**Thankful Thanksgiving**

Suddenly it's upon us. It seems only yesterday that we were enjoying the long, lazy days of summer, and the long weeks of fall seemed to stretch before us almost without end. But now it's practically Thanksgiving, and Christmas is soon to follow. As we prepare for Thanksgiving, we are very much aware of the arrangements that must be made for the celebration. Grocery shopping, travel arrangements, calculations on the cooking of the bird. But as Christians we **must** ask, what is the ***inner meaning*** of this holiday?

You know, we grew up learning about that first Thanksgiving – how the Pilgrims; who suffered many deaths and hardships when they came to this land; survived because their Native American neighbors helped them, teaching them how to plant crops, what to plant and when. When the first harvest came around, they were able to sit down with their new friends, giving thanks to God for all they had been blessed with. That first Thanksgiving feast lasted three days, providing enough food for the 13 surviving Pilgrims and 90 Native Americans. The feast consisted of fish and shellfish, ducks, geese, turkey, venison, berries and other fruit, vegetables such as peas, pumpkin, beets, onions, barley, wheat, beans, dried corn and squash. After the massive destruction of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln, desiring to begin to bind the wounds of the nation, proclaimed a “national day of thanksgiving”, to be celebrated as a national holiday of unity and gratitude, decreed to be on the fourth Thursday in November, and called Thanksgiving.

Now this **is** true for America, but we as Christians need to remember that, though we may be citizens of the U.S., we are no longer of *this* world – we are citizens of the kingdom of God and for us, the first Thanksgiving was **not** by the Pilgrims: it was in decreed by God, in fact, thousands of years ago, in the desert of Sinai. I am going to ask that you turn to Deuteronomy 26:1-11:

Now, let me ask each of you to tell about one thing you are truly thankful for, (call on people)

I am thankful for not dying as I could have last Monday night. (Tell story)

Throughout Scripture, we are told to have humble and thankful hearts, filled with gratitude for all that we are, for all that we have.

In Psalm 107:1 it says, *"O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever."* Give thanks to God for He is good. We should always give thanks to our Father – because He always looks out for us, cares for us in times of need, and, most of all, gave His only Son for our salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 reads: *"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."* In EVERYTHING give thanks, there is a reason behind it and God knows it as He sees the whole picture we can’t.

Sometimes the circumstances of our lives are not always the best. In fact, they may be downright bad, but still, we are to look for something to be thankful for! There is ALWAYS something positive for which we can be thankful. It often seems that people complain far more than they are thankful. Not pointing fingers here, we all do it I am sure, without thinking much of it but Scripture tells us we are to have a different attitude. We can read in Philippians 2:14-15: (**READ**)

You see: a positive, thankful person is a great witness in this sinful world today. Instead of looking at the negatives in our lives and complaining, we **must** look for the positives and give thanks for those. What happens to us can be seen as a test, if you wish to look at like that. When others see how we live our lives, will they remember us for always being thankful to God, you know giving thanks daily like Scripture says to, or will we be seen as the type of Christian who ignores what the Scriptures says by forgetting to be thankful?

There are four verses that can help us remember to be thankful in our daily walk. Two are from the New Testament and two are from the Old Testament.

(Have people read the verses)

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Colossians 3:17

Psalm 106:1

Psalm 100:1-5

It seems, today, that so many forget to be thankful for what they have, complaining instead that they don’t have “enough”. I heard about a couple who complained that $4500 a month was not enough for a family of four to get by and in fact they needed government help paying for heat! Um, hello? $4,500 a month is not enough? That right there shows that being thankful for that much is out the window and the complaints about not having enough are pouring in.

On a monthly average, I might be lucky to bring home $1,200. I am thankful to be employed and enabled to work as God provides. I know others who live on $700 a month or less even, and they are thankful. So, though it shocks us to hear something this foolish; about $4,500 a month not being enough to live on, this is the common state of the human heart. We aren’t grateful for what we **DO** have, always constantly wanting more and more.

Look at third world countries, like India for example, where our friend Keith runs a children’s home for God with only donations, very little money, yet he care store almost 30 children on what most of us would consider to be a week’s pay. Now compare that to the U.S. where we have billion dollar churches: who are the more thankful here? Food wise, we are land of plenty – we can gorge ourselves, wanting more and more and something new every day. In third world countries, where daily food is – if you’re lucky – a bowl of rice and maybe a veg, they are more thankful for that little bit of food that God provided for them then we are for all our options we have here.

I ask this, what happened to being thankful for what you have and being thankful God allowed you one more day to bring glory to Him? It is important to remember that ***we should be thankful every day*** not just one day a year.

I am reminded of Colossians 1:12-14, *"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us, meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."*

So, why should we be thankful? Here are two reasons:

1. ***First, because it honors God***. When we are thankful, we recognize that God exists, and we are acting on the reality of His life as the very source and means of ours. True thankfulness recognizes our total dependence on God and stems from realizing that everything going on in our lives and all we have is the product of God's sovereign control, infinite wisdom, purposes, grace, and activity. 2 Corinthians 4:15 says: *"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."*

2. ***Second, because it is commanded in Scripture***. First, the Psalms are filled with the call to give thanks. An example is Psalm 100:4

*"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."*

Then Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

*"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*

In Colossians, Paul twice gives the command to be thankful. In both Colossians 3:15 and 17 he says:

*"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."*

If we are to live in obedience to God, our first step and our constant companion should be “an attitude of gratitude”. Without this gratefulness and thankfulness to God, we cannot be faithful to obey Him in all things, as we are commanded to do. We must never forget WHO is the Author and Architect of all that we are, all that we have.

Let me close with the words of the poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson:

**“For each new morning with its light, For rest and shelter of the night, for health and food, for love and friends, for everything Thy goodness sends.... may we be truly thankful.”**

Let us pray:

**“Father, we thank You for every good and perfect gift that You have given to us in Jesus Christ. Thank You for Your grace and the gift of salvation by faith through Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Let us walk by faith and not by sight, knowing that the exercise of our faith pleases You. Nothing is impossible for those who choose to believe in You, Father. We place our trust in You, knowing we will never be disappointed for doing so. Thank You for the shield You have provided for our defense as we walk through the snares and attacks we face, for Your Name’s sake, in this life. Thank You for Your Word that builds our faith in You. Thank You for the blessings we receive every day, for everything You have done for us. Thank You for the beauty that surrounds us, thank You for Your provision, for our family and friends, for our health. Help us to walk and live by faith in you, with grateful hearts, for all that You, in Your mercy, have been so gracious as to grant to us.**

**This week, as we as a nation take rest from our labors to consider your many blessings, let us be grateful for our freedoms, for the opportunity to contribute our skills, our attributes and our values toward the good of others. Help us to be light and salt, help us to help others, and in all things, let us serve You in all that we think, say or do. And, as our brother, the apostle Paul said, help us to live lives that honor You, Lord, that we will always please You and come to know You and love You even better. May Your glorious power make us patient and strong enough to endure anything, and that we will always be grateful to You, God for letting us have a part in what You have promised Your people in Your kingdom. These things we pray with grateful and humble hearts, in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King.**

**Amen**