

For What Are You Thankful?

Ken Johnson

Thanksgiving Day is just around the corner, and yet we hear very little if anything on the radio or TV concerning preparing to give thanks, or about the original intent of Thanksgiving Day celebration. About the only thing we are likely to hear on TV or radio are advertisements from grocery stores selling turkeys, etc. Magazines are typically no better, as they usually just focus on the thanksgiving meal, and are concerned only with how to make this Thanksgiving the most decadent ever, or perhaps on how to trim calories from the meal.

It is significant that this holiday has not been commercialized to death like Halloween and Christmas. Thanksgiving, unlike Halloween, Christmas and Easter does not have its origins in pagan antiquity. It was created instead out of an earnest desire to thank God for the very things necessary for life. Thanksgiving has little more impact on Americans today than Labor Day does, being reduced to little more than a speed bump between Halloween and Christmas, with many just using the holiday as an excuse to over eat.

This should not surprise students of scripture, however, because one of the things Paul told Timothy in his second letter to him was that in the latter days men would be unthankful. “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, unholy” (2 Timothy 3:2).

Interesting, is it not, how God inspired that to be said. We find that in this nation today, Thanksgiving, the very day that was set aside for giving thanks to God, has taken a back seat to holidays that focus on mindless frivolity and receiving gifts instead of giving of thanks. The principle of giving thanks to God is however very Scriptural and is found in over one hundred examples throughout the Bible. This theme of thanksgiving led our forebears to reflect on their own blessings and eventually set aside a national day of Thanksgiving to God.

For example, a day of thanksgiving was observed in 1623 by the pilgrims at Plymouth colony in recognition that God had provided enough to get them through some very tough times. It was a day for expressing gratitude for deliverance from drought and impending famine (*The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England*, William DeLoss Love, pp. 78-83; *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford; cf. [“Thanksgiving”](#))

Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving Day a national holiday in 1863 and fixed the day as the last Thursday in November. In 1941 Congress moved it to the fourth Thursday in November where it stands to this day.

A seeming paradox exists today as giving thanks to God is in vogue with some in the celebrity class. Although many celebrities seemingly delight in using God's name as little more than a curse word, some athletes give thanks to God after making a score or winning a game, and actors and music artists sometimes publicly thank God after winning awards. Apparently, such celebrities feel that when they win that God smiling down on them in approval of them specifically and is really supporting their success.

Anyone who has this view may be missing a clear fact of Scripture: God is not so much interested in sports or secular pursuits as Him is in our obedience to Him. God will guide you in all you do if you genuinely seek His guidance and will in every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:6). However, God is not a good luck charm that we should thank when we have success in pursuits outside the bounds of the things that are of paramount importance to Him, while we ignore His commands.

God is much more interested in being appreciated for all He does for us than for being given credit for something in which He may have had no direct role. To one degree or another God's grace and mercy is extended to all (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17).

But beyond this, for those who know the truth, blessings are often a result of keeping God's laws which offer instruction on the proper way of life (Leviticus 26:1-13; Deuteronomy 28:1-14). In other words, keeping the law of God has the blessing of not suffering the consequences inherent with bad decision making. Bad decisions override blessings and create their own curses which often have lasting effects. For Christians, it is for us to set the right example for others (Matthew 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:11-12). With that in mind, I would like to take a look at seven areas where we can be thankful.

Knowledge of the Kingdom of God

Matthew 13:10-11, 16-17.

And the disciples came to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given."

How much is this knowledge worth? What value have others put on it?

Verse 16 tells us, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;

17 "For assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Healing

Luke 17:11-18.

11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

[The Samaritans were thought to be of inferior character by the Jews at the time, and generally despised by them].

17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

18 "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

Laws

Psalms 119:59-62.

59 I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.

60 I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments.

For What Are You Thankful?

4

61 The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments.

Mercy

Psalm 106:1.

1 Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

Victory over Death

1 Corinthians 15:56-57.

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Protection

2 Samuel 22:48-50.

48 It is God who avenges me, and subdues the people under me;

49 He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; you have delivered me from the violent man.

50 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.

Brethren

2 Thessalonians 2:13.

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth....

Food

Matthew 15:36.

For What Are You Thankful?

5

36 And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude.

Giving thanks to God for all we have is very humbling and it helps us to keep all things in perspective. As we gather together with extended family this Thanksgiving let's be mindful to set the right example of being a humble people, who acknowledge their dependence on God and show that we take to heart the lesson taught in Psalm 79:13: "So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever; we will show forth Your praise to all generations."

cogmessenger.org

2014

Unless otherwise noted Scripture taken from the New King James Version™
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Messenger Church of God
PO Box 542
Peculiar, MO 64078
USA