



Beloved,

It's here! The wonderful time of the year when we pause to give thanks. Thanks first and foremost for Jesus giving His life that we might live. For Christians, salvation is the greatest gift that they will ever receive. The Bible speaks clearly about this when it says, For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36 NASB)

May the Lord richly bless you and your families as you celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas!

Blessing,

Pastor Gary

Please find below an article from the webpage, www.gotquestions.com that gives a history and biblical perspective on Thanksgiving.

Question: "What should be the focus of Christians on Thanksgiving?"

Answer: The original thanksgiving celebration was held by the Pilgrim settlers in Massachusetts during their second winter in America in December, 1621. The first winter had killed 44 of the original 102 colonists. At one point their daily food ration was down to five kernels of corn apiece, but then an unexpected trading vessel arrived, swapping them beaver pelts for grain, providing for their severe need. The next summer's crop brought hope, and Governor William Bradford decreed that December 13, 1621, be set aside as a day of feasting and prayer to show the gratitude of the colonists that they were still alive.

These Pilgrims, seeking religious freedom and opportunity in America, gave thanks to God for His provision for them in helping them find 20 acres of cleared land, for the fact that there were no hostile Indians in that area, for their newfound religious freedom, and for God's provision of an interpreter to the Indians in Squanto. Along with the feasting and games involving the colonists and more than 80 friendly Indians (who added to the feast by bringing wild turkeys and venison), prayers, sermons, and songs of praise were important in the celebration. Three days were spent in feasting and prayer.

From that time forward, Thanksgiving has been celebrated as a day to give thanks to God for His gracious and sufficient provision. President Abraham Lincoln officially set aside the last Thursday of November, in 1863, "as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father." In 1941, Congress ruled that after 1941, the fourth Thursday of November be observed as Thanksgiving Day and be a legal holiday.

Scripturally, we find things related to the issue of thanksgiving nearly from cover to cover. Individuals offered up sacrifices out of gratitude in the book of Genesis. The Israelites sang a song of thanksgiving as they were delivered from Pharaoh's army after the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15). Later, the Mosaic Law set aside three times each year when the Israelites were to gather together. All three of these times [Unleavened Bread (also called the Feast of the Passover) (Exodus 12:15-20), Harvest or Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21), and the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-36)] involved remembering God's provision and grace. Harvest and Tabernacles took place specifically in relation to God's provision in the

harvest of various fruit trees and crops. The book of Psalms is packed full of songs of thanksgiving, both for God's grace to the Israelite people as a whole through His mighty deeds, as well as for His individual graces to each of us.

In the New Testament, there are repeated admonitions to give thanks to God. Thanksgiving is to always be a part of our prayers. Some of the most remembered passages on the giving of thanks are the following:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1).

Of all of God's gifts, the greatest one He has given is the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus paid our sin debt, so a holy and just Judge could forgive us our sins and give us eternal life as a free gift. This gift is available to those who will call on Christ to save them from their sin in simple but sincere faith (John 3:16; Romans 3:19-26; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:13; Ephesians 2:8-10). For this gift of His Son, the gift which meets our greatest need, the Apostle Paul says, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

We, like the Pilgrims, have a choice. In life there will always be those things that we can complain about (the Pilgrims had lost many loved ones), but there will also be much to be thankful for. As our society becomes increasingly secular, the actual "giving of thanks to God" during our annual Thanksgiving holiday is being overlooked, leaving only the feasting. May God grant that He may find us grateful every day for all of His gifts, spiritual and material. God is good, and every good gift comes from Him (James 1:17). For those who know Christ, God also works everything together for good, even events we would not necessarily consider good (Romans 8:28-30). May He find us to be His grateful children.