint. Would it be fair to say the one could discern certain spiritual facts about an individual based upon this sacrifice?

How would you have handled this command? What would you have brought and when? Do you think that since the sacrificial system was fulfilled in Christ that God is no longer interested in your “sacrifice of thanksgiving?” I think that the attitude of the Psalmist holds true for believers of every age:

- I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. – Ps. 116:17

This should be an automatic response of someone who has been rescued from the flames of torment and adopted into the family of King.

Second, we will see that our act of Thanksgiving is:

II. Expressed Through Music and Singing

- And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *he is* good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever – Ezra 3:11a
- I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. – Ps. 69:30
- Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. – Ps. 95:2
- Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: Ps. 147:7

Notice a few things about their Thanksgiving music. It was:

- a. highly structured – “*by course*”
- b. Lively – “*praising*”

[there were two main reasons why the charismatic movement exploded in the 80’s.
1) people got sick and tired of hypocritical and smug Baptists who did nothing but constantly fight and act unchristian. 2) because there was no power in the sermons or life

in the music of the average Baptist church. Mainly for those two reasons, right or wrong, people left for charismatic assemblies in droves]

c. God/Christ centered – “*praise the name of God*” that is they sang about Him; specifically and exclusively.

d. Intimate – “*unto Him*” – they sang directly to Him.

Some have noticed that generally speaking, in older hymns we are usually singing *about* God, while in more modern contemporary songs we find ourselves singing *to* God. Both are beneficial. Both are scriptural.

e. Joyous – “*joyful noise*” even those times when we sing with a broken heart, the collective voices of the sanctified children of God cannot hide their joyous hearts. Rejoicing and singing are the hallmarks of the children of God.

From the Bible we can also detect that Thanksgiving is:

III. Personalized through our Witness

- That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. - Ps 26:7
- And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing. - Ps 107:22
- By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. – Heb. 13:15

Minding these words would cure many cases of depression. Constantly recounting our blessings from God would put husbands and wives back on the same page; it would bring parents and children together.

How often to you dwell on what is wrong in your life, your marriage, your church, or your life? How often to you rejoice in all that is right?

IV. The Main Ingredient of our Prayers

- I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. - Ps 116:17
- Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; - Eph. 5:20
- I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, - Phm. 4
- Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; - Phil. 4:6
- pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. – 1 Thess. 5:17-18
- Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; - Col. 4:2

We are all aware of the fact that praying involves asking God to do certain things that we cannot do for ourselves. This is not a bad thing. Is it wrong for a child to ask his mother to prepare him a meal when he is hungry? (Rachel and Josh do not mind!) So it is not wrong for us to ask of our Heavenly Papa to answer those things which are besetting our life. But lest we only think of God as some sort of heavenly Santa Claus, we need to always bathe our prayers in the sweet perfume of thanksgiving.

That leads into our final point about Thanksgiving. It is always a:

V. Prerequisite to Acceptable Worship

- Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. - Ps 100:4

 - And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. – Rev.11:16-17
- 1) Worship/thanksgiving is not a spectator sport.
 - 2) How did you participate in worship today? [giving thanks, tithing, singing with joy, praying, receiving the preached Word, praising God, etc.]
 - 3) How will you observe the national Holiday on Thursday?