

Thanksgiving

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We're going to talk about Thanksgiving today. It seems like it's been a long time since I've heard a sermon on Thanksgiving.

It seems that time slips by and we tend to breeze by Thanksgiving. Ours will be next Thursday. It was set legally for the fourth Thursday in November and for our Canadian brethren, it's the second Monday in October. Traditionally for everyone, I think it's just about the same. I don't know how your family goes, but it's a big day for family gatherings. It's for football and those kinds of things. It's a day of celebration.

We as God's people, should be the most thankful people on the face of the earth. I'm going to talk about that quite a bit today.

Before I get too far into this, I just want to say that I'm well aware that some Church of God people think that Thanksgiving has pagan roots, so they don't celebrate or observe it. This approach comes in several ways. You perhaps heard more than I have.

The first bit of reasoning in not wanting to observe Thanksgiving as a national holiday is that it is not in scripture, so we should not observe it.

The other is that in pagan cultures, they would celebrate after the fall harvest. Who knows what that was, whether it was a drunken orgy or what. You can Google that and, yes, ancient cultures did celebrate the harvest. Especially if the harvest was bountiful, they would celebrate that.

Then we have some of the symbols that are usually associated with Thanksgiving like the cornucopia, the horn of plenty. I know that comes right out of Greek mythology. We often see the expression of abundance that we enjoy.

Satan is often depicted as this evil being with the two ram's horns, and that does it. Some would say, "Satan is in this so I'm outa here."

People are free to think however they choose, whether I think it's misguided or not.

Much worse are the blatantly pagan holidays, the ones that we don't keep as a church. They claim to be Christian, and those are obvious. As far as I'm concerned, you have to make a real stretch to tie in Thanksgiving with paganism. It can't be proven.

I won't review the history of Thanksgiving. I think most of us know that, although I'm sure that most traditions gather some mythological baggage as time goes on. I'm not sure how accurate that is. There were a lot of bad things that happened with the pilgrims. There was cruelty to the indigenous people that were here. One of the

tragedies that happened; I'm not sure whether it was the Vikings or the settlers from England that came later on to America, but they brought measles which decimated some of the northeastern tribes.

When I think of the people that won't keep it for that kind of reason, what I worry about is that of the whole concept of thankfulness. In my opinion, this should be a constant thing for God's people. It should be a constant frame of mind. But if you are of that particular persuasion where you think it's pagan, wherever you are, you are welcome to tune out and I sincerely hope you have a good Sabbath.

However, I'm going to talk about Thanksgiving. I could launch into a very long list, and there are many scriptures. The Psalms are full of thanks, many of those being prayers. They are worship towards God, they are thankfulness to God, and gratitude towards God. I'm just going to throw out a smattering of things here. I know we all heard sermons in the past about giving thanks.

One of the first items I can think of that I feel we should be very thankful for is our nation, our country. I think we should be very thankful for where we live. We don't have a choice about where we are born. It's not wrong to appreciate and be grateful to God for our country. I can't speak for our Canadian brethren, but we've had many wonderful feasts in Canada. It's a beautiful place. One time we kept the feast in Edmonton and after the feast, (Marie and I didn't have children then), but after the feast we went west from Edmonton to the Rockies. We came to an area where the elk are as thick as sparrows. It was a wonderful trip.

In my 75 years, I've been to many countries, some good and some bad. Again, we don't have a choice about where we were born. I've been to poverty stricken countries. I don't believe I've ever been anywhere in the United States where people are very poverty stricken. In most third-world countries, you will see hordes of little kids begging on the street. I've never seen that in the United States. On the rooftops there are sand bags, mortar positions, and that kind of stuff. Also you'll see that law enforcement is the military in many poor countries. Then you're really in trouble. That's martial law. Many of those places simply are not safe.

I left home right out of high school. I was a typical naïve teenager. I joined the Navy because I bought the recruiter's line about being able to see the world. When you live in a small town, you just want to get away and go to the big city. I spent about five years doing that and when I came home, I never wanted to leave again.

We've been places after that. We've been blessed to go to different feast sites. We've been to Australia, to Fiji and other places, but it's always good to come back home.

Do you remember some of the videos we saw when the POWs were being released from Vietnam? The most heart wrenching sights that I have from that were when some of them came off the plane, they would kneel down and kiss the tarmac. It was such a relief to be home.

We enjoy all these freedoms in this country. Of course, it's getting worse and worse. There are a lot of people that would like to take our freedom away, but we enjoy that here.

So what does all this have to do with scriptures? Did you ever notice that one of the blessings that God gave us is good land? Let's turn to Deuteronomy 8. Good land is a great blessing, and we are blessed to be here to enjoy that.

Deuteronomy 8:1. "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers. (NKJV)

Of course, we know that started back in Genesis with Abraham. It was promised as a blessing. We'll look at that a bit later, about Abraham.

2) And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

3) So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone (Christ quoted this in the New Testament); but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

4) Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. (NKJV)

Everything lasted.

5) You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

6) "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

7) For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; (NKJV)

The creation is beautiful, and we have that here. When our youngest son was still home, we would backpack. One of our favorite spots was a high mountain lake. It was a six-mile hike. It was four miles to one end of the lake and pick up the trail and hike another two miles to the end of the lake. It was a gorgeous spot. The lake was like glass. There was an island in the middle of the lake and there was a little resort there where you could buy some food. You could rent row boats because motors were not allowed. It was pristine, beautiful and clean. That's nature.

In many places in the world, you don't find anything like that. Let's continue in Deuteronomy. It continues with the blessings that God is giving.

Deuteronomy 8:8. *a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; (NKJV)*

There were abundant crops and food.

9) a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. (NKJV)

The resources are abundant.

10) When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. (NKJV)

Not to mention to be thankful and appreciative for all the physical blessings and a beautiful place to live.

11) “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, (NKJV)

The blessings from God are conditional.

12) lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;

13) and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; (NKJV)

Enjoying all the blessings and abundance of this gift of good land that God has given.

14) when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; (NKJV)

God warns that we should not forget where all this comes from. We'll look at scriptures later that say the same thing.

15) who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;

16) who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—

17) then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ (NKJV)

That is an unthankful, arrogant attitude towards God.

18) *“And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

19) *Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. (NKJV)*

What happened to the Israelites repeatedly? They did that, and they were captured and carried away from that good land. They lost that good land because of their disobedience.

20) *As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

Personally I think we would be derelict if we don't consider in our hearts daily how thankful we should be to God for the physical blessings He provides, our country being one of those. It's a great place to live. Just go live somewhere else for a while.

Isn't it funny that people that hate America, and we have a lot of them, isn't it strange that we don't see them lining up at the dock or international airports trying to get out of here?

I have a poem about loving America. It's written by John Mitchem. He's kind of a supporting actor. He was the younger brother of Robert Mitchem, who was leading man in a lot of movies. As the story goes, these brothers during the 1930s, during the depression, they hoboed around the country, riding the rails, etc. They saw America like most of us will never see. This poem that John Mitchem composed had to do with the experiences of his travels. You might look at this as corny patriotism, but here goes.

My Beautiful America Beneath God's Wide White Sky

You ask me Why I Love Her?
Well, give me time. I'll explain.
Have you seen a Kansas sunset
Or an Arizona rain?
Have you drifted on a bayou
Down Louisiana way?
Have you watched a cold fog drifting
Over San Francisco Bay?
Have you heard a bobwhite calling
In the Carolina pines,
Or heard the bellow of a diesel
At the Appalachia mines?
Does the call of Niagara thrill you
When you hear her waters roar?
Do you look with awe and wonder

At her Massachusetts shore...
Where men who braved a hard new world
First stepped on Plymouth's rock?
And, do you think of them when you stroll
Along a New York City dock?
Have you seen a snowflake drifting
In the Rockies, way up high?
Have you seen the sun come blazing down
From a bright Nevada sky?
Do you hail to the Columbia
As she rushes to the sea?
Or bow your head at Gettysburg
At our struggle to be free?
Have you seen the mighty Tetons?
Have you watched an eagle soar?
Have you seen the Mississippi
Roll along Missouri's shore?
Have you felt a chill at Michigan
When on a winter's day
Her waters rage along the shore
In thunderous display?
Does the word "Aloha" make you warm?
Do you stare in disbelief
When you see the surf
Come roaring in at Waimea Reef?
From Alaska's cold to the Everglades,
From the Rio Grande to Maine,
My heart cries out, my pulse runs fast
At the might of her domain!
You ask me why I love her?
I've a million reasons why ---
My Beautiful America,
Beneath God's wide, wide sky.

That poem is probably better known as being narrated by the famous actor, Marion Morrison. We probably know him better as John Wayne. Actually, you can look that up on Google if you want to. He recites that much more dramatically than I can. It's a beautiful poem. Actually it's on YouTube.

Here's another famous speech about our country, America.

We've been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God and we have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us and we have vainly

imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to the fill the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace. Too proud to pray to the God that made us, it behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended power, to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Abraham Lincoln
National Day of Fasting and Prayer
March 30, 1863

If I remember right, the Civil War was still going on at that time. When you think about it, that was 152 years ago. According to the U.S. census, 152 years ago, there were approximately 31+ million people in this country. The latest census in the U.S. is 321+ million now. That's about ten times more.

I think it's a nation that is largely, not all, ungrateful, unappreciative and unthankful for our national blessings that we still enjoy. Granted, there are a lot of things wrong, but it's mostly what people have done or are doing to her. That's what is wrong. It's mostly self-interested people that divide. God always wants to unite.

Again, it's just my opinion, but I think that we of all people should be most thankful to God for this wonderful, beautiful country that we live in.

Here's another thing to be thankful for. Again, like I said earlier, I'm going to throw out just a smattering of things that I thought of.

During World War II, there was a special unit developed because of a need. They were called the Path Finders. They would actually parachute in or sometimes go in a sub and a rubber raft and get into an area. They were sent ahead to do recon, to kind of lead the way. We too, as God's people have had people go before us. There are people that have actually paved the way, most of the time through great personal sacrifice. They gave their lives. We have that true today. We have that book that we all use.

My first thought is Abraham's sacrifice and the tremendous trial he went through. That whole account is in Genesis. God made that promise to Abraham and repeated to Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son, and through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He kept repeating that promise. They didn't see how that was possible. Years went by. They did things, and we have that account in Genesis. They even tried to rush things a bit, because Sara gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham. As a result, a child, Ishmael, was born. We remember the story where Hagar and Ishmael were sent away because Sara got angry. I believe it's in Genesis 21 where God promised that He would bless Ishmael. Have you noticed the land that the Arabs inherited? They have lots of oil and sand. That's what they inherited. That's interesting.

Finally, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son, Isaac. Then after he was grown up, as the story goes, God told Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him. We read that and tend to think, "Here's Abraham. He was really close to God and talked to God and God talked to him." We think that he understood what God was doing. How could he understand that? After all of those years hoping that God would provide that son God had promised. Now God wants Abraham to kill his son. That whole account is in Genesis 22. You may want to turn there. There is no way that it was an easy thing for Abraham to do. I cannot imagine the trauma and the agony he went through. But he did what he was told to do, no matter how gut wrenching that was for him. He did it. He trusted that God would provide a sacrifice. He was ready with the knife poised, and God sent an angel to say, "No, Abraham, stop. Don't kill the boy."

Then God repeated the promise. In Genesis 22 we will read verses 15 through 18 from the NLT.

Genesis 22:15. *Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven.*

16) *"This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that*

17) *I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies.*

18) *And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."* (NLT)

Yes, that's a two-fold promise. We know that. But there's a physical blessing there as well, very much so. Traditionally, our belief is that we celebrate this day of Thanksgiving in a land because one of those nations, through Abraham, finally came down to this time. It's because of Abraham's obedience. I'm thankful for Abraham because he was willing, despite the agony and everything he had to go through to prove himself in that terrible trial that he had to endure.

Of course, that foreshadowed another sacrifice that we should be even more thankful for, the other part of this. That's in John 3:16. You may not need to turn there. We know it by heart. Have you ever looked to see what that really says?

John 3:16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (NKJV)*

He's back in heaven now, but He came down from heaven. It's so easy to read right over that and not think about where He came down from. He came down from the very throne of God. When you look back in history, time doesn't mean anything to God. But at some point they formed a plan and they created man. They had a plan in mind and also part of that plan was for one of them to come down and be God's Son and he would be a human sacrifice.

14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

16) For God so loved the world ... (NKJV)

That's a love without bounds. We can love the people who are close to us or the things close to us, but we don't have the capacity to love the world.

16b) ... that He gave His only begotten Son ... (NKJV)

You see the connection there. He earlier told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, the son He promised to him. Now we have God, the Father sacrificing His son.

16 continued) ... that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (NKJV)

So again, do we think it was easy for God to do that? They devised a plan that was going to require Him to sacrifice His Son. His Son would die. We have to ask ourselves, are we thankful for that sacrifice? Are we thankful to God, the Father that devised that plan, and His Son that said, "I'll do that, Father. Not my will but yours." Look at the agony He went through before that crucifixion. Then God let Him die as a sacrifice, so there could be the promise of eternal life for all mankind. Again, are we thankful to God for that sacrifice? We should be eternally thankful. I hope that we are.

Here's another item that I thought about for which we should be thankful; that is the Sabbath day. Remember when the lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment? He condensed it into two. He said love towards God and love towards your neighbor. If you look at the ten commandments. We've probably heard this many times, but I want to review it quickly. The first four are our relationship with God and the last six are in regard to our relationship with our fellow man. That all starts with the fifth commandment to honor your mother and father. That is where we should learn respect in our lives. We've heard that the fifth commandment is the pivotal one. I kind of think that the fourth commandment, remember the Sabbath day, is the hinge that holds it all together. I think the fourth commandment is absolutely vital to our spiritual wellbeing. It just is.

We believe that God's plan is pictured and described in the holy days. If you go back to Leviticus 23, what is the very first thing mentioned? It's the Sabbath day, the seventh day. Even with the holy days, I think the commandment about the Sabbath hinges that whole plan together. Why do I say that? Let's turn to Exodus 20. I don't know if you've ever thought about it this way, but God's commandments are part of His plan. I think this fourth one is absolutely crucial because God's plan is exactly the opposite of Satan's plan. It is when you think about it. Satan's plan is to enslave everyone. He has

done a pretty successful job so far, because God has allowed him. But that is Satan's plan.

Exodus 20:1. *And God spoke all these words, saying: (NKJV)*

He is beginning the ten commandments.

2) *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (slavery). (NKJV)*

We review this during the spring holy days, the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. God brought us out of Satan's world where we were enslaved. We see that comparison every year.

Then God begins to give a code of how to apply, to leave and prevent that enslavement again, which we don't want to do. Again, the first three: (1) don't worship other gods; (2) don't worship idols; (3) don't take God's name in vain; and the fourth one again, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. In Hebrew, if you look at the word "remember," it means that *you keep something in the forefront of your mind, the working part, and you act on it by remembering it.*

The second word about the Sabbath, that word is interesting. In the Hebrew, it's derived from a word that means *intermission*. Remember the old movies when they were good and they were long? They had an intermission. It was a time out. You could take a breather or go to the rest room or get a bag of popcorn. Again, it's like that for us. The Sabbath is a time out; it's a pause from the influence of Satan's world. If you look at the day, it's a space of time. You can slice that any way you want. We hear all kinds of arguments about the Passover, and some try to over analyze what a day means. Well, it simply means from sunset to sunset.

The last part of that commandment is to keep holy. That's more than just to set a day apart. It's a day that is consecrated, dedicated, an undefiled day to worship God. The intent is to worship formally by assembling. This is hard to believe, but I remember an individual a number of years ago who would go home from services on the Sabbath and watch football games. That's unbelievable to me. That's total defilement. That's polluting the Sabbath day that God gives us. Christ said that the Sabbath was made for man, not the other way around.

9) *Six days you shall labor and do all your work,*

10) *but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.*

11) *For in six days (pointing back to creation) the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (NKJV)*

Let's turn to Deuteronomy 5. There are a couple differences as Moses repeats and restates that commandment. It makes it interesting. To me, it adds to that. Here is a repeat of the ten commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:12. *‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. (NKJV)*

Instead of remember, it says to observe. If you look up that word in the Hebrew, it means to *hedge about, to guard*. The Sabbath is something that we want to guard and preserve, because it's for our benefit. If we won't do that, it could slip away. Some people have stopped keeping the Sabbath. It slipped away from them. In verse 15, it's kind of interesting because instead of pointing to creation week, it says ...

15) And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (NKJV)

So if you wanted to put all of that in a nut shell, God called us, you and me, out of a world ruled by Pharaoh/Satan and gave us a respite, gave us this reprieve, this intermission on a weekly basis from that influence.

Does anyone want to argue that Satan's influence isn't getting stronger and stronger? Sure it is. It's a 24-hour break in the 168 hours that we have in a week. The other days, we have to function in the world. We have to make a living, we have to go shopping, etc. So why would we not want to keep that foremost in our mind, the Sabbath and what it means to us? We must preserve that and protect it and not let it slip away. Why would we not want to assemble with brethren of like mind? Why is that?

I remember a story that a minister told about one of his friends. He said, "You know, I've been in the church so long, forty some years. I don't go to Sabbath services to learn about doctrine. I don't go to hear instructions about the things we do traditionally or otherwise in the church. I don't do that, because I know all of that. Sometimes I don't go even to try to get anything out of the sermon, I go to worship God because He commands me to do that, and to be with other brethren of like mind. I thought that was a great comment. What an attitude. What a conversion.

Remember that Christ said that the Sabbath was made for man. It's a gift that we should be so thankful for.

Another Sabbath scripture we can look at is in Isaiah 58. Back in the early days we would use a colored pencil and highlight all the Sabbath scriptures, etc. Actually, I wore that Bible out. I had to buy another one.

Isaiah 58:13. *“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight ... (NKJV)*

That's an interesting word to look at. Delight means a *luxury*. It means an *extravagance*. The Sabbath should be a time of delight and enjoyment. It's a whole lot different than the attitude of, "Well, I have to drag myself to services and listen to another boring sermon. I have to sit around for a while, and then I can finally go home." That's not a good attitude regarding the Sabbath.

13b) ...The holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him ... (NKJV)

We honor God when we come together when we assemble and worship Him.

13 continued) ... not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure ... (NKJV)

Finding our own pleasure means a desire for earthly things, for example whatever you do to make a living. That's what the word "pleasure" means.

13 continued) ... Nor speaking your own words, (NKJV)

That means speaking about your earthly business or things.

14) Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken." (NKJV)

There are great blessings for doing that.

There is an Old Testament example of God's reaction to a kind of approach that pleased Him. It's over in 1 Chronicles 29. The context here is about David wanting to build a great temple, but because of his weaknesses and his sin, God is not going to allow him to do that. But he was able to accumulate the materials for that temple. Then Solomon came along later and he built it.

1 Chronicles 29:9. *Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the LORD; and King David also rejoiced greatly.*

10) Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.

11) Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all.

12) Both riches and honor come from You ... (NKJV)

That was mentioned earlier in Abraham Lincoln's speech.

12b) ... and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

13) "Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. (NKJV)

David goes on to say:

14) *But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. (NKJV)*

He says, "We're just giving back to You what you gave us in the first place." It was mentioned that all we can give to God is our thanks and express our appreciation. We can't give anything materially back to God. It came from God. David knew that. All that substance, all the things he had accumulated for the temple was just merely giving back to God that which He had given to him. We can find a corollary to that in Matthew 11.

Matthew 11:25. *At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (NKJV)*

That's us.

26) *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.*

27) *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (NKJV)*

Again, that's us.

28) *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

29) *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

30) *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (NKJV)*

Do we have something to be thankful for there? Jesus Christ thanked God for you and me. He was grateful for that. I can reference myself in that. Sometimes I don't think He got much of a bargain with me, but that's really what this says. In verse 25 again, He said:

25) *At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (NKJV)*

Christ thanked God for every one of us, brethren. We have that promise from Him right here. He gives us an easy burden and a light yoke if we cast all of our burdens and all

of our trials on Him and if we give Him the honor and credit for the things we are thankful for.

Turn again to 2 Chronicles 5. Here the building has been completed.

2 Chronicles 5:1. *So all the work that Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated (all the things that God gave him): the silver and the gold and all the furnishings. And he put them in the treasuries of the house of God.*

11) And it came to pass when the priests came out of the Most Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions),

12) and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets

13) indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, (NKJV)

Wow! What a worship service. Look what happened. All the singing and praising to God. It was a group, an assembly.

14) so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God. (NKJV)

They stood and praised God with music and singing. God heard that and honored it and He loved the worship and He filled the house with His glory. That kind of reminds me of the type of God's holy spirit that was given at Pentecost. It filled the whole house. That's an interesting comparison.

That was the physical temple. Now we are the spiritual temple. We're God's house now. How thankful are we to be called to be part of God's house now? Turn to 1 Timothy 3. Paul is saying:

1 Timothy 3:14. *These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;*

15) but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (NKJV)

We are called into a family. I don't know about you, but Thanksgiving for us is a very big family day. We get everybody together. It's not a holy day. There are football games and kids running around doing this and that. My son has a wonderful home and

out back they have a landscaped area where there is a fire pit. We will bundle up and go out and build a fire and have a wonderful day, and lots of food. Marie likes it because the daughter-in-law has taken over preparation of the turkey and the heavy work. She appreciates that.

But we, as God's people are a spiritual family. We are in God's spiritual temple, bound together by God's holy spirit. It says that in 1 Corinthians 3:16.

1 Corinthians 3:16. *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (NKJV)*

1 Corinthians 3:16. *Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? (NLT)*

Turn to Hebrews 3:1. Paul is speaking.

Hebrews 3:1. *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2) who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. (NKJV)*

It's talking about a house, a building; going back and forth between physical and spiritual.

*3) For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.
4) For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.
5) And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, (NKJV)*

We have that now.

6) but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. (NKJV)

The whole point there is that we are the house of God. We should be extremely thankful for that. We could be somewhere else, and we're thankful we're not. We were called out of that.

Another thing to be thankful for is that God has opened our minds. You might not put it together this way but I want to bring something out in Daniel. God has opened our minds. He has given us things that we wouldn't have even thought of. Have you ever been in Bible study or meditation or just driving down the road and you had a thought just pop into your head? You think, "Boy, I've never thought of that before." It's a spiritual thing. It's awesome. This is an interesting account, and we remember what led up to this. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and God revealed it to Daniel.

Daniel 2:19. *Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

20) *Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. (NKJV)*

He was thankful to God for that revelation.

21) *And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.*

22) *He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.*

23) *"I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's demand." (NKJV)*

Daniel understood where the revelation came from. God revealed the meaning of the dreams to him. When you think about that, He revealed knowledge of the dream to him that reaches down to our day. He revealed things in that dream that are going to impact every nation on the face of the earth in the future. That may be very close, we don't know.

The point I'm trying to make here is that we cannot claim that kind of revelation. We can't interpret dreams, at least I can't. Daniel recognized and gave thanks and praise to God for revealing that dream.

We should do the same thing and feel the same way, for the understanding and perception that we have that God has given us through His holy spirit. He has given that to the babes of the world, not the great and the mighty. He hasn't given it to the people who could really use it, maybe put it in some super computer or something. He has given it to us.

Paul says that plainly in 1 Corinthians 1. Look at what Paul says about the church today, and this has held true in every sense.

1 Corinthians 1:18. *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

19) *For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."*

20) *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*

21) *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (that's us).*

22) *For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;*

23) *but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, (NKJV)*

1 Corinthians 2:7. *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, (NKJV)*

That's part of God's plan, to call a people and give us His holy spirit. We can say that today. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. It's hidden wisdom. The wise don't understand it. No one understands it, but God ordained that. It's part of God's plan, to give it to some of us. It doesn't make us special at all. We should be very thankful for it, just like some of these scriptures we've read. They recognized where it came from and they were thankful and praised God for that.

1 Corinthians 2:8. *which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

9) *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

10) *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

11) *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*

12) *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world (not Satan's spirit), but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

13) *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (NKJV)*

That's the only way that works. If you don't have it in here, you don't have it anywhere else. You're not going to learn it just by reading the Bible.

16) *For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (NKJV)*

Do you and I really appreciate having that? If you are called by Him, we are in Christ, and we have the mind of Christ. Speaking for myself, if I can compare it to light, that it might be a little bit dim. I would like to say I had one hundred percent the mind of Christ, but none of us do. We have a small part of it to use in our lives, to overcome and to exercise the mind of Christ in any way we have the opportunity. We should be so thankful for that. That should really stir thankfulness in us, to know we have the mind of Christ.

Do you ever think about the opposite of thankfulness? We, above all people, should choose thankfulness, appreciation, gratitude and all of its synonyms. Cheerfulness is part of that, appreciation, gratitude and even joyfulness. That all ties into a forgiving spirit as well. Do we want to be remembered as reflecting the opposite of thankfulness? That would be an unthankful, gloomy and unforgiving spirit, and resentment, bitterness

and sadness. Those are the opposites of thankfulness. I don't think we want to be remembered that way, at least I hope we don't.

I heard someone say that hanging onto resentment and those negative things is like letting something you despise live rent free in your head. That's an accurate saying. It's similar to one that says that hating is like acid. It's more harmful to the container than what it's spilled onto.

I heard once in a sermon, I believe, that they saw a reader board in front of a church. It said, "If you can't be thankful for the things you do receive, then be thankful for the things you don't receive that you really deserve to receive." You might remember that. You know there are a lot of things we deserve that haven't happened to us yet. We should be thankful for that.

Again, we should be chief among all the people on earth that are thankful to God for our blessings. Even a day set aside nationally; it's a good day to celebrate the freedom, the land, and especially the things we have that have been given to us by God.

Granted, there are a lot of things to be sad about, if you want to dwell on it. There's a lot to complain about concerning our leaders, and also in this election year, it will intensify. There's a lot to criticize and have contempt for. We can't do that. We cannot let our minds dwell there. We choose thankfulness, not resentment or contempt. We should have a constant attitude of thankfulness. Paul says that in 1 Thessalonians 5 from the NLT. Towards the end of chapter 4, it talks about Christ's return. Those that are alive are not going to be changed before those that are dead.

1 Thessalonians 5:1. *Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don't really need to write you.*

2) For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

3) When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

4) But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

5) For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.

6) So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded.

7) Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk.

8) But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

9) For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us.

10) Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.

11) *So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*

...

15) *See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. (NLT)*

That is interesting. It gives three attitudes and approaches that we should have.

16) *Always be joyful.*

17) *Never stop praying.*

18) *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (NLT)*

The King James says to *be thankful in everything*.

I ran across a good commentary. I'm going to quote this from The Preacher's Commentary. He is referring to this verse.

“

In everything give thanks. This is the third command, and it certainly grows out of the first two. Joy and unceasing prayer flow forth in a constant stream of gratitude. I'm not in agreement with the interpretation of this phrase that calls us to praise and thank God for everything that happens. I can't imagine God being thankful for everything that happens. Things happen because of the selfishness or sinfulness of ourselves or others and should be changed, not accepted. I prefer to thank God for being God and to focus on Him rather than the things that happen. The great drama of the Bible centers on the belief that God is at work for good in the lives of His people no matter what.

There was nothing good in Joseph's brothers selling him to the Ishmaelite traders. There was nothing good about the injustices he experienced from Potiphar's wife. But in retrospect, Joseph could say, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

In a sense, Paul articulated that when he said:

Romans 8:28. *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (NKJV)*

To continue with the quote:

Our translation tends to make all things the subject rather than God. A better translation is that in everything, God is at work for good. We must never forget that God is at work in and through and often in spite of the things. While I may not be able to give thanks for all of the things that happen, I can give thanks in

everything for the confidence that God is always present and always at work for good.

I thought that was a very good commentary. It's hard to disagree with that approach.

Brethren, we have so much to be thankful for, not only now, but in the future. Let's enjoy this Thanksgiving. It's a good day to celebrate with family and friends. Let's also keep in mind those wonderful blessings that God has given each and every one of us.