

11-24-19 Thanksgiving Week LESSONS ON THANKSGIVING

TEXT:

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Intro:

My wife told me that floating around the internet is a new word for an alternate Thanksgiving. It is called "Friendsgiving.." This new alternative to thanksgiving, takes the word thanks out and replaces it with friends. I often said, how can you corrupt giving thanks to God? You can't so the world needs to take the thanks out of the equation and replace it with friends. To me the eating of the meal is not as important as the giving of thanks to God for all that He has done for you, and the grand meal is part of the celebration of the act of giving thanks. Friendsgiving replaces the thanks with friends and puts the emphasis on a meal and friends. Since the inception of this holiday the emphasis was giving thanks to God and goes back to the pilgrims who gave thanks to God for their first harvest and peace with the local Indians of the land.

Let me read a brief history of the pilgrims and this holiday.

In October of 1621 the pilgrims celebrated the first thanksgiving in America. 55 of the 102 pilgrims had survived that first winter. Nearly half of them died, and they suffered two fires and innumerable hardships and sicknesses, and enough problems that would cause most of us to despair for our lives. Yet they were thankful and in the tradition of the pilgrims we too will celebrate this great holiday of thanksgiving this week.

Consider the history behind this Holiday:

The Pilgrims, in search of freedom to worship, left England and came to Holland for religious freedom. Soon they found that in Holland they still were not going to be able to worship freely also they believed that the people of Holland defiled the Lord's day, by seeking entertainment on Sunday rather than setting it aside as a day for worship, reflection, and thankfulness. They saw coming to America the only solution to their dilemma.

The trip to America was a harsh trip. The Atlantic crossing in the fall of 1620 had been an extremely difficult journey for the Pilgrims. For two months, 102 people were wedged into what was called the "tween decks" of the Mayflower, the ship's cargo space with only about five-and-a-half feet of headroom. No one was allowed above deck because of the terrible storms. This was no pleasure trip. The Pilgrims comforted themselves on their journey by singing from the Book of Psalms. This "noise" irritated one of the ship's paid crew members. He told the Pilgrims he was looking forward to throwing their corpses overboard after they succumbed to the routine illnesses common on such

voyages. As it turned out, this crew member himself was the only person to die on the voyage and be thrown overboard. God providentially protected His own people. A little-known fact about the Mayflower is that this ship normally carried a cargo of wine; and the wine spillage from previous voyages had soaked the beams, acting as a disinfectant to prevent the spread of disease.

During one terrible storm, the main beam of the mast cracked. Death was certain if this beam could not be repaired. At that moment, the whole Pilgrim adventure could very easily have ended on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Providentially, the Pilgrims had with them a large iron printing press screw. That screw repaired the beam, saving the ship and all on board.

After sixty-six days at sea, land was sighted off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, not the place these Pilgrims wanted to be. They intended to establish their new colony in the northern parts of Virginia Charter (which then extended to the Hudson River in modern-day New York), but two factors interrupted their plans. The winds had blown them off course, yes; but they later learned that other Englishmen who wanted to settle in the same parts of Virginia Charter, (now known as New York) had actually bribed the ship's crew to land them farther north.

Despite this chicanery, God was in charge and the Pilgrims landed exactly where God wanted them to be. Had they actually made landfall near the Hudson River, they most certainly would have been immediately attacked by hostile Indians. Instead, they arrived at the one spot along the coast where hostile Indians had been providentially removed from the land.

Many years before the Mayflower journey, local Indians (The Patuxet's) had captured a Frenchman on a fishing expedition to that region. Just as they were about to kill him, the Frenchman warned them God would be angry, would destroy them all, and would replace them with another nation. The Indians boastfully replied that his God could never kill them. Yet, a year or two before the Pilgrims arrived in this very same region, nearly all the native inhabitants had been wiped out by a plague.

Despite this miraculous provision of safety from hostile Indians, the Pilgrims barely survived their first winter on the Cape. Only four families remained intact; but God was still faithful. In the spring of 1621, He sent Squanto, an English-speaking Indian who offered to teach the Pilgrims how to survive in this strange new land. Squanto was one of only Patuxet Indians who escaped the plague. He had been captured as a young man and taken to England as a slave. During that time he mastered the English language. When he was freed, he returned to his native territory on the Cape shortly before the Pilgrims arrived. Probably the most important thing Squanto taught the Pilgrims was how to plant the native winter staple crop--corn.

The Pilgrims thanked God for this wonderful helper. They also repaid Squanto by sharing with him the most valuable treasure they had brought with them from England--the Gospel. Squanto died a year or two after coming to the aid of the Pilgrims, but

before his death he asked them to pray with him that he might go to be with their God in Heaven.

The first winter in New England after they arrived was extremely harsh. Many died in the brutal winter. As history records, William Bradford, Myles Standish, John Alden, Priscilla Mullins, and the rest of the folks who founded Plymouth in 1620 and survived their first brutal winter had much to be thankful for in the fall of 1621.

Only 55 of the more than 100 original settlers had survived to see their first winter thaw. Their labors had paid off and they had a good first harvest. William Bradford proclaimed a day of prayer and thanksgiving and extended an invitation to the local Indians, Wampanoags, who had helped with the cultivation of the colonists first crops. Around 90 of the Indians participated and brought along 5 deer to help out with the meal.

The Pilgrims were people who believed in God and stood for what they believed. The time was set aside was to thank God for the blessings He had given to them. So, 390 years ago our forefathers, because of their religious faith, began a tradition that has left us with a great heritage and an example concerning thankfulness. We have much to be thankful for in our country and the Pilgrims understood the teaching of the Bible on thankfulness, and surely quoted I Thessalonians 5:18.

Here is a history of the Holiday in our nation:

I Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

In October 1777, all 13 colonies celebrate Thanksgiving. In October 1779, George Washington writes the Thanksgiving Proclamation. It was lost, but recovered and installed in the Library of Congress' archives in 1921.

In October 1863, Abraham Lincoln proclaims the annual holiday as the last Thursday in November.

The following is part of the proclamation he made, establishing a day to stop and give thanks to God for the blessings He had given America:

"Whereas, it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor; Whereas, both the houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me 'to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness!' Now therefore, I do recommend next, to be devoted by the people of the states to the service of that great and glorious being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that

will be, that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country."

President Lincoln and the Congress knew that even in the midst of severe conflict, Americans had much for which to be thankful. No matter how bad the debate, disagreements, and fighting became; Americans had been blessed by God and needed to stop and thank Him.

In 1939, Franklin Roosevelt moves it back a week to extend the Christmas shopping season. Congress ruled that after 1941, the fourth Thursday in November will be Thanksgiving day, a legal federal holiday.

What a great heritage this Holiday has in our nation. How sad it is that we in our modern minds think we need to re-define it!

THIS THURSDAY WE CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING. IN LIGHT OF THIS I THOUGHT IT GOOD TO CONSIDER THE SUBJECT OF BEING THANKFUL.

LESSONS ON BEING THANKFUL:

I. GIVING THANKS DOES NOT COME NATURALLY TO THE NATURAL MAN SO IT WILL TAKE A SACRIFICIAL EFFORT ON OUR PART TO BE THANKFUL:

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Do children naturally say thank you or do we have to teach them to say thank you? We are born into this world by nature the most selfish self centered beings in the universe. The Bible says we are by nature the children of wrath.

Giving thanks to God is like offering up a sacrifice.

It is in our selfish nature we all have a tendency to gripe and complain.

And in this evil world there is always something we can gripe and complain about.

What is a sacrifice?

A sacrifice is the giving up of something that we enjoy for the glory of God.

In our sinful nature we enjoy complaining, we enjoy whining, we enjoy telling others about our woes, etc. When we face difficult times and in these difficulties we learn to thank God, we are offering to Him a verbal sacrifice of praise.

It takes effort on our part to be able to see some good reason why God may be allowing an adversity in our life.

Complaining comes natural, giving thanks takes spiritual thought and effort on our part.

II. IN ORDER TO GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING WE MUST REMEMBER THAT GOD HAS ALLOWED EVERYTHING IN OUR LIVES FOR A PURPOSE.

I Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Consider Job.

Messengers came with this news:

The Sabeans fell on your servants and have stolen all your cattle.
Fire fell from heaven and killed all your sheep and servants.
The Chaldeans came in three bands and stole your camels and killed everyone.
Your children were all eating and drinking in oldest sons house, and a great wind destroyed the house and they all died.

Job 1:20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

JOB BLESSED GOD AND OFFERED UP A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO HIM!

How different that is from the mindset of people today:

II Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

II Timothy 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Let me read for you an excerpt from Matthew Henry on giving thanks:

**MATTHEW HENRY'S PRAYER OF THANKS
AFTER HE WAS ROBBED
4 reasons he could thank God**

I Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I Thank thee first because I was never robbed before: second because although they took my purse they did not take my life, third, although they took my all, it was not much: and fourth because, it was I who was robbed , not I who robbed.

1. WE NEED TO LEARN THAT WE ARE NOT PROMISED A BED OF ROSES IN THIS LIFE: In fact anything less than death is the grace of God.

ADAM AND EVE SHOULD HAVE DIED THE VERY DAY THEY SINNED BUT GOD PROVIDED A SACRIFICE FOR THEIR SIN. THIS ESTABLISHED THE PRINCIPLES OF ATONEMENT AND MERCY.

Lamentations 3:38 Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?

Lamentations 3:39 Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

Cain was an example of one who should have been thankful for the mercy of God but instead he complained:

Genesis 4:13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Genesis 4:14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

How could those early pilgrims give thanks when every one of them had to face the freshly marked graves of loved ones who were not with them that OCTOBER 1621. THEY COULD DO IT BECAUSE THEY KNEW ALL THINGS WORKED TOGETHER FOR GOOD AND THEY WERE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES FOR A CHANCE OF ESTABLISHING A SETTLEMENT WHERE THEY WRE FREE TO WORSHIP GOD!

2. WE NEED TO LEARN THAT GOD LETS US HAVE DAYS OF ADVERSITY AND DAYS OF PROSPERITY SO WE CAN LEARN TO GLORIFY HIM IN ALL THINGS.

These trials of life are there to help us learn to trust Him.

Ecclesiastes 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

One man put it this way, Cotton Mather once said,

Religion often begats prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother.

Book of Judges is an example of how people in the flesh in times of prosperity and wealth and peace are prone to forget God.

The Bible says the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were:

Ezekiel 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

In their abundance of idleness they had time to do their acts of perversion.

The Wisdom of Proverbs puts it this way:

Proverbs 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Proverbs 30:9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

So we should thank God for adversity and trials. As James wrote.

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

James 1:3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

James 1:4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

If it were not for internal turmoil or adversities or problems or difficulties how many of us would have come to Christ?

Jesus said:

I Corinthians 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

I Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Fellow from Ukraine, YURI KRAVETS, GIORGI VIN'S CHURCH
1986 - 1989 in prison in the Ukraine.

He said, his people are able to fight communism and atheism, better with their children than American materialism, and idleness that leads to immorality.

III. IN ORDER TO GIVE THANKS WE NEED TO LEARN TO BE CONTENT:

We give thanks for what we have, we gripe about what we do not have.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

THANKSGIVING PROCEEDS FROM A HEART OF CONTENTMENT.
WE MUST LEARN TO BE CONTENT. IT DOES NOT COME NATURALLY.

Everything that is worthwhile takes effort and work on our part.

It takes character to manifest an attitude of thanksgiving.
That character must come through discipline and learning.

Paul said I have learned in every state how to be content.

How does this take place?

It can only take place as we transform our thoughts and thinking to God's thoughts.

Paul was in prison at Philippi. He was beaten.

He was bruised and his back ached. Yet here is what we read about Paul and Silas in the book of Acts:

Acts 16:22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

Acts 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

Acts 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

He could have said.

I'm a Roman.

Who do they think they are? I'm going to sue them.

God you know I've been trying to do right and look what I get for it.

He could have said things were so much better when I was a Pharisee.

But here is what PAUL probably was thinking:

I put Christians in jail thank God now I am able to suffer for Christ.

Jesus promised me a blessing for this.

I thank you that I am worthy to suffer.

What a privilege it is to be in Jail with Silas. Let's pray and sing.

What a perfect opportunity to show how great Christ is.

Pilgrims thought they were supposed to go to the northernmost point of Virginia. Instead they were blown off course and landed in Cape Cod.

In it they wondered was it an accident or was it God that wanted them to go somewhere else.

In everything give thanks.

They after searching for a place to settle and found a place they called Plymouth. They thanked God for His leading, and in fact of all the coast there was no better place for them to land. Because a Hostile tribe of indians (the Patuxet tribe) had mysteriously all died 4 years previous to their landing and all the other indians believed that place to be haunted, and did not resettle that area.

Latter it was discovered that neighboring tribes sent medicine men to cast evil spells on their white intruders believing the land was haunted by evil spirits they expected them to all die off like the Patuxet indians. When they didn't ,the paranoid medicine men believed that the white men had great white spirits looking after them.

Pilgrims settled in a place called Plymouth rock and why did they succeed? It was because they learned to be thankful when other people could not learn that lesson.

It is a Christian virtue to learn to be content. And then to learn to give thanks.

377 years ago and small congregation of believers came to this country for religious freedom and an opportunity to train up their children in the things of God. They were willing to suffer hardships for this opportunity.

An opportunity to own their own farm.

An opportunity to worship God as they felt the Bible taught them to worship.

An opportunity to establish a christian community....

What was the number one virtue that insured their success?

It was their ability to give thanks in all things.

An soon we enter the Thanksgiving season then comes the Christmas season.
Then comes the New Year.

For many this is a time of blessing and warmth and love.
For others it is a time of turmoil and bitterness, etc.
People rushing and fighting one another for a parking space at the mall.

Before the pilgrims came a group of people tried to establish a settlement in Virginia for glory and fame, and wealth.

They failed miserably. The main reason they did was that they were unable to endure hardships with an attitude of thanksgiving and praise.

We rightly attribute the pilgrims with the first successful colony in this country.

Read an excerpt of an interview with the president of Argentina:

Roger Babson the statistician was lunching with the president of Argentina. "Mr. Babson", the president said, "I have often been wondering why it is that South America with all its natural advantages, its mines of iron, copper, coal silver, and gold: its rivers and great waterfalls which rival Niagara, is so far behind North America." Babson replied, "Well Mr. President, what do you think is the reason?" He was silent for a while before he answered. "I have come to this conclusion. South America was settled by the Spanish, who came to South America in search of gold: But North America was settled by the Pilgrim Fathers, who went there in search of God..."

In their search of God we honor the pilgrims by the establishing of a holiday in their memory. This great national holiday we call Thanksgiving. Let us learn to be grateful like they were.

Let us truly give thanks to our Lord this Thanksgiving.

Now what I would like to do tonight in our evening service is have folks come and share testimonies of praise and thanksgiving for what God has done for you in your life. I hope you will come prepared to share a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.