

## Thankful Thoughts

Psalm 9:1 I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Above all things, thanksgiving is the thought which shows that things are good in the heart of the believer. God's people for thousands of years have been giving thanks for eternal life, for blessings material and spiritual, and that thanksgiving is a product of God's presence in the heart of his people.

This thanksgiving is like many others we may experience in our brief time on earth. It can happen for a day, when we may gather with friends or family for a bountiful meal. It can happen every single day when we are walking with God and know that "all things truly work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." ~Romans 8:28

But life is not always like that. Sometimes we have disappointments. Sometimes there is pain or difficulty or illness. When we are able to look at the dark times in our lives as blessings, and see that God is showing us something in that moment that we could not see at any other time, we have found a kind of thanksgiving that is truly a gift from God.

"What seems to us as bitter trials,' writes Oscar Wilde, "are often blessings in disguise." Unmasking that disguise and seeing past the trial to the blessing which God is giving at that moment is like unwrapping a wonderful Christmas present. It is at once a nice surprise and indescribable delight.

Thanksgiving, like faith, does not depend on circumstances. God's kind of thanksgiving is impervious to disease, death, and disappointment. It is a gift from heaven which transcends everything else. It rises out of gratitude expressed.

Giving thanks can, however, make those earthly situations better. "Gratitude," writes William Ward, "Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings."

Are you, dear reader, more thankful to God than you were last year? If we are walking with God, the events and conditions of life reveal more of him all the time. When the people of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry land, they saw who God really was. When Simon Peter walked on the water in the storm, it was because he saw and trusted Jesus.

I have no doubt that there were many thanksgivings after these miracle moments, and the innumerable times God has taken us through the wonderful times and the storms of life. This blessing of thanksgiving is something which can happen regardless of circumstance and in time of plenty or want.

Lawrence Welk, the great bandleader, played out this tune of thanksgiving. "Over and over I marvel at the blessings of my life: Each year has grown better than the last."

May that be a blessing for you this year, and may it build until the time you meet God in heaven one day. Let thanksgiving be a ladder of blessing, a many tiered chandelier of light and love, the biggest pile of blessing that anyone could put together. God can do it as we give thanks for our blessings each year, and thank him as their source.

Henry Van Dyke writes that "Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse." If we can see thanksgiving at the natural flow of the divine process of worship, we will be forever blessed.

Here is a prayer that was written around the time of the first Thanksgiving in America. By the way, Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday.

*O Lord our God and heavenly Father, which of Thy unspeakable mercy towards us, hast provided meate and drinke for the nourishment of our weake bodies. Grant us peace to use them reverently, as from Thy hands, with thankful hearts: let Thy blessing rest upon these Thy good creatures, to our comfort and sustentation: and grant we humbly beseech Thee, good Lord, that as we doe hunger and thirst for this food of our bodies, so our soules may earnestly long after the food of eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.*

George Webb, "Short direction for the daily exercise of the Christian,"  
London 1625. Courtesy of Plimoth Plantation

When we connect on the table to the bread of life, Jesus Christ our Lord, we will find the kind of thanksgiving which endures forever. All of us seek peace. We all want to get rid of worry and doubt.

So, as God says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

When we discover those wonderful ingredients that God can place in a thankful thought, we will want to do it all the time. In all circumstances. In every moment. No matter where we are in the annals of history!

