

“With Thanksgiving”

Psalm 103:1-14; Philippians 4:4-7

November 24, 2024

Introduction

- For a family of fine cooks, it isn't surprising that my favorite holiday is Thanksgiving.
 - o Every year we used to go to my Aunt Judy's house.
 - o There, she and my mom would assemble the finest collection of food for the holiday.
 - We brought the sides and, thankfully, it was a family of great cooks.
 - There were the occasional misses.
 - o Once, Aunt Leslie went with too heavy handed with vinegar on a green bean casserole.
 - o But, for the most part, the food was spot on.
 - Sweet potatoes redolent of maple syrup and loaded with marshmallows.
 - A turkey that was roasted to perfection and always moist because my uncle brined the Turkey for days prior to cooking it.
 - Whipped cream touched with a bit of bourbon.
 - The desserts were always so good and so many of them.
 - Aunt Ann's platter included one slice of each kind of dessert.
 - o Most everyone got an Aunt Ann platter.
 - The food was just so good that I can remember it now.
- Thankfully, Benjamin got a little taste of it.
 - o I remember once, when he was much younger, he was looking forward to Thanksgiving, mentioning it daily in the car on the way to preschool.
 - "Is it thanksgiving yet?" he wondered.
 - o But Ben wasn't looking forward to the food, he was looking forward to the time he'd get to spend with his cousins Alex and Taylor.
- Things change over time.
 - o Those days at Aunt Judy's are now sweet memories of the past.
- A great deal of change has come since those storied Thanksgiving days.
 - o Both my father and my sister are now gone, with the Lord forever, not with us on major holidays any longer.
 - o Nowadays, I do most of the cooking and while decent, it's nowhere near the heights of culinary perfection that my aunt and mom used to muster yearly.
- Things change yet one thing should remain.
- Gratitude.

Pilgrims and Thanksgiving

- Our roots wire us to give thanks.
- Believe it or not, the Puritans who helped found this country were not only the starters of, but big believers in thanksgiving.
- They even favored it over Christmas, with Christmas celebrations being much more subdued than the Thanksgiving ones.
 - o Funny to note, they saw the excesses of Christmas and shunned them by downplaying the holiday enormously.
- Nowadays, being sandwiched between Halloween and Christmas, Thanksgiving has gotten the short end of the sticks.
 - o Ever noticed how major stores "Skip" right from Halloween to Christmas?
 - That's because the other two are much more focused on us buying things.
- In fact, one year, I tried to get Ben a good kid's book for Thanksgiving.
 - o What I found was a small selection with only one book even mentioning being thankful to God.
 - And that was one just being thankful to a generic, worldly God, not the God of Jacob and Isaac, not the Father of Jesus Christ.
- If we're not careful, Thanksgiving can degenerate to the lowest common denominator.

- A big meal, a Cowboys' game and the desire to get started on Christmas shopping the coming morning.
 - We might even forget WHOM we're supposed to be thankful for if we're not careful.
- We might be thankful for things'
 - Thankful for our homes'
 - Thankful for our families'
 - Thankful for our 401k's'

When we don't direct our thanks to Jesus, it's like being thankful only for the food which has populated the Thanksgiving feasts in our lives without recalling the wonderful presence of the people who gathered with us.

- To be sure, Thanksgiving has changed, both in my life and in the world but one thing should always remain for the people of God.
 - Thanksgiving!!!!

Thanksgiving

- We are called to be thankful people.
- Reading our Scriptures, we get an amazing sense of just how thankful a people we are to be.
 - In good times and in bad, we're called to offer our thanks to God.

Gospel of Luke

- In the 17th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus encounters no less than 10 Lepers.
 - Now, at the time, leprosy was a major impediment.
 - Not only were you saddled with an illness, so too were you saddled with social ostracism.
 - You were forced to live away from everyone else so as not to infect anyone else.
 - This meant even your family was removed from you.
- But this group of lepers had heard about a particular man, Jesus.
 - Jesus was known to be a healer, having already performed miraculous deeds.
 - Can you imagine the hope these men must've had, hearing about Jesus?
 - Can you imagine their excitement seeing Jesus walking near to them?
 - Here was a solution to their dreaded problems.
 - The ten cry out, "Jesus, MASTER, have mercy on us."
 - Jesus speaks plainly to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priest."
 - So, these ten men do that.
 - They discover that their leprosy is gone,
 - They've been healed and now 9 of those men return to their lives.
 - Back to their homes and wives.
 - Back to nuzzle the heads of their children.
 - You know they were thankful.
 - But to whom?
 - To what?
 - I think these men are like the countless untold thousands who will gather to celebrate Thanksgiving but not put at the center of thanks Jesus Christ.
 - One leper returns to Jesus to give thanks.
 - It makes sense to do so after all, when you really think about it. I mean, here is the man responsible for the great blessing of healing you've just experienced.
 - This is the leper to whom Jesus tells "Your faith has made you well."
 - Could it be that thankfulness is the special sauce, so to speak?
 - This Samaritan has already been healed, hasn't he? He's been healed just like the other 9 who, presumably, have missed the point.

- So why in the world would Jesus say that this faithful response, this return to Him and the prostration at His feet has made this leper well?
- Could it be that the physical healing wasn't the real blessing Jesus wished to give?
- Could it be that the things in our life aren't the greatest gifts in our lives? That God's blessing run deeper than our current circumstances.
 - IT MUST BE THE CASE.
- The greatest blessing of our life is Jesus Christ and HE can never be taken from us.
 - There is a great lesson to be learned in being thankful under all occasions.

The Story of David and the Temple

- Tell the story of David wanting to build the temple.
 - Nathan agrees but then gets word from the Lord, this is not to be the case.
 - Ever had something you wanted to do but never got the chance to?
 - Did you thank God for not getting the chance?
 - In a way, that's what David does.
 - He OFFERS A PRAYER OF THANKFULNESS AND PRAISE to God.
- David praises God, even NOT Getting what he wanted.
- Can we do that?
- Can we offer praise, thanksgiving, when things aren't going the way we want them to?
- We can if we keep in mind several things.
- First, like the lepers, the real blessing is Jesus.
 - Jesus guarantees us God's love is constant, no matter what we're going through.
 - We may have houses and families and things to be thankful to God for but primarily our thankfulness flows from the awareness that God is good.
 - And that God loves us which we know why?
 - John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*
 - Favorite word from Melody Matthews service.
 - Add that word “SO” the next time you tell someone you love them.
 - Notice how it adds extra emphasis.
 - God doesn't just love you.
 - God SO loves you.
- And you know that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - To God be the glory.

Thankful for the food.

Deeper thanks – for the people and the laughter and the good times with family.

Thankful for the healing.

Deeper thanks – for the person who done the healing.

Thanksgiving can be just about thanks for the things.

OR it can be deeper, thanks for the things but especially thanks for the person Jesus Christ who heals us of our sin and guarantees us an everlasting life in the Kingdom of God.