

“GIVE THANKS”

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Colossians 2:1-7*

Two old friends met one another on the street one day. One of them looked forlorn, almost on the verge of tears. His friend asked, “What has the world done to you my old Friend?!” The sad fellow replied, “Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, an uncle died and left me \$40,000.” “That’s a lot of money!” said the friend. “But two weeks ago, a cousin I never even knew died and left me \$85,000. – free and clear.” “Sounds like you’ve been blessed!” “You don’t understand!” he interrupted, “Last week my great aunt passed away. I inherited almost a quarter of a million dollars.” Now, his friend was really confused. “Then why do you look so glum?” His reply, “This week...nothing!”

Not exactly an attitude of gratitude. Not exactly a heart filled with Thanksgiving. There are too many times when we too easily look down, and specialize in and on the negatives of life. We allow the hurtful, the disappointing, the nasty to lead and guide our lives. Even though there are a wealth of blessings surrounding us, you and me – we turn our gaze downward and allow God’s blessings to be eclipsed.

Well, what better time than the Sunday before Thanksgiving to remind you to Give Thanks?!

Give thanks! That’s today’s memory verse! Give thanks! I know! I know! We all have problems, and issues, and some of great concern – but remember Paul’s words in Colossians, as Christians “abounding in Thanksgiving.” Give Thanks!

Here is a little history. Governor William Bradford of Massachusetts composed the first American Thanksgiving proclamation three years after the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth. And if you recall, all was not peaches and cream at that time. But they knew how to give thanks!

In as the Great Father has given us this year of an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables and has made the forest to abound with game and the seas with fish and clams, and inasmuch as He 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 nine and twelve in the daytime, on Thursday, November 29th, in 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.

To give thanks is necessary! Now, let that sink in . . . Thanksgiving is necessary!

Giving thanks; being grateful; expressing appreciation is a requirement for life! Yes, it is!!

We need an attitude of gratitude! We need a tank-full of thankful! (Oh, excuse me. I was getting carried away). Almost all of us could counter, “I have so many problems, worries, cares, fears; what do I have to be thankful for? —Consider—perhaps, that is exactly the time when you need to be thankful. Thanksgiving has the power to change us, you and me.

Even in times of great distress, indeed especially in times of great distress, you need to express thankfulness. Thanksgiving adds perspective to your life. It can take you outside, beyond your limited view of your troubled, confused life.

Consider our National Holiday, Thanksgiving. There is no doubt it is an exceptionally popular holiday. It is filled with religious attitude, and yet is non-sectarian. It was no afterthought, the institution of Thanksgiving. In times of distress, Thanksgiving was needed. In 1777, Continental Congress issued the first national Thanksgiving Proclamation. The occasion was the Battle of Saratoga. Americans were enjoined to “express the grateful feelings of their hearts and consecrate themselves to the service of their Divine Benefactor.”

In 1863, after the Union Victory of Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation that set the precedent for today’s holiday. The last Thursday in November was to be a time of “Thanksgiving and Praise . . . to the Most High God.”

In 1942, on Thanksgiving Day, the darkest year of WWII, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation recognizing the war, (our battle for preserving liberty) expressing “our dependence upon Almighty God.”

Now! Now! Now! Give Thanks!!!

The words, ‘Thanksgiving’ and ‘Thanks’ appear in the Bible over 140 times. The idea of being thankful, expressing thankfulness, appears hundreds of times.

- ❖ Jesus gives thanks to God, when sharing bread, in the feeding of 4,000 plus (story in Matthew 15).
- ❖ Jesus again gives thanks to God, at his last Seder.
- ❖ There are numerous Biblical citations where Jesus gives thanks, expresses thanksgiving.
- ❖ Paul often gives thanks. He gives thanks to God, to Christ, to friends, such as Prisca and Aquila (in Romans).
- ❖ Overflowing with Thanksgiving!
- ❖ Give thanks!

I chose the Colossian passage this morning. I could have chosen any number of Bible passages, from either the Hebrew Scriptures, or the New Testament that express Thanksgiving. To give thanks is an attitude toward life. It makes a difference in your life; whether you “give thanks,” to be overflowing with thanksgiving. There’s the Gospel! There’s what Jesus and Paul are trying to get across to all those turkey’s, around them. (I mean—religious leaders, disciples, crowds).

It’s time! It really is. It’s time to give thanks. It’s time to break the barriers, the excuses, the hems and haws and be thankful! Overflowing with Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving, a day when families and friends sit down to feast and give thanks for home, country and God. This year we will welcome to our table a family from Ghana, friends of my son’s and now our friends also. They are a wonderful Christian family. And they will be subjected to (I mean blessed with), our tradition of each person at the table – expressing “thanksgiving”, something they are thankful for. Oh, and I need to make a slight correction from last week’s service. I somewhat misspoke. When Rabbi Kaplan finished his children’s sermon, I was asked “What makes me happy?” and apparently several of you were keyed right in, because you remarked to each other without hesitation – “Candied sweet potatoes.” Well, I said Rabbi Larry’s friendship made me happy, but upon further consideration... I do enjoy those candied sweet potatoes! In fact – I’ve been promised some next week that include pineapple...life is good!!

Give thanks!

Friends, it's your call! How you live. You've been taught through our Christian faith to live in Jesus Christ, rooted and built up in him and establish in the faith, just as you taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Friends,

Give Thanks!

Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

And be sure to pass the candied sweet potatoes!

Amen.