

The Power of a Grateful Heart

Nov 29, 2020

The Thanksgiving Real Celebration

For many of us, the meaning of Thanksgiving usually includes feasting, four-day weekends, football games, floats, family reunions, or a forerunner to Christmas festivities. The “first Thanksgiving,” however, was neither a feast nor a holiday, but a simple gathering. Following the Mayflower’s arrival at Plymouth Rock on December 11, 1620, the Pilgrims suffered the loss of 46 of their original 102 colonists. With the help of 91 Indians, the remaining Pilgrims survived the bitter winter and yielded a bountiful harvest in 1621. In celebration, a traditional English harvest festival, lasting three days brought the Pilgrims and natives to unite in a “thanksgiving” observance.

This “thanksgiving” meal would not be celebrated again until June of 1676. On June 29 the community of Charlestown, Massachusetts proclaimed a day of thanksgiving for their good fortune. Ironically, this celebration excluded the Indians, as the colonists’ recognized their recent victory over the “heathen natives.” One hundred years later, in October of 1777, all 13 colonies participated in a one-time “thanksgiving” celebration which commemorated the patriotic victory over the British at Saratoga. It would take a span of over 150 more years to establish Thanksgiving as we celebrate it -- George Washington proclaimed it a National holiday in 1789, Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November in 1863, and Congress sanctioned it as a legal holiday in 1941.

The Power of a Grateful Heart:

It gets our eyes off ourselves and helps us to focus back on God.

Ps 3 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

3:1-3 O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. 2 Many are saying of my soul, “There is no deliverance for him in God.” Selah. 3 But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

It reminds us we are not in control, but that we serve a Mighty God who is.

1Thes 5:16-18 Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

It keeps us in a place of humility and dependency on Him, as we recognize how much we need Him.

Ps 75:1 We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks, For Your name is near; Men declare Your wondrous works. (read Ps 75:1-10)

It helps us to recognize we have so much to be thankful for, even all of the little things, which often we may forget to thank Him for...but they really are the biggest, most important things in this life.

Jas 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

It takes our attention off our problems and helps us instead to reflect on, remember, the goodness of His many blessings.

Eph 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

It reminds us that God is the Giver of all good gifts. We were never intended to be fully self-sufficient in this life.

Ps 136:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

A grateful heart reminds us that ultimately God is our Provider, that all blessings and gifts are graciously given to us by His hand.

Heb 12:28-9 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

A heart of gratitude leaves no room for complaining. For it is impossible to be truly thankful and filled with negativity and ungratefulness at the same time.

Heb 13:15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

It makes the enemy flee. The forces of darkness can't stand to be around hearts that give thanks and honor to God. Our praise and thanksgiving will make them flee.

2Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, (1Cor 15:57)

Example of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 20:1-30)

As the Army gave thanks to the Lord - God gave victory over their enemies

Example of Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:22-27)

As they gave thanks to the Lord - their chains were broken and all the prison doors opened.

It opens up the door for continued blessings. It invites His presence. Our spirits are refreshed and renewed in Him. God loves to give good gifts to His children. He delights in our thankfulness and pours out His Spirit and favor over those who give honor and gratitude to Him.

A Prayer of Gratitude

Dear God,

Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are able to bring hope, through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life. Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy. We love you and we need you, this day and every day. We give you praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy!

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thanksgiving Quotes:

"We would worry less if we praised more. Thanksgiving is the enemy of discontent and dissatisfaction." -- Harry Ironside

"The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; but the thankful heart will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings." - Henry Ward Beecher

"The Christian who walks with the Lord and keeps constant communion with Him will see many reasons for rejoicing and thanksgiving all day long." - Warren W. Wiersbe

"We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning." - Albert Barnes

"Thanksgiving is a very important holiday. Ours was the first country in the world to make a national holiday to give thanks." -- Linus -- (Charlie Brown Thanksgiving Quote)