

Everyday Should Be A Day of Thanksgiving

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In keeping with this time of year, I want to talk about the Mayflower. The Mayflower, I think we all know, was the boat that came across the Atlantic Ocean with a number of people on it, to a new life. The Mayflower was a tiny boat when you think about it. It's only about twenty-five feet wide and it's less than 100 feet long, if you don't count the bow-sprit—the beam that goes out from the bow forward, to mount sails to. If you don't count that it's less than 100 feet long. She had four masts with a total of six sails. At the time of the crossing, the boat was about twelve years old and designed as a cargo ship. It was designed to haul lumber, fish and casks of French wine for short hops up and down the European coast and across the channel to England. It was never intended to transport passengers—it was not a passenger boat.

The fact is, it had a very bulky design. It was very short length-wise and very wide proportionately in width because it was designed to ply fairly calm waters. She was not designed for sailing on the open ocean. She was especially not designed for sailing across the northern Atlantic in the middle of winter. It was never before used for anything approaching a 3000-mile trip from England to North America—never designed for that.

The Mayflower set sail for America on the sixteenth of September in 1620 from Plymouth, England. On board were approximately thirty crew members and 102 passengers including three pregnant women. There were more than a dozen children on board. In fact, there was one baby born during the crossing. So, you have thirty crew, approximately 102 passengers, you have all of their belongings and most likely a few farm animals down in the hold, on this tiny, tiny, ship less than 100 feet long and twenty-five feet wide. Think about that. The passengers had to be squeezed below decks where it was obviously very crowded, very cold and very damp. Of course, winters in the north Atlantic are notoriously known for their very rough seas and very high winds. Obviously, these passengers, not being sea faring people to begin with, suffered horribly from crippling bouts of sea sickness on the way over.

They averaged about forty-five miles per day in sailing. They sailed sixty-six days across roughly 3000 miles of these very stormy seas and very stormy conditions. Their main diet would have been what we call today, hard tack. That's a cracker like biscuit that is dried and can be preserved. They also ate some salt pork, various dried meats which included cow tongue, various pickled foods and they had some oatmeal and cereal grains and of course, some fish. The fact was that usually, they could not cook the food due to the rough seas and the high winds out on deck. For those of us used to all the modern conveniences we have today, there were no toilet facilities, there were no beds and there were no berths. They used chamber pots and hauled the contents up and heaved it over the side and then brought the chamber pot down for the next user.

During their two-month journey to America, the Mayflower's passengers—think about it and what they went through—cramped quarters, rough seas, limited food and the numbing cold. The predictable result was, sea sickness and colds and flu which spread through all of these people in very, very tight quarters, below decks. There was no masking or social distancing.

Conrad Humphreys is a professional sailor and was the skipper of a recreated boat of the bounty and he sailed the course described in the book, *Mutiny on the Bounty* and said this about the Mayflower:

The boat would have been rolling like a pig. The smell and stench of illness and sickness down below and the freezing cold on deck in the elements, would have made conditions very, very miserable. And that's probably an understatement.

We have just finished Thanksgiving. We have to stop and ask—and think about those events—who were these people who would endure such hardships and take such risks, for themselves and their children and their lives and their relatives? Who would get into a small, unproven boat, endure extreme cold, hunger, sickness, risk their lives every day for two months, to sail to an unknown land in the beginning of winter? Who were these people who would do this? What made them do this?

Thirty-five to forty of the 102 passengers were Puritans and they were members of a radical Puritan sect called the English Separatist Church. The rest were called “strangers” meaning they were non-Separatists. So, some of those others—the strangers—were skilled craftsmen or indentured servants to the Separatists. At that time in Britain, every British citizen was expected to attend the Church of England, without exception. That was the rule of the land. Those who didn't attend the Church of England, which we know is an outgrowth of the Catholic church, were severely punished.

There was one group of farmers in northern England who were disparagingly known as Separatists and they began to worship in secret so that they would not be found out. But they worshipped in secret knowing full well that what they were doing was treasonous, punishable by death, imprisonment, by horrible beatings. Not all the Puritans in England felt they had to separate. The Separatists were a small group of the Puritans. Most of the Puritans felt they could work within the Church of England or through the Church of England to affect change. But the Separatists did not believe that. They were persecuted in England starting with Queen Elizabeth. If you know British history, she was the daughter of Ann Boleyn and King Henry VIII. She was adamant, she objected to anyone who opposed the Church of England. Some Separatists were executed at her hand, by her command, for advocating separation from the Church of England. She would not tolerate that. When Elizabeth died, King James I succeeded her and we know King James as the one responsible for the King James Bible. He was absolutely intolerant of their rebellion. Many were thrown into jail and James was the principle reason that these Separatists came to the conclusion that they had to flee England and start somewhere else, so they could worship their God in freedom.

Donna Curtain, who is the executive director of the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts says this:

“Once they decided that the only way, they could be true to their conscience was to leave the established church and secretly worship. They were hunted and persecuted and many of them faced the loss of their homes and the loss of their livelihood. When it became impossible for them to continue in this way, they began to seek another place to live. They found the Mayflower and the captain and made the arrangements to travel to America to escape the jurisdiction of the Church of England, which they found absolutely corrupt. Not following what they read in God’s word.”

These pilgrims read primarily the Geneva Bible which was published in 1560. This preceded the King James Bible by about fifty-one years. The Geneva Bible was the first mass produced Bible printed in English and was the one that was taken on the Mayflower. These early Separatists did not observe Christmas, they did not observe Easter. They saw these were holidays invented by men, because they were not referenced at all in the Bible that they could find, and because they were not observed by the early Christian church. So, these Separatists rejected men’s holidays. We can only imagine if they could see America today. They obeyed Matthew 6:31, let’s go there. When we read this, this is familiar scripture, read it from the viewpoint of these people walking down the plank, getting on this tiny, little boat in September of 1620. Put yourself in their perspective as we read this. Christ says this:

Matthew 6:31-33 *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
32) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (KJV)*

Now it’s one thing to read this in the comfort of a nice, heated, dry, comfortable room; it’s another thing to read this and be willing to step on a little tiny boat and sail 3000 miles over treacherous waters, to land in a strange land, where there is no food, no clothing and no shelter and just when winter was starting. That’s a whole different thing, to read this and obey this under those conditions.

The Separatists finally arrived on December 18, 1620. They landed at what is now known as Plymouth Bay, Massachusetts, at the start—the very beginning—of one of the harshest winters on record, the winter of 1620 and 1621. They suffered greatly from the general conditions aboard the ship which we have already described, and then arriving in Plymouth, they obviously had no shelter other than the boat itself. They suffered from scurvy because they had no fresh fruit or fresh vegetables and then on the land, it was in the middle of winter. They couldn’t just go and pick berries off a bush as it was snowing.

Sadly, forty-five of the 102 on the Mayflower—the passengers—died during that first winter. In other words, forty-five were never able to see spring in the new land that they had yearned for and hoped for and sacrificed for. But that first Thanksgiving celebrated by the Puritan Separatists, they were thankful to God Almighty. It was after their first harvest in the New World in the fall of 1621. A little less than a year later after they had landed. As recounted by Edward Winslow, who was there that day and wrote a journal, Edward said that this Puritan Thanksgiving lasted three full days and it was attended by fifty-three pilgrims and ninety Wampanoag Indians; they were a local, friendly tribe of Indians who actually helped the pilgrims and they were invited to that celebration.

Kate Sheehan, who is the director of Plymouth Plantation, Massachusetts says this:

We know it took place over three days sometime between mid-September and early November in 1621 and was considered a harvest celebration following the successful planting of multi-colored flint corn or maize. We know that after all these Separatists had been through and had lost almost half of their friends, their relatives, their mates, these survivors knew that they owed their lives to God Almighty. They knew that. The God that they worshipped, they gave full credit for the fact that they could be there that day and celebrate the harvest and they had gotten through that winter and had had a successful spring planting and a successful harvest. So, they set aside three days to give thanks to God Almighty. These are who went on this boat. These describe the people who were on this boat.

Today, those who survived that time are called Pilgrims, with a capital P. Donna Curtain the executive director of Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts points out though that William Bradford, who was the first governor of the colony, didn't name his community pilgrims. Pilgrims with a capital P was a word he was not familiar with and was not used in his lifetime. The first usage of the word Pilgrim with a capital P appeared around 1800 when a group of citizens in Plymouth, Massachusetts created a Pilgrim Society. They created this Society to organize a celebration of the founding of the colony in 1620. Before 1800, these Separatists who landed in Plymouth, were known up until about 1800 as "First Comers" or Forefathers".

Today, interestingly, more than 30 million people in the United States today and Canada can trace their ancestry to these 102 passengers and roughly thirty crewmen. That includes Presidents, James Garfield and John Adams, actor Humphrey Bogart, even chef Julia Child—she passed away not long ago—can trace their heritage. In fact, Dorothy, on her father's side, who came from Ohio, can trace his lineage right back to that boat. So, Thanksgiving continued in New England annually until it was proclaimed a national holiday in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. An editor of an influential women's magazine named Sarah Hail helped convince President Lincoln that the nation needed a National Day of Thanksgiving to try to unite the country during this horrible revolution that was going on. Then, seventy-eight years later, a few days after the start of World War II in December 26, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt fixed Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday in November.

So here we are today, after that beginning, here we are today. As with so many things, our country has strayed from the ideals upon which it was founded. From the ideals of giving thanks to God Almighty for food and clothing and shelter, a three-day festival, to our current national “holiday” of Thanksgiving. Today it’s called Turkey Day and people look forward to getting “stuffed” on Turkey Day. We eat ourselves into a coma and then watch football. I checked, I lost count at how many football games were telecast on Thanksgiving Day but there was at least a dozen, probably more. In fact, one commentator said “Thanksgiving means, ‘food, family, football’”. What’s the problem with that? I think we all know. The central focus of Thanksgiving has been deemphasized to the point that there’s actually no giving of thanks to God Almighty anymore. I watched carefully on TV, anytime we would watch TV, on the days running up to Thanksgiving and I never found one mention to God Almighty relative to Thanksgiving at all in the two weeks preceding Thanksgiving—it’s just not there.

We know that in—we won’t turn there—2 Timothy 3, a very familiar scripture,

Perilous times will come.

We know we are told there

*that men will be lovers of their own selves, unthankful
and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;*

1 Timothy 3 in the first four verses. That prophecy is absolutely true, relative to Thanksgiving. Satan wants to pollute anything that is Godly, anything that is good and in our deceived and materialistic world, thankfulness to our Father is increasingly rare. It just doesn’t happen anymore in the national consciousness. Yet, here we are, regardless of the circumstances we have personally, regardless of our personal trials, the trials that the church is going through on a daily basis—we have so much to be thankful for, don’t we? Especially when we compare ourselves to what these pilgrims came through to arrive in America, all those years ago. When we compare ourselves to the Christians that have gone before us—the persecution that they have suffered. And we compare ourselves to the rest of the world because most of the world—80% of the world—lives in what we would call dire poverty, severe poverty.

We have much to be thankful for and this leads to the title of the sermon today.

Everyday Should Be A Day of Thanksgiving

If we have time, we will have four points. What should be first on that list?

1. We should be thankful that our Father and His Son are Who They are.

Let's go to Isaiah 42 and we're going to look at four different passages in the book of Isaiah that tell us—remind us—Who our Father is and why we should be so thankful for that revelation.

Isaiah 42:5 *Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: (KJV)*

That's exactly what the pilgrims were celebrating. Go to verse 8.

*8) I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.
9) Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them. (KJV)*

That is the God Who we know and Who we serve. Now let's go to chapter 44:6. In this whole series of chapters, 42 through 46, there is a great deal that is descriptive of God Almighty.

Isaiah 44:6 *Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (KJV)*

Pretty clear statement. The next chapter, Isaiah 45:5. Yehovah, God Almighty, continues to speak.

Isaiah 45:5-6 *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:
6) That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. (KJV)*

No one, no being at His level. Then finally, Isaiah 46:5, the next chapter, we will read this out of the New King James.

Isaiah 46:5 *To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal And compare Me, that we should be alike? (NKJV)*

Find another being if you can. Verse 9.

*9) Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,
10) Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' (NKJV)*

This is the God Whom we serve. Now with that in mind, let's go to Psalm 92 and we're going to begin in verse 1. This is a Psalm for the Sabbath day, to be sung to music on the Sabbath day. We're not exactly sure who wrote this, maybe David, maybe not.

Psalm 92:1 *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD ... (KJV)*

Which we did on Thursday, which the Pilgrims did in their three-day festival.

1 continued) ... and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: (KJV)

That is one of the Father's titles. Jumping to verse 8.

8) But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore. (KJV)

We can be thankful that we know Who God is and we worship Him as the Supreme Being. That has been revealed to us as His children and we should be so thankful for that. Now with that in mind let's go to the New Testament in John 17 and see what Christ says regarding that very thing. John 17:3, just one verse. Christ is speaking and He is identifying life eternal so our ears should prick up and our antenna should rise. Notice what He says about His Father.

John 17:3 *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (KJV)*

We know that there are only two eternal Beings; the true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We should be so thankful that we understand that and we know that. We should also be so thankful that we know their nature and their character. We find that in 1 John 4:8. As usual, I'll read out of the King James unless otherwise noted. This is repeated, this identifying characteristic, is repeated twice for emphasis.

1 John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (KJV)*

A simple declaration. If you don't love, you don't understand Who God is. Now verse 16.

16) And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (KJV)

We see that love is our Father's defining characteristic. It is His Son's defining characteristic. In fact, He loved humankind so much that He gave His Son and watched His Son suffer, be tortured and murdered. His Son loves us so much that He was willing to give Himself and go through the torture and pain and being murdered because He loves us. That is their defining characteristic.

Stop and think: What if the Supreme Being was like Satan? Can you imagine what life would be like if the supreme Being of all was like Satan? We would say, "what hell on earth that would that be?" It would be horrible. We can be so thankful that the Father

and the Son, whom we worship, their defining characteristic is love, love for Their children. We should be so thankful for that. We should be so thankful that the Father and His Son and their nature and their character, do not change. Let's go to James 1:17. Undoubtedly the Pilgrims read this verse when they sailed across the ocean and when they landed in the new world and in a little less than a year later, celebrated their three-day festival of Thanksgiving.

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* (KJV)

We see two facts in this verse. That every blessing comes from God Almighty, our Father and His Son. The second fact is, He, and by extension His Son, do not change. How thankful should we be for those facts? That we can rely on the Father and we can rely on His Son, every minute of every day and that what they tell us is true and does not change. We should be thankful that our Father wants a family. That's where we come in. Let's go to Luke 6 and we'll just read the beginning of verse 35. Christ is giving us a command that is probably one of the most difficult commands for human beings to obey.

Luke 6:35 *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest:* (KJV)

In these last days, the Father and the Son have revealed themselves as never before and of course, for details you can search our archives on our website for many messages and papers about that; specifically, about Who God is, Who Christ is and what Their nature is. We can be so thankful that their nature is love and they do not change. Therefore, we should be so thankful that they are Who They are and we can trust explicitly in them. That's the first point today.

The second point we need to make is, what we should be thankful for everyday is:

2. We honor our Father when we are thankful.

Think about that. What gift can we give our Father, who has everything? We honor Him when we are thankful. Let's go to Psalm 69:30. David is writing here. We'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

Psalm 69:30-32 *Then I will praise God's name with singing, and I will honor him with thanksgiving.* (NLT)

The Hebrew word for *honor* means 'to magnify' or 'to make large' or 'to lift up'. We can honor God Almighty, we can lift Him up, we can magnify Him, when we give thanks, is what David is saying. We honor Him, we lift Him up, we magnify Him when we offer thanks.

31) For this will please the Lord more than sacrificing cattle, more than presenting a bull with its horns and hooves.

32) The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help be encouraged. (NLT)

We are told here that thanking God Almighty, our Father, from the heart is better than giving an offering. Why is that? You could offer a bull or a goat and do it as a duty and never be thankful in your heart. You could just kill the animal, give it to the priest and you're done. It has nothing to do with anything coming from the heart. You could make that offering with no inner thankfulness. That's why David is saying, we honor God Almighty when we give Him thanks for what we have been given.

Let's go to another episode of David in 1 Chronicles 29:10. This is David's final public prayer as king and when the transition would occur to Solomon at his death. This is David's final public prayer. Notice his attitude, notice what's on his mind in this last prayer that the Israelites will hear from him.

1 Chronicles 29:10-13 *Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. (KJV)*

David knew that Yehovah was His Father, was God the Father. Yehovah does not refer to Jesus Christ, it refers to God Almighty, God the Father. David understood that, he knew that, it was very clear to him.

11) Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine [belongs to God Almighty]; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. (KJV)

God Almighty the Father is Head above everything.

12) Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

13) Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. (KJV)

We uplift the name of God Almighty, we magnify the name of God Almighty when we give thanks. When you think about it, thankfulness is how we honor the one Who has everything. He doesn't need a gift from us because He created everything. What He wants from us is just a simple "Thank you for the blessings You give us." On the day of Thanksgiving and on that first Thanksgiving is exactly what the Separatists did and they were so grateful after what they had been through.

The third point about giving thanks—should be an everyday thing, is just that.

3. Giving thanks is something we should do daily.

Often, we don't, but we should. When I first came into the church in the mid 1960's I was stationed on the Canadian border at Sioux St. Marie, Michigan at an Air Force base and once I was called, on Friday afternoons I would find some excuse to leave early and jump in the car and drive due south across the Mackinaw bridge and go into central Michigan. It was a 240-mile drive to the nearest church. On Friday night and then again on Saturday night the brethren were kind enough to put me up so I could spend those two nights. So, we went to services obviously on the Sabbath and then Spokesmen's Club was on Sunday morning and then after that I would head home. Spending two nights and parts of three days in their homes for a whole year, you learn about the church and you learn more about God by their example and living with them, so to speak. I can remember being impressed early on—the first few months—by two prayers that were given. They frankly surprised me. One, the Deacon—Al Tenet—who became a good friend over the years and is dead now, gave a simple prayer thanking God Almighty for a good night's sleep. When I first heard that it took me by surprise. Then another pillar in the church—I stayed at his home, Nick Tomich—gave a prayer giving thanks for abundant food every day, every meal. Both of those struck me because up to that time I had taken them for granted, never even gave them a second thought. Good night's sleep, having food on the table—never gave them a second thought. I had taken them for granted and those two prayers impressed me greatly because we shouldn't take them for granted. They could go away tomorrow. So, it was very impressive to me that we should give thanks every day.

For what should we be thankful or how should we do it?

3A. We need to express our thanks in our daily prayers.

All too often our prayers are dominated by asking. God would you do this or could you give me that or could you solve this problem for me or could you take me out of pain or heal me? Most of our prayers—at least mine—there's a lot of asking involved. Let's go to Daniel 6:10 and see the example that Daniel set. I think you know where we are going. A decree was made by Daniel's enemies and they manipulated King Cyrus to issue a decree that no request could be made to anyone—God or human—except King Cyrus, for a period of time and that decree was signed. So, we break into that narrative.

Daniel 6:10 *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed [that decree], he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, [notice what the prayer was] and gave thanks ... (KJV)*

There's no record of him saying, spare my life, keep these people away from me—the record is that Daniel gave thanks.

10 continued) ... before his God, as he did aforetime. (KJV)

Does that theme hold true in the New Testament? Let's go to Philippians 4:6 out of the New King James.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving ... (NKJV)*

When we go to God in prayer and we ask a supplication from Him, we should do so with thanksgiving.

*6 continued) ... let your requests be made known to God;
7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

All too often, as I said, our prayer time is dominated by asking, isn't it? Rather than giving thanks for all of the blessings that we have. The point is, we should in every prayer, spend time giving thanks to God Almighty for our blessings.

3B. Another thing we should be very thankful for on a daily basis is our calling.

Sometimes we take that for granted. Let's go to Colossians 1:12. It's amazing when you do a word study on *thanks, thankfulness or thankfully or thanking*, how many times that concept appears in scripture. This is out of the NLT.

Colossians 1:12-13 *... always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light.
13) For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son ... (NLT)*

We see that we share an inheritance and He has rescued us from the world, from Satan's world, through the concept of calling us out of the world. Calling us into the church, of which His Son is the Head. Now, Colossians 2:6.

Colossians 2:6-7 *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
7) Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (KJV)*

Abounding in our calling, abounding in being in God's church; the Greek word for *abounding* is interesting, it means to "super abound" or "to excel". In other words, we are to "super abound" or "excel" in the faith while being thankful. Now let's go to 1 Timothy 1:12, again being thankful for our calling, every day. Thankful we are not part of this world that is being deceived and has this fog or cloud over it today.

1 Timothy 1:12-16 *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; (KJV)*

We see that this is a role of Jesus Christ. To put deacons and to put people in to becoming deacons, to becoming elders—that is a role of Jesus Christ.

13) Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. (KJV)

You think of our sins before our conversion, we were in the same boat.

14) And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

Faith and love.

15) This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (KJV)

Of course, he had every reason to say that because he killed Christians, he was responsible for putting them to death, for persecuting them, dividing families, throwing people into jail—persecuting the children of God Almighty. He says, “*I am chief*”.

16) Howbeit for this cause, I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. (KJV)

What he’s saying is, if I can be brought into the church—if I can be called, having been a murderer and putting people in prison and persecuting the very church of God. If that can happen to me, it’s a pattern for you and you should be thankful that it happened to me first and it is happening to you despite our sins before. Our Father had mercy and He called us. Paul is thankful for the grace, the mercy and long-suffering shown to him as part of his calling and of course we should also be as well.

3C. We need to be thankful for the church and the brethren.

We need to be thankful for that because so many are so scattered. Paul, in his writings, says much about being thankful and 1 Thessalonians 2:13 is one of those passages and occurrences.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-14 *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, [what is he thanking God without ceasing for?] because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, [he’s thankful they received his teaching as coming directly from God Almighty] which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 14) For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God ... (KJV)*

Here Paul is thanking God, that they—as we do, when we heard God’s Word—received it, not as something of men, but God-breathed, from God Almighty. We understood that and Paul is very thankful for that. Now let’s go to Colossians 3:15. Being thankful that there is a church, being thankful that we have brethren of like mind.

Colossians 3:15 *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (KJV)*

He’s saying be thankful you are being called into the body of Jesus Christ. Be thankful if you have a local church. We have one here. There are local churches scattered all over the U.S. and Canada but the fact is, many of the Pacific brethren would at least love to have a local church. They would be overjoyed to have a local church. The majority of the brethren in Pacific are scattered. They are alone, they have in many cases no brethren locally at all. They are listening now on the “phone in” line or watching over the internet or they will get a DVD and watch later or download later, but they are by themselves. They don’t have the privilege of meeting with like-minded brethren on the Sabbath. Paul is so thankful and is exhorting the churches to be thankful and we should be thankful we have a church and be thankful for the brethren, even though they are far away in many cases. We have telephones they didn’t have; we have internet they didn’t have; we have postal service that far exceeds the postal service of the Roman Empire. We can be thankful for all of that. We express our thanks by communicating with one another and encouraging one another as we go through life together.

The fourth and last of expressing our thankfulness to God Almighty on a daily basis is:

3D. We need to be thankful for every day blessings.

It’s so easy in this world of richness and wealth and privilege to take things for granted. We were Colossians 3:15, look at verse 17.

Colossians 3:17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to ... (KJV)*

The word “the” is omitted. So many times, in the New Testament, the word “the” before God is omitted. It is here, due to trinitarian influence. It should read,

“giving thanks to the God and the Father, by Him”.

Paul is saying, give thanks for all that we are able to do. We are able to do things now with God’s Spirit in us that we were not able to do before conversion. We are able to tame our human nature, we are able to resist Satan the devil, we are able to resist the world. We didn’t have that power before we were converted. We can be thankful for the power that God has given us through our calling. We need to be thankful for Their Spirit in us. Remember Christ said, during the night He was betrayed,

“We will make Our home inside you; We will come to dwell in you.”

What an honor and what a privilege that is.

We should be thankful for our everyday blessings that we take for granted. I get up well before first light in the morning and the chair where I study has a window right next to it and faces to the east, so I get the joy of seeing the sunrise every single morning. You can take that for granted, but the sunrise you see in the morning will never be repeated. There will never be another one just like it; statistically impossible. It has such beauty that there is a blessing from God we can be thankful for.

I remember one time, when we had our business, I was driving home from Seattle and it was a late night—after midnight—coming up the last pass to get to our home in Yakima. It was about 1am I think—not many cars on the road—and as I was pulling through the pass, I looked off to the left through the driver's side window and I saw the Northern Lights. We don't get the Northern Lights very often, but it was like you could reach out and touch them. I pulled over on the side of the road, there no cars or trucks on that side—it was cold, in the winter—and I got outside the car and leaned up against it for about ten or fifteen minutes. I saw this emerald blue, green, shimmery curtains going back and forth and I just sat there in awe of the Being Who created all this. What a gift it was to just sit there and watch it.

The other day we were trying to get ready for dinner. I had gone to exercise at the gym and was hot and sticky and thinking that I needed to take a shower before dinner time—it was kind of a chore—but then you get under that hot shower when you're hot and sticky and relax and realize what a blessing a hot shower is. Most of the people that have ever lived in this world have never had a hot shower. Most of them have never had it, yet we take it for granted. Do we give thanks for that? For the sunrise? 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is a simple admonishment from Paul. As we've been through these scriptures, most of them are coming from Paul and most of them are directed at various churches. He is encouraging people to be thankful.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *In everything give thanks [in everything]: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (KJV)*

Most of us want to be in harmony with God Almighty. Most of us want to do His will and we are told explicitly. What is His will? To give thanks, to honor Him, to honor His Son, because of what They do for us or what They provide for us. Christ set the example. With the seven loaves and the fish for the 4000 men in Matthew 15, He gave thanks. For the five loaves and the two fish of 5000 men plus women and children in John 6, He gave thanks. For His last meal with His disciples in Matthew 26, He gave thanks. Paul gave thanks before they broke a fast, all 276 people aboard this ship in Acts 27 before running aground in Melita, Paul stopped before they broke the fast and gave thanks for the food. Then God Almighty, as we know, saved them and saved everybody on board.

We need to be thankful every day for food, clothing, and shelter and yet it's so easy to take these for granted. You've seen pictures of what it's like in other parts of the world,

in the tropics and Africa and it's just horrible. We are so privileged that it's easy to take these blessings for granted. We have so much to be thankful for. We should be giving thanks many times a day for the blessings, big and small, that our Father gives to us.

4. We need to daily focus on what we have and not focus on what we don't have.

It's the old thing, do we view our glass as "half full or half empty"? What is it? A while back I came across a Hasidic parable and I copied it down. It's humorous in a way, but there is a great truth to this parable. I'm quoting from it now:

Once, times were tough, two poor farmers were walking down a country lane and met their Rabbi. "How is it for you?", the Rabbi asked the first man. "Lousy", he grumbled, bemoaning his lot, "terrible, hard, awful, not worth getting out of bed for. Life is lousy.

[We've known people who are that way, who have that temperament and if we are honest with ourselves, we've all been that way from time to time.]

God was eavesdropping on this conversation. "Lousy?" The Almighty thought. "You think your life is lousy now, you ungrateful lout, I'll show you what lousy is."

[The parable goes on.]

Then the Rabbi turned to the second man and said, "How are you my friend?" The second man replied, "Rabbi, life is good. God is so generous. Each morning when I awaken, I am so grateful for the gift of another day. For I know, rain or shine, it will unfold in wonder and blessings too bountiful to count. Life is so good."

[This second man said.]

God smiled as the second man's thanksgiving soared upward. "Good? You think your life is good now" God thought, "I'll show you what good is."

There is a lot of truth in that parable—a lot of truth. The question we have to ask ourselves is, will God continue to bless those who are not thankful for what He has already given them? If we are ungrateful, why would He give us further blessings that we are ungrateful for? Let's go to Ephesians 5:1, coming from Paul, the subject is being thankful.

Ephesians 5:1-4 *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; (KJV)*

Indeed, we are.

2) And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

- 3) *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;*
4) *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. (KJV)*

Verse 17.

- 17) *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (KJV)*

Here we go, the will of God again, the will of His Son again. What is Their will? The giving of thanks.

- 18) *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*
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 [The Greek word, 'ho' which means "the" is omitted again.] God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (KJV)*

Paul admonishes us to do that. I don't know if you've heard of Anna Quindlen. She is an American author, born in 1953 and one of her many books was called, One True Thing. She had a very fundamental concept that was stated in one sentence in that book.

"It is so much easier to learn to love what you have instead of yearning always for what you imagine you're missing."

Paul reflects that in his letter to the Philippians, so let's go there, to Philippians 4:11. It reflects that very same thought, that very same principle. He also repeats it in his letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:8, but let's read Philippians 4:11. If anybody could say this, it would be Paul.

Philippians 4:11 *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (KJV)*

Rather than focus on what we do not have, we should focus on and be thankful for, what we do have, because frankly, it could all go away tomorrow and someday it will. We need to be thankful for the blessings of the day.

Let's close now and wrap this up and summarize.

In many ways, we are like these early Pilgrims and the Separatists. With that in mind let's go to 1 Peter 2:11. When you think about what these Pilgrims went through, what the Separatists went through in a physical sense, we are going through the same thing in a spiritual sense and a physical sense.

1 Peter 2:11 *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; (KJV)*

The Greek word for *pilgrim* means “an alien alongside”, that is a “resident foreigner”, “a stranger”. Peter is telling us that we are strangers, we are foreigners. Why are we strangers or foreigners? Our citizenship is not on earth, our citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:20 tells us that. We are not citizens on this earth, we are strangers, we are foreigners, we are pilgrims. Let’s go to Hebrews 11:13 for a final scripture talking about the concept of being “strangers and foreigners” on this earth—being “Pilgrims”. Referring to all of those who had gone before the time when this was written and of course we could refer it all to the people who have gone before us, living here today.

Hebrews 11:13-16 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (KJV)*

All of those who had died prior to this being written. Verse 14 is out of the NIV.

14) People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

15) If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.

16) Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore [once again the word “ho” in Greek is omitted.] God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (NIV)

The Pilgrims were, as we are today, strangers in a strange land seeking to worship God Almighty in freedom without fear of persecution. They sought that as we do today. We see not just a physical place, what we are seeking and looking for is not just a physical place, but rather a permanent place to worship our Father, God Almighty.

We see at this time, the Pilgrims were abundantly blessed and after receiving those blessings, after their first planting and first harvesting, they stopped to give the Almighty the thanks and the credit for three full days. Thankfulness is a way of reminding ourselves of a simple truth. Every good thing comes from our Father—warm homes, food in abundance, health, freedom to worship, spiritual family, our calling, the opportunity to be eternal, to be in the presence of God Almighty and His Son forever. We should be so thankful for that. “Thanks” is what we offer to the One Who has everything and without Whom we have nothing. Therefore, let’s make every day a day of thanksgiving.