

Sermon Notes





Reflections

Some look forward to Thanksgiving Day, others have modified the name to Turkey Day, and still others want to fight its very existence in court because of its “religious overtones.” In 1621 the Pilgrims celebrated a day of giving thanks for their survival and for the bounty God had provided for them. They would not have been successful in surviving without the natives who assisted them. They had much for which to be thankful. Several of the original colonies celebrated thanksgiving as a special day in the early 1600’s and over the years, many presidents have made proclamations for a day of special thanksgiving. Abraham Lincoln set the last Thursday in Nov. as Thanksgiving Day. It was the celebrated day until FDR changed it to the fourth Thursday in Nov. to aid merchants in preparing for their Christmas sales declaring that the fourth Thursday would better suit their needs. The ideal for Christians, however, is that their life be filled with daily thanksgiving rather than it just being formalized by a special day. For us, each and every day should be Thanksgiving Day.

Thanksgiving is a clear theme in the Scripture with the giving of thanks being translated by the word thanksgiving at least 32 times plus 75 uses of the word thanks and it is always related to the blessings given to us by God either by provision or by His greatness. At times the use of these words describes responses to God’s generous daily provision for us and in other instances it is used as a command or a plea to give thanks to God because He is Great. Some uses are indicative of an act of giving thanks before meals or as worship for a special act of healing, or simply to acknowledge the deity of Christ. The Psalms are filled with declarations of thanksgiving.

** You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, ¹² to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever. (Psalm 30:11-12 NKJ)*

** Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. (Psalm 97:12 NKJ)*

** Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. (Psalm 106:1 NKJ)*

The New Testament includes many references to those who gave thanks to Jesus for His work in their lives, to those who worshiped

Him with thanksgiving, and for giving God thanks for many other reasons related to the grace, mercy, love, and provision of Jesus. It is quite evident that we not only have much to be thankful for, but that the Scripture indicates giving thanks is to be a normal part of our Christian walk.

I can remember, as a child growing up in church, we used to sing an old hymn that was called “Count Your Blessings.” Its lyrics called on us to count our many blessings naming them one by one and in so doing we would see what God has done. It is too easy for us to share our many troubles and trials without also counting our blessings. It might really surprise us, as the old hymn declares, to see what the Lord has truly accomplished and what He has provided for each of our lives. Once again we turn to the Psalms to read: *Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever. (Psalm 136:26 NKJ)*

When we consider all that we enjoy in our lives, food, shelter, and perhaps more “toys” than we really need, good health or good health care when we need it, and many more blessings that fill our lives, we have many reasons to be thankful. Even if some of these “blessings” are missing for some of us, we still have the assurance that in Jesus we have His gift of eternal life and His loving care for each of us through even our trials and difficulties, loss of health, or other hardships. He has given us the promise that He would never leave us: *For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5 NKJ)* and that He has made us more than conquerors in Him. *...in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:37 NKJ)* so we can rest in Him and in His promises, and count our blessings.

So with Thanksgiving Day just a few days away, let’s practice what should be a daily occurrence. Let’s count our blessings, and yes, name them one by one. It may truly surprise you what the Lord has done. Review your past and see where God protected you from hurt or destruction, or when He met a financial or physical need, or how He met your spiritual need for a savior. When blessings are rehearsed, we keep our mind focused on things above as the Word calls on us to do. When families and friends gather to celebrate the abundance of God’s provision, and to fill up on more food than we normally consume, let’s purpose to spend some time together counting our many blessings. It will remind us of how much we have for which to be thankful.

Pastor Doug