
5 Points on Godly Thanksgiving

11/23/2016 Sermon for Thanksgiving Eve Service



Dear Christian Friends,

Henry Ward Beecher once wrote: *“If one should give me a dish of sand and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes and search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through the sand and now would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles by the mere power of attraction. The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings.”*

A thankful heart! What a blessing! We can ask God to give us such a heart. George Herbert wrote: *“Thou hast given so much to me, give one thing more---a grateful heart... Not thankful when it pleases me, as if Thy blessings had spare days, but such a heart, whose pulse may be Thy praise.”*

A Southern mountain woman chiseled in rough and uneven letters the following epitaph for her dead husband: *“He always appreciated.”* May you and I do the same. Consider a few things about God-glorifying thanksgiving.

<p>1. WE MUST ADMIT THAT ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING WE HAVE COMES FROM GOD</p>
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Listen to what Moses said: *You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.”* Dear friends, don’t ever forget where your blessings come from. We came into the world with nothing and leave with nothing. There are no U-Hauls behind hearses. Everything in between your first day on earth to your last is from God’s hand. Everything.

2. WE CAN'T GIVE THANKS UNTIL WE RECOGNIZE OUR UNWORTHINESS.

We don't deserve anything from God, and he gives all we need. Not only that, but he loved us so much that he gave us his only Son. Isn't that incredible? The Apostle Paul told the Romans: *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"*

David had the right attitude when he said, *"Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"* And it was Jacob who said, *"I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant."*

If you think you deserve what you have, you can't even begin to give thanks to God for his blessings.

3. FROM GRATEFUL HEARTS FLOW WORDS OF GRATITUDE.

If you genuinely appreciate what God has given you, say it. Take your words of thanks with you, away from the confines of the church pew. Pepper your daily conversation with how grateful you are for God's blessings. Listen to what the Psalmist says: *"Give thanks to the LORD, make known among the nations what he has done.* Say grace in a restaurant – out loud, with the members of your family. Tell a stranger how God has blessed you. Let your friends know what God does for you day after day. When you are speaking of your successes, make it clear that it is God who has prospered you. When you get that promotion, let business associates know that you consider it a gift from God. Tell fellow farmers how much you rely on God for everything. Speak with your children about God's goodness. In other words, speak of God's wonderful acts on the other 364 days of the year, too.

4. SHOW GRATITUDE BY GIVING FIRSTFRUITS TO GOD.

One of the principal offerings of the Old Testament was the thank offering. When King David wanted to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah, he insisted on paying for it. David didn't want to offer something to God that didn't cost him anything. He said, *"I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."*

Let's make sure that our thank offerings for God's work are sacrifices, and not merely some leftovers. If we bring small change to the house of God for a thank offering and keep major portions for ourselves, it speaks volumes about our gratitude. An attitude that says, **"Give the Lord a dollar, keep hundreds for myself, give him 60 minutes, then put him on the shelf"** betrays a lack of gratitude in the heart. God deserves offerings that glorify him for his goodness.

Henry Thornton, always a generous giver to the work of the Lord, sent a check for \$100 to the church treasurer. A telegram informed Henry shortly thereafter that he had lost \$10,000. Feeling the sting of his loss, he asked for the return of his \$100 check, and made out another one for \$1000. He knew what so many Christians have yet to find out: It's not what you give to the Lord, **but what you keep from him** that makes us poor. You can shout "Thanks, Lord!" by your giving.

5. SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE BY DEDICATING YOUR LIFE TO HIS SERVICE.

Thanksgiving is best practiced by **thanksgiving**, by service to Christ. The best way we can express gratitude is by giving yourself to Christ. Someone asked a meat packer what he did for a living. He said, "I am a Christian, a servant of Christ." "You don't understand," the person said. "I mean, what do you do for a living?" "I am a Christian. I serve Christ in gratitude for what he has done for me. I pack meat to pay the expenses."

GIVE THANKS! Acknowledge God's goodness, admit your unworthiness, speak of God's works, share your gifts and yield yourself in heart and life to Him who loved you and gave himself into death for your sins.

It has been said that the pilgrims, during their first difficult years in America, had to ration food. Each person received five kernels of corn a day. Later, when things got better, they developed the Thanksgiving custom of putting five kernels on their plates. Before they ate, they would go around the table and each person would mention five things for which he or she was grateful. As you celebrate Thanksgiving with your

families, highlight five blessings out of the many thousands God has poured into your lives. Then, as a family, thank God for his Son, the greatest blessing of all. Amen.